RELUCTANT NURSE

The Memoirs Of
Marie Goodman (1915-2021)

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Preface To The Cyber Edition

This book was published in hard copy on September 9, 2022, the first anniversary of Marie Goodman's death. I also mailed out a few copies as PDFs and EPUBs. Before this mailing I noticed a small typo which I corrected. Some time later, my co-editor received some feedback from an associate of his (who wishes to remain anonymous).

To my horror he found not only a duplicate anecdote but a number of other, albeit very minor typos. I have removed the first appearance of the anecdote, corrected the typos, and incorporated most of his suggestions. I have also replaced the photograph on page 225 with a scan of a better quality version of the same; it has different colouring and a wider angle.

I cannot imagine how both of us missed all these errors but they have now been corrected, and this cyber edition is published officially today.

Alexander Baron,
Sydenham,
London.

December 2, 2022

From The Editor

This book was dictated by Marie Jeanne Goodman to her son Edward (who is its *de facto* co-editor) between 2011 and 2019 with a few very minor, later additions. It covers principally from her birth until the early years of her second marriage. As might be expected, due to the passage of time and especially in view of her great age, there were lapses of memory. The ones I detected included the same anecdote being attributed to different people in different years. The author did not take contemporaneous notes; very likely she had no intention of writing her memoirs, and probably no inkling she would live so long.

There were also technical problems with regard to assembling the text. Edward Goodman gave the dictated notes to typists, who made a large number of uncorrected typos. I was given the complete text partly as *Word* files and also as ring binders full of A4 which included a lot of duplication. To be on the safe side, I retyped all the A4 notes.

With all this in mind, I have edited the text as given to me as minimally as possible. This includes verbatim quotes such as quotes in French which were dictated in English. As with most autobiographies, this one includes a fair amount of information which is not within the strict personal knowledge of the author. I will assume the reader is savvy enough to recognise hearsay and to afford it the credibility it deserves. This though isn't a controversial memoir of a politician or some outrageous person, nor is it simply a collection of unrelated personal anecdotes, rather it is the life story of a woman of humble origins who due to her circumstances led a unique life as well as a very long one.

She was surely the only woman in history to have been born in France, lived in both Nazi Germany and Nigeria, married twice, then become an English housewife, and lived to the age of 106!

When people reminisce, they have a tendency to jump about; for that reason, this text isn't in strict chronological order, although I have tried to arrange it so as far as possible without losing the flow of the narrative. There are seventeen chapters which cover the following periods: Chapter 1: from her birth in 1915 (including her earlier family history); Chapter 2: growing up to the early 1920s; Chapter 3: into her teens; Chapter 4: her early working life 1929-33; Chapter 5: Nazi Germany, 1933; Chapter 6: the South of France, 1934; Chapter 7: Strasbourg, 1937; Chapter 8: working in England, 1937; Chapter 9: her first marriage, 1938; Chapter 10: life in Nigeria, 1939-40; Chapter 11: as a young widow in England, 1940; Chapter 12: training with the Red Cross, 1942; Chapter 13: war and hospital work to 1946; Chapter 14: early married life from 1944; Chapter 15: suburban housewife from 1945; Chapter 16: later life – 1980s on; Chapter 17: *Epilogue*, 2021 (written after her death).

I have added an abundance of notes for especially younger readers who were born decades after most of what is documented here. With my limited resources I have been unable to verify many of the things she said which although technically in the public domain would require intensive research off-line. I have made this clear in the notes. In April 2019, a great deal of historical research for the background was commissioned by her son from an independent researcher in France, and this has been incorporated where appropriate. Unfortunately, while Herve Palaez Cassarieco did an excellent job, he traced

only her direct family tree, and didn't include the dates of birth of her siblings. As will become evident from the notes, there is some confusion over these and some other dates.

The final chapter was written partly by her son and partly by me. I had hoped to present Jeannette with her own personal copy of this book, but sadly this was never meant to be. It is being published officially on the first anniversary of her death.

Alexander Baron,
Sydenham,
London.

August 2022

Acknowledgments

This book would not have been possible nor even conceived without Edward Anthony Charles Goodman, devoted son of Marie Jeanne Goodman. Thanks too to Nicole Schwartz, niece of Marie Jeanne, cousin of Edward; to researcher Herve Palaez Cassarieco. Also to the legendary Jan Harold Brunvand; Professor Mary Schaeffer Conroy of the University of Colorado, Denver for her lightning speed reply to my Tokalon query, and for her excellent book on E. Virgil Neal, of course. And a special thanks to Rupert Parsons of Womersley Foods for information about Womersley Hall.

RELUCTANT NURSE
by Marie Jeanne Goodman

Chapter One: Early Childhood

I was born Marie Jeanne Schwartz on March 22, 1915 at the family home during the First World War. At school I was called Marie, but at home I was called Jeanette to differentiate from my older sister Maria (see second paragraph below).

My village, Jœuf, in North-East France, was occupied by the invading Germans for the duration of the war. My siblings were taught German in school; they didn't like this because the teachers inflicted corporal punishment by making the pupils put their fingers together then hit their fingertips with a ruler. After the war, French was taught again without corporal punishment, which had been abolished in French schools decades before I was born.

My mother gave birth to seven children and had one miscarriage. I was the fifth child; the eldest by far was my sister Antoinette who was born in 1903; my brother Eugène, named after my father, was born in 1906; my sister Maria was born in 1908. Then after another two years, my brother Louis was born. (1) Then there was a gap of five years before I was born. Maurice was the sixth child and Robert the seventh, born 1916 and 1918 respectively. The old women of the village said I would not live long because I had veins showing on my temples. They said that was a sign

of an early death. They were so very wrong! I am now nearly ninety-eight. (2)

My mother was rewarded because of my survival as I was her fifth child. After the First World War, (3) she was recognised as the mother of "*un famille nombreuse*" (a large family). This status was financially rewarded in France, and she was thus, for example, entitled to free travel on public transport. The French Government did this to encourage a high birthrate so France could close the gap with the much larger population of Germany, the national enemy. It also criminalised abortion and contraception while making divorce difficult.

When a baby was born, the midwife or doctor had to immediately register the birth at the hospital. The baby's father had to register the birth at the town hall within 48 hours. It was 3 kilometres from our house; when my father went to register the birth of my older brother, he forgot the name my mother had chosen, so gave the first name that came into his head: Louis. When he told my mother, she was furious because "Dumb Louis" was a local expression for "stupid boy".

After each of her many pregnancies, my mother would take a sheet and fold it until it was half a metre wide. Then she would hold one end while my father pulled the other and she wrapped it tightly around her stomach. She would do this every day for several months to restore her flat stomach.

When her eldest daughter my sister Antoinette had a baby, my mother insisted she do likewise. Antoinette tried this but she found wearing the substitute corset uncomfortable, and stopped. Then she developed a flabby stomach which was exacerbated by her over-eating. She became gross with a flap of skin hanging over her pubis, so when she was

naked it was impossible to tell if she was a woman or a man.

When I had my children, with my second husband, I would wear a corset afterwards. Now, women do pelvic floor exercises.

The First World War broke out the year before I was born, on July 28, 1914 to be precise. I heard that a young man from the village came to my mother and gave her an engagement ring for Antoinette, who was then in her early teens. The man said he was leaving to serve in the French Army and wanted my mother to keep Antoinette free for him to marry when he returned from war service. He then gave my mother the ring for safe keeping as proof of his intentions. She dropped it on the stone floor of the kitchen accidentally; it bounced out of sight, and couldn't be found. My mother thought this a bad omen, but didn't tell the man. (4)

Later, my father found the ring; it had lodged in a slipper. He gave it to my mother who wore it with her own rings, as it fitted her. Her prediction about the man proved true; he didn't survive the war, so didn't come back to claim my sister's hand in marriage. My mother continued to wear the ring.

My father was rejected for military service because he had flat feet and couldn't march properly. He was a labourer in a steelworks which also employed many Italian workers; one of them had been called Mussolini who became Italian Prime Minister in 1922, but my brothers doubted it was the same man; Mussolini had however worked outside Italy as a labourer.

The de Wendel family owned the factory where my father worked, and the surrounding villages. There were three enormous furnaces which lit up the night sky. They were

beautiful to see, but not to breathe the dust. De Wendel's château was at the top of the hill, but he lived in the valley. He was powerful and arrogant, and had paid someone to transfer the aristocratic designation "de" to him. When visiting the factory once, he offered a worker a cigarette, knowing full well that smoking was prohibited there. The poor man assumed wrongly he had been given permission to smoke it. De Wendel sacked him on the spot.

Poetic justice followed. In 1940, the invading Germans confiscated the factory from the de Wendel family. After the Second World War, it was returned to them, only to be nationalised without compensation in 1978. (5)

At the beginning of each new shift, the factory siren would sound. Workers affected would walk to the factory, except for those living some way away; they would stand outside their houses and wait for the company bus.

Only men were recruited for the de Wendel factory, and they would each be bound by a contract of employment forbidding the employee to work for any other iron foundry within two years of leaving. Similarly, the factory offered tied apprenticeships which meant that when one qualified as an engineer he could work there and nowhere else. One ambitious worker wanted to improve himself by moving to a better factory in nearby Metz, so he left the local one and for two years subsisted by working as a dustman (refuse collector) then relocating to Metz.

We lived in Rue St. Alice (all the village roads were named after Saints and were owned by the factory for the workers). Our house was two-up-two down ie, a kitchen and bedroom downstairs and two bedrooms upstairs.

Like the rest of the houses in our village, our little workman's cottage had electricity, but no gas or running water, so water had to be collected in buckets from the

village pump. (6) Vegetables from the garden were washed at the pump. There was also a *lavoir* where women would do their laundry. (7)

When I was a little older, as soon as I got home from school, my mother would tell me to fill two pails with water from the village pump. This was considered girls' work; I would take a pail in each hand. One would contain lettuces and cabbages with dirty roots. I would have to wash them under the pump and fill the other pail with water. Carrying these heavy pails led to me developing strong arms from an early age.

I also had to take the family washing in a bucket by wheelbarrow to the *lavoir* where I would wash it with soap and hit it with a *battoir* then rinse it. I would then put it back in the wheelbarrow and take it home to hang on the washing line. It was terrible in winter because the *lavoir* had only cold water. The washing had to be boiled at home.

The lack of water meant we never washed our hands before meals, and at one point I acquired a tapeworm. One day, I saw a long, thin, white strand in my excrement and called to my mother. She told me I had worms, and next day gave me some vermifuge medicine which cured me.

When I was young, Antoinette had to look after me. One Sunday when there was no one at the *lavoir*, she let me splash about at the water's edge, and I fell in. She screamed, and luckily a passerby heard and pulled me out of the water before I drowned. Thereafter, my nightmares were about drowning.

Antoinette had beautiful wavy, very blonde hair and dark eyes. Like my siblings and I, she didn't inherit our mother's lovely blue eyes. Although my mother was petite, we were all tall like my father.

Food was short because of the war, so my father bought a baby goat which grew up with me, and because he earned little as a factory labourer, to support his growing family, he resorted to home farming. We kept chickens in our back garden, for eggs, the goat gave us milk, and in our outside lavatory was a piglet my father had bought for us to fatten up with kitchen scraps so it would grow to maturity for us to eat at Christmas. Neighbours would give us their offal to feed the piglet. Additionally, my father went into the Vosges Mountains and collected bags of acorns for it to eat. When it was fully grown, after six months, he hired a slaughterman to kill it. Some of the meat was then distributed to the people who had given us offal.

We called the goat Grisette; she was fed on grass which my father also collected from the mountains. At night, she was housed in the lavatory; during the day, she was tethered in our garden. If I went near her in the garden she would butt me and pin me against the wall. My siblings laughed, but I screamed until my mother came out and pulled the goat away.

One day, to exact revenge, I took some tobacco from my father's pouch and gave it to Grisette to eat hoping to make her ill. To my surprise, she loved it, but my father was annoyed to find his tobacco depleted, luckily not realising I was the culprit.

Like most working class Frenchmen at that time, my father rolled his own cigarettes from a pouch of tobacco. Many would also chew the tobacco, they rolled some of it into a ball and, when they had chewed and swallowed all the nicotine, they would spit it out.

All the money my father and brothers earned was given (in unopened pay packets) to my mother. She kept the bulk for housekeeping then gave each of us pocket money, and

my father his tobacco money. Sometimes, my brothers gave him extra tobacco money from their shares; he chewed the tobacco as well as smoking it in his pipe.

My mother milked Grisette daily; we children loved the thick, rich milk. When I tasted cow's milk for the first time, I thought it was so thin that it was diluted.

When we grew older, we refused to drink goat's milk, so my mother sold Grisette. Instead, she would buy a live goose every December to fatten up on good food. She was a farmer's daughter and wanted a good Christmas goose for the family.

The goose was kept in the garden shed; my brother kept his new motorcycle in there and fitted a padlock on the door. One night, the goose started to scream and woke us up. When my father opened the wooden shutter of his bedroom window, he saw two men running away from our garden. He rushed out to see what was going on. He found the padlock to the shed door had been broken, but the motorcycle was still there. (8) We were all so grateful to the goose, Jacqueline, for saving it that we refuse to eat her for Christmas. My mother bought another one. I never knew what happened to Jacqueline.

Half a century later in England, I heard of a similar incident. My cleaning lady told me thieves had tried to steal her husband's delivery van. It was parked in their drive, and one evening when she was opening the bedroom window, she saw it moving. She called to her husband in bed and told him he had forgotten to put on the brake, and the van was going down the road. He told her that was impossible because the drive was uphill. He leapt out of bed to look, and saw two men pushing the van. He shouted at them. They fled and his wife chased after them. He couldn't, because he slept naked.

One day, before we sold Grisette, a woman knocked on the door and asked if she could buy some goat's milk. My mother told her she had only enough for her own family and asked the visitor how she knew we owned a goat. The lady said her daughter had told her about it. After that, my mother told me to keep quiet about the goat's milk! The caller was a Jewess.

Most of the shops in our village were owned by Jews, and there was anti-Semitism, including from my own mother. After the lady departed, my mother told me "*Ces juifs, ils peuvent tout acheter*" (Those Jews, they can buy anything). There was a saying "*Voler un juif n'est pas un vol*" (To steal from a Jew is not stealing).

My parents slept in the downstairs bedroom and us seven children occupied the ones above. When one of us was ill, he or she would sleep with my parents so they could provide help, if needed, all night.

In 1919, my elder brother Louis caught Asian flu and had to go to hospital. Luckily, he survived. Tragically, however, many French soldiers whose families were celebrating their surviving the Great War died from the flu. (9)

There was a tragic incident at Strasbourg near where we lived when a toddler killed his baby sister. The father used a big knife to cut open a rabbit. While he was doing something else, his young son imitated him by taking his knife off the table and plunging it into the sleeping baby.

When he was four years old, my younger brother Maurice kept coughing, so my mother made him sleep with her and my father. To cheer Maurice up, I lent him my favourite doll. It had a moveable head. and arms linked to an internal elastic band. Being curious like most children of that age, Maurice kept pulling the arms to feel the elastic band; it broke, leaving them disjointed. When he

recovered, he returned the doll to me, but it had no arms. I refused to play with such a mutilated creature and complained to my mother. Instead of chiding Maurice, she condemned me for being so stupid as to lend it to him. I gave my mother the broken doll to dispose of.

As we were inland in the east of France near the Vosges Mountains, we had very cold, severe winters when the roads were covered with ice, so we walked to school with old socks or bits of cloth over our shoes to stop us slipping. Adults did the same. We also had violent storms. My mother told us never to stand under a tree when it rained because we might be struck by lightning if we did, so whenever walking back to school in the rain, I happily avoided trees and got soaked.

There was no heating in our cottage, and as my parents had seven children, we never received any individual attention, much less a kiss or a cuddle. The sleep-in on Sunday morning was thus very dear to us, Sunday being my father's day off. When he and my mother woke, she called me and my two younger brothers from the bedroom we shared. We were then allowed to get into our parent's bed. The place of honour was for one of us to be in the middle. The other two had to be on the edge of the bed. Each week, by rotation we were allowed into the middle. We each knew our exact place in the rota, and stuck to it. After we had a cuddle with our parents, my mother ordered us to get up for breakfast in the kitchen. It was just bread and jam. Then she asked my father to take us children out so the kitchen would be free for her to prepare Sunday lunch. He would take my two younger brothers and I into the nearby woods. He wore spiked shoes which he used to climb up wild cherry trees to collect the fruit. I loved these trips.

We would collect acorns for our pig, and chestnuts for us to roast and eat. He would show us belladonna berries and would warn us they were poisonous.

He also pointed out which mushrooms were edible and which were not.

Then he would swim in the river, giving my brothers and I turns at holding onto his neck. I loved it.

Whenever he heard the sound of a viper, he explained it was also poisonous.

The mushroom lessons stood me in good stead years later when I was a nurse in Britain. I went out picking mushrooms with Major Milton and brought back some chanterelle mushrooms. (10) I gave them to the hospital cook to include in my meal. He was horrified and said they were poisonous toadstools, but I insisted. They were delicious. The next morning, he came into the ward. The sister ordered him back to the kitchen, but he had wanted to see if I was still alive.

Our family had to eat together in the kitchen as we had no dining room. We had no refrigerator, so my mother had to do the shopping every day. Perishable foods were kept in an outside cupboard attached to the north-facing wall to avoid sunshine. It had a wire mesh front to allow in ventilation but not flies.

One day at mealtime, my father told my mother he had dreamt of her half-sister in the village wearing a white dress that was far too small for her. He said such a dream announced death.

My mother's older half-sister lived in our village with a nephew. She was a widow when I was young. My father didn't like her because she was very manly and had a moustache. My brothers hated her because she would repeat to my mother any of their misdeeds at their school

where she worked part-time. I didn't like her either because her moustache would prick my face when she kissed me.

My mother laughed at my father's prophesy, but a few days later, the nephew came to tell my mother that she had been taken ill after coming home from work. My mother visited her in hospital. A week later, she was dead. Among her possessions was a letter that said when she died, she wanted to be buried in her wedding dress. My father's dream was prophetic because he saw the details of that dress in his dream.

A few years later, my father had another such dream, this time about his sister wearing a white dress. She was much younger than him. Shortly afterwards, the postman delivered a telegram. My mother asked me not to mention it to my father until he had finished his lunch when she would tell him herself. The telegram stated his sister had been taken to hospital and died on the operating table. I attended the funeral with my mother.

I grew up with my two younger brothers. This meant I was always bigger and stronger than they were and I took advantage of this to bully them, sometimes physically!

This upbringing meant also that I was totally unafraid of men. It stood me in a good stead, as I was always able to handle them. One night I was walking from the doctor's house, where I worked as a maid, to my nearby lodgings. A man jumped out from behind a tree. I put up my fists ready to fight, and he fled. I feel sorry for women who are frightened of men and thus vulnerable.

In addition, growing up with two brothers, meant that I have always been more than happy to look at a penis. The sight of a vagina, however, disgusts me! (11)

My sister Maria was very different. The only man she had known was her weak uncle in Alsace who was always ill. She was therefore frightened of strong men. This was sad because she was the most attractive girl in the family. One day, Maria told my mother and I of her amusing experience of a flasher. She was walking with her older female friend and the latter's young daughter when they were accosted by a man who indecently exposed himself. The older woman calmly told her daughter to look away then went up to the man and smacked his penis. Terrified, he immediately ran away.

We also had a German soldier billeted in our house like every other home in the village because it was near the battle front. Additionally, a German sentry would patrol the road at night to enforce the curfew.

Throughout the war, the Germans imposed a strict 7pm curfew enforced by patrolling soldiers. In the summer of 1917, as a toddler, I woke up one night to urinate. There was no inside lavatory, and I couldn't find the chamber pot. I managed to open the back door (we had no locks) and get into the garden to relieve myself. The German sentry saw my white nightdress in the dark, came into the garden, picked me up, and banged on the door with his rifle butt. My mother opened it, and the soldier asked her if I was her child. She confirmed I was, and the soldier gave me to her with a warning not to let me out after dark! (12)

The German soldier billeted at our house was very amiable, probably because my mother was able to converse with him in German. (13) Although she was able to establish friendly relations with him, our neighbours were not so fortunate; those who could speak only French were maltreated by their unwanted German guests. These women would come to my mother in tears with horror

stories. Often, the German soldier would take exception to the picture on the wall of the absent French husband in uniform, and smash it up. Additionally, having taken the main bedroom, the soldier would act as if he owned the place.

The soldier who stayed with us had two great loves in his life - his wife and his violin. He worked as an orderly, serving meals to the officers. He was resting before being sent back to the front. His wife sent letters to my mother to ask how he was.

One day, the soldier told my mother he was going for an army medical examination in three days. He gave her some coffee asking her to brew it very strong. He kept drinking this so that when he went to see the doctor he would be a bag of nerves and not be sent back to the front. The ploy worked, and instead he remained billeted in Jœuf, but ultimately it did him no good. At the end of the war, all the German soldiers in occupied France were evacuated, including those from our village; he was put on a train headed back to Germany, but the track had been mined by French forces to prevent soldiers leaving to fight another day. The train was blown up and all its passengers were killed.

When I was about four years old, my mother took me with her when she visited her elderly mother near Strasbourg. We stopped only the one night there while my father took care of my younger brothers back home in Jœuf. It was the first time I met my grandmother. She was about ninety years old.

When my mother put me to bed in there, it was so high that she had to lift me up because it was covered with a thick, eider duvet. I loved it as I was then cocooned in a

lovely soft, warm bed which I still remember ninety years later.

It was in Alsace where geese are raised and their down is used for duvets. Gaggles of geese were driven into the fields to graze by geese girls. Off duty, they wore huge black bows on their heads, which is the national female dress of Alsace. As it had just been re-annexed by France in December 1918, each bow had a French red, white and blue cockade in the corner.

My maternal aunt in Alsace had no children; my brothers and sisters would stay with her every school holiday; I didn't, because I was too young. Knowing she couldn't have children, my aunt wanted to adopt my elder sister Maria. My parents accepted and left her there.

Then her husband died and she fell on hard times. She started sending bills to my mother for Maria's upkeep and clothes. My mother couldn't afford this, so took Maria back. She returned from Strasbourg speaking fluent Alsatian and German but no French. My siblings were ashamed of her at school and pretended she was a cousin living with us, though being a bright girl, she soon learned French.

Little could she have realised that thirty years later, her knowledge of German would save her husband's life when he was arrested and interrogated by German officers during the occupation for dealing in black market ham. (14)

Maria never wore out her shoes, so when she outgrew them they were handed down to me, and my father nailed metal rims to the toes and heels. Nevertheless, I would wear them out within a year. My father complained that even the iron reinforcements were no protection against me.

In those days, a mother would typically put her baby in a perambulator which she would leave outside so the baby could get some fresh air. In a nearby village, a tragedy occurred. It was a cold day, and when the mother came to check on the baby she found a cat sitting there. She pushed it away only to find the child was dead. It had suffocated because the cat had sat on its mouth to keep warm. Later perambulators had netting under their hoods to prevent such occurrences. (15)

I started school in 1920 when I was 5 years old. The village girls school commenced at 8am, then at noon we went home for lunch and had to be back by 1pm until 4pm. The older boys and girls had to remain until 6pm to do supervised homework there. Unlike in England, we had Thursdays off, but not Saturdays.

At school, I learned an easy way to recognise Eighteenth Century French furniture. Bending one's legs outward represented Louis XIV tables and chairs which have deep curved legs, whereas straight legs show the Louis XVI style. My father was good-natured. When my mother (who was strict) ordered him to beat one of us for disobedience, he would pretend to comply, whispering in the ear of the miscreant to cry when he touched her or him. Then, when he had gently smacked the buttocks, it convinced my mother there had been chastisement. This was better than the normal method of disciplining the young used at that time - a smack in the face.

One day, my mother insisted my father chastise one of us, so he took off his slipper and gave my brother a mild slap with it. This wasn't good enough for my mother, so she bought a martinet with which she would hit us when we were disobedient.

There was no swimming pool in our town, so I used to go to a nearby river to swim. My elder brother Eugène would supervise me. I went into the shallow part and, under his watchful eye, taught myself to swim. There were leeches in the river. If one stuck to you, it bit so tightly that you couldn't pull it off until it was full of blood. Doctors kept a supply and applied them to septic wounds to suck out the pustular blood.

My younger brother Robert did likewise. My other younger brother Maurice never learned to swim. In summer, when my father used to go swimming too, when he got out of the water he would shout "*Regardez!*" (Look!) and show us a leach that had fastened to his bare leg and was sucking his blood. It was difficult to pull off, so he waited until it had filled with blood when it dropped off naturally.

My father had gone to school at Saverne near Strasbourg in Alsace. The school had a famous rose garden which was open for only three months of the year. (16) An old schoolfriend of my father worked there as a gardener; he gave my father cuttings of special roses.

My father would also go into the forest and collect wild rose plants which he would replant in our garden and graft the green rose cuttings onto them. I boasted at school we had green roses. The teacher told me off for this. My mother gave me a green rose to take to school the next day to prove my point.

My father was devoted to my mother and always reserved the best produce from the garden for her, but I never saw either of them kiss each other. We children always knew when they had quarrelled because then my mother would answer our questions with "*Demande à ton père*" (Ask your father).

He would also collect wood from the forest and carve whistles from it for us. The local forester was a handsome man; he was married to an older woman who was always ill. Local widows would tell me that when his wife died, each wanted to be the first in line to be his second wife. On the other hand, my mother had a saying that people who are ill always live the longest. She was right. The poor forester died young while his widow lived on for many years.

My maternal grandmother married a man from the same village in Alsace; they had two daughters before he died. They had an orchard which produced plums which were dried to become prunes; it was their cottage industry. Her second husband was a handsome civil engineer who travelled widely for his job. My mother was from the second marriage. The aunt who tried to adopt Maria was my mother's half-sister; she raised my grandmother because the second husband had also died young.

I had a cousin from Agneau in Alsace; he was horrible. When he visited us, he put me on a swing and kept pushing it as hard as he could so as to make it turn full circle. I screamed with fear, so my father came out, and he stopped. Fifteen years later when France was occupied and Alsace annexed to Germany, I heard he had joined the SS, a suitable profession for such a sadist.

The steel furnace where my father worked was near the front, and he agreed to smuggle letters from the French side back into our village. They were from French soldiers to their wives in German-occupied France. My father would give the letters to distributors in our village.

One day, he was delayed and thus unable to collect the contraband mail before going to work. Returning from the factory, the workmen's train was stopped *en route* and he

was ordered out of the truck to be searched by German soldiers. Luckily, because he had been delayed, nothing was found. My father never smuggled letters after that because he knew he was under suspicion. After the war, he discovered that his best friend at work had betrayed him to the Germans, for money. Had he not been delayed that day, he would have been shot. (17)

A few days later, some local men fired on a parade of German soldiers, then fled. The soldier billeted at our house rushed to my mother warning her to flee the village with her children because the Germans were going to burn it down in reprisal. Two hours later when she was ready to take all five of us away, the soldier returned to say we were safe because his commander had reversed the order to destroy the village.

Another time, my father overslept. There was a loud knocking at the door; it was German soldiers wanting to know why he hadn't reported for work in the vitally important steel mill. The bedroom was on the ground floor behind the kitchen. Woken by the knocking at the kitchen door, my father heard the soldiers questioning my mother, telling her they were going to search the house. He jumped up, put on his trousers, jumped out of the bedroom window, and rushed off to work. My mother was amazed; she didn't know where he had gone until he came home.

Soon afterwards, my father began suffering from stomach pains. He was diagnosed with a stomach ulcer by the German doctor and was prescribed drastic treatment: no solid food for a week. He complied and was more or less cured. In later life, I put this down to the strain of raising a family of seven young ones on a workman's wages, the ulcers were induced by stress. (18)

Sickly children were sent to summer holiday camp by the sea in Brittany paid for by the de Wendel company. I asked my mother to let me go; she pointed out that only children with medical certificates were eligible, so I asked her to take me to the doctor. He asked me to sit on the couch in his surgery them pressed my legs and turned to my mother telling her I was too strong to give a sickness note. He was right!

My father used to tell us horror stories at night to quieten us down and make us sleep. I remember one that particularly frightened me. He said the Devil had one distinguishing feature he couldn't disguise, namely his goat-like cloven hooves. One evening, a man went into a bar and ordered drinks for everyone there. The man next to him looked on in amazement. Then they noticed his cloven hooves; the Devil realised he'd been recognised, and fled.

When I was about ten, there was a popular French song in which a Foreign Legionnaire sang "I have to work day and night, I have to eat mad cow. I am fed up".

I remembered it seventy years later when the British Government warned about the new "mad cow disease" and the dangers of eating untested beef. (19) Perhaps the disease was suspected long before it was officially recognised.

I always memorised things fully and was thus chosen to do recitations in front of the class. At home, my mother made me recite the poems I had learned to guests. I recited an Aesop poem at the school show. I can still remember it now ninety years later, it was *La Sauterelle Et La Fourmi*, (*The Grasshopper And The Ant*). My mother made a special dress for me and told her friends I would be performing. Then disaster struck.

I stood on the stage looking at all the faces in the audience. I was afflicted with extreme stage fright, and froze in terror. I had to go backstage, give my dress to another girl to wear, and then she mimed the poem before the audience while I spoke it from the side. My mother was furious and berated me afterwards saying she had told her friends I would perform wearing the dress she had made for me. I loved reciting poetry, especially *La Fontaine's Fables*. I spent half the night learning one, then in the morning I showed it to Robert. He read it through twice and then recited it. I realised then I had no academic future; my brother was two years younger and much more intelligent, so was my other younger brother Maurice. Another poem I learned was one called *Ode À Un D'oreiller* (*Ode To A Pillow*).

My family was too poor to own a wireless, but every Saturday when I went to the market, I heard songs. (20) At each music stall, the man would sing the latest popular songs of the current sheet music he was selling. I couldn't afford this, but I could easily memorise a song having heard it only once. Even now, ninety years later, I can sing them word for word. I could have been a performer had I not suffered from stage fright.

Ninety years later, I can still remember and recite fables word for word in classical French, including *Ode To A Pillow;* my favourite is the story of the rich man and the shoemaker. The worried man paid the shoemaker to keep his bag of gold coins safe. Every night thereafter the shoemaker was sleepless with worry about any unexpected noise believing it might be thieves. After a while he returned the bag of coins to the rich man saying "Please let me be happy and sleep peacefully again". The moral of the story is that wealth brings worry. How true! (21)

In about 1920, after the end of the war, a new factory was built between our village and Metz. It advertised for workers, but no Frenchmen applied because it was dangerous, dirty work. The local women said that if their husbands worked there, they wouldn't make old bones. Poor Italian immigrants took the jobs as they were well paid. Every worker had to drink three litres of milk every day to neutralise the poisoned air breathed in the factory. Nonetheless, these men all died young from breathing poisonous fumes.

The Italians all went to live near the factory where the was a canteen for them. Then a bank opened for them to use: *La Banque Franco-Italienne*. It paid higher interest rates than French banks, and the local Italians deposited their savings there. There was no church for them, so an Italian special priest settled with them: l'Abbe Caravdossi.

Then in about 1925, *La Banque Franco-Italienne* closed, and the Italians lost all their savings because it was bankrupt. The local paper reported that white crosses had been painted on the front doors of some houses. The local French took no notice, but the Italians knew it was a sign of vendetta. One appeared on the door of l'Abbe Caravdossi.

Some of the occupants of white cross houses left France, but not Caravdossi. Then it was reported he had been murdered; the killing of a cleric was regarded as shocking. It is believed he was killed because he was connected with the failed bank. I remembered this when living in England I heard that the similarly named Vatican banker Roberto Calvi had been murdered for the same thing in London fifty-seven years later. (22)

My father had very big feet. In France in those days, very big shoes were unavailable, so be bought the biggest pair he could, and stuffed them full of wet newspapers. He left

them like that for a fortnight to stretch the leather before wearing them. By contrast, although very tall, my first husband had small feet, size 7 in British sizes. This was the same size as me, as a much shorter person. We could wear each other's shoes.

My mother was unhappy at being repeatedly pregnant. She blamed my father. (23) Once, I overheard her complaining to a neighbour that he had only to come home and take off his trousers to make her pregnant. Whenever she was expecting another baby, she went into a prolonged sulk lasting several months, and she would refuse to talk to him.

Chapter Two:
Village Life, Growing Up

The main buildings in our village consisted of a town hall, church, the boys school, and the girls school (where all the teachers belonged to a teaching order of nuns and were thus unmarried). There was also a row of shops, a small cinema, a drinking bar (to which only men were admitted), and a big hostel for unmarried workmen who came to the village for employment in the iron ore factory. There were also houses for married workers. These labourers were mainly Italian and Polish. On the hill above the village was a beautiful château occupied by the de Wendel family, the local "royal family". In the valley were the iron ore factories and houses for manual employees plus clerical staff.

Jœuf was traditionalist and religious. Although immorality was condemned, it did take place surreptitiously. For instance, there was a scandal at the local cinema, a balcony seat could be booked for privacy. A man and woman would go together, and during the show when the lights were out they had sex. On one occasion, the man's organ remained stiff and swollen so he couldn't withdraw it. A doctor had to be called, and the couple were taken to hospital, creating a scandal. (1)

I used to go to the cinema on Sunday afternoons. I saw the film *La Dame aux Camélias* based on the tragic novel by Alexandre Dumas. (2) At supper that evening when my sister Maria asked me if it was worth seeing, I burst into tears because of the film's sad ending. My mother said she wouldn't pay for Maria to be sad.

The other recreation in the village was Sunday evening dances at a café. Entry was free, but you had to pay for every dance. Half way through each dance the music stopped and a man would collect the fee. When every man on the dance floor had paid, the music resumed. In this way, only one dance partner, the male, had to pay. I was too young to go to these dances, and anyway didn't know how to dance.

On Sunday, church bells would ring before each service, except during the three days of Easter, when they remained silent out of respect for Christ's martyrdom. Services were then instead announced by children sounding clackers. Each of us was assigned one street to alert worshippers in this way.

On Good Friday each year, all church bells in France were silenced. We children were told this was because they had all flown to Rome to be blessed by the Pope for Easter. Then on Easter Sunday they rang again. We were told this was because they had flown back to Rome but on the way back they dropped chocolate for the children. On Eastern morning when the bells rang again, we rushed into the garden where we found Easter eggs and chocolate rabbits among the flowers (which our parents had put there for us).

Between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, boys with clackers would go along the streets announcing when each church service was due. On Good Friday itself, meat was prohibited.

Living far from the sea and having no refrigerator, we never bought fish. Instead, we ate eggs and cheese, but my brother Louis found a way around this. He said that, if we paid the fishmonger in advance each week, he would deliver a box of any fish he had. My mother tried it. The

first week, herring arrived. My mother cooked them for us, but hated the smell. After the meal she washed the cutlery thoroughly and then sniffed it. She didn't like it, so stuck each knife and fork into the garden soil for several days until the smell had gone. She hoped for something better the following week, but herring came again. In disgust, she ordered no more fish, so that was that.

Apart from this misadventure, the only fish we had were small river ones, which we fried and ate whole (including tails). When I came to England fifteen years later, I was surprised to discover that river fish were not eaten, because there was so much tastier sea produce. I came across such things as cockles, mussels, and jellied eels!

On one Good Friday, my religious father caught one of my brothers eating sausage. When ordered to stop, he protested that sausage wasn't meat, but I obeyed the rule. (On Good Friday 2015, after my hundredth birthday, I ate haddock). On Easter Sunday, we wore new clothes for mass and a bonnet. Females always had to have their heads covered in church. These clothes then lasted us for a whole year's church-going.

Unlike Easter, we never celebrated our birthdays. Instead, we celebrated our Saints Day, ie the feast of the saint after whom we were named. Mine was Sainte Jeanne in July. (3)

Each year on All Saints Day, November 1, the French people would put chrysanthemums on the graves of relatives. In addition, some also placed a wreath made of beads. After my father was killed during the Second World War, my mother would always place such a wreath against his tombstone in November for a fortnight. Then she would take it home and put it in a box ready for next year. When I first saw the opera *The Mikado* (translated into French) I was amazed at the song that praises the "joyous

chrysanthemum", then I learned it was the national flower of Japan, and thus a pleasure for people there, unlike in France where it is associated with death.

At Christmas, we had a tree in my parents' bedroom downstairs with real candles. When they returned from midnight mass on Christmas Eve, they woke us up to see the tree with the candles on it. They made us put empty plates on the downstairs living room floor and put out hay to feed the reindeer of Father Christmas! We were then put back to bed, and our parents had their meal. There was much merry-making.

On Christmas morning, we woke to find the tree gone and the plates we had left full of sweets, put there by Father Christmas. Christmas was then over.

The real festival for us was Saint Nicholas Day on December 6, which was for children. We put straw outside the window sill for his donkey. Then, next day, someone dressed as a bishop (like Saint Nicholas) came round to each house. With him was someone dressed as Père Fouettard in black with a big, artificial black tongue and carrying a bunch of twigs. (4) He would visit each household and ask if each child had been good during the preceding year. If the answer was negative, he hit the poor child with his bunch of twigs. One year, my elder brother played the part of Saint Nicholas with our cousin disguised as Père Fouettard. He made him hit me for misbehaviour. Saint Nicholas distributed little bags of sweets to good children.

My father was the eldest of seven children in a village near Strasbourg; at that time, Alsace was part of Germany. His father was an unsuccessful tailor who emigrated to America to find a better life and then send for his family. Instead, after he arrived in America, his wife and children

never heard from him again. As the eldest son, my poor family had to help support his mother and siblings. This resulted in my father having minimal schooling; when not in class, he worked part time as a woodcutter.

Thirty years later (in 1955) when I was living in England and had two young children, I was amazed to receive a letter that started "Hi cousin". It was from the grandson of my paternal grandfather who had disappeared in America. He was serving with the American forces in Britain. I invited him to come and meet us. My young son was excited, expecting to meet a cowboy. Instead, a skinny, uniformed soldier turned up blind drunk, almost falling asleep as he spoke. He invited my second husband and I to his forthcoming marriage to an English girl. We accepted. She was very low class; the wedding reception was boozy and rough. My cousin returned to America with his new bride.

One day, my mother took me to the infirmary. It was staffed by nuns, and she left me there in the care of the nursing sister who wrapped me tightly in a sheet. The doctor told me to open my mouth wide and inserted a brace to keep it open. Then he inserted some instruments after which I coughed blood into a container. He had removed my tonsils. (5)

Then a nursing sister gave me a bowl of ice cubes to suck. I cried for my mother. To calm me, the nun described the suffering of Christ on the Cross. I shouted that I didn't care, whereupon the nun called me a wicked girl and left the room. I passed out, and when I regained consciousness, I was in a bed in my parents' room.

The doctor who removed my tonsils had a reputation for being very eccentric. When a boy jumped into a shallow pool near our village, his foot tendon was cut by broken

glass and he was carried to the hospital. He had developed gangrene, and the doctor amputated his whole leg instead of just the foot. Thereafter, parents tried to prevent their children being treated by him.

As a girl I was plain, unlike my beautiful elder sisters Antoinette and Maria. This didn't worry me as I was a tomboy. I fought with my young brothers and wanted to do everything the boys did. I wanted to whistle like men did, with two fingers in my mouth. My mother disapproved strongly when she caught me trying to learn to do so from my brother. She interrupted, saying any woman who behaved like that deserved to have her neck broken.

Our old neighbour Madame Vaiger used to tell me not to worry because I would become beautiful. Well, I suppose I did because I managed to attract two husbands in quick succession. Times have changed since my mother's day. Now women have the same freedoms as men: they drink, swear, sleep around, and so on.

One day, my father asked my mother to put a bottle of cold coffee in his luncheon bag for work. She used an old Schnapps bottle. On his return, she emptied what was left of the bottle into the pig swill. However, she had mixed up the old and new Schnapps bottles and had poured alcohol for the pig. She realised this when the half-grown pig started to roll about on its back. She was frightened it would break a leg and have to be killed before being fully grown, so she tried holding it still for several hours until it stood up.

My father collected the blood from the pig and made boudin (similar to the English black pudding). When he worked the night shift, he would eat some on his return in the morning. I and my two younger brothers would smell it

as we came down to the kitchen for breakfast, and he would give us some.

I grew to hate the men of our village; they were rough with their families and drank heavily to make their hard lives tolerable. As a result, they often beat their wives. Such domestic violence was accepted as normal in those day, not like today, thank God, when it can result in prosecution. One hit his young son so hard that the poor boy became cross-eyed and remained so for the rest of his life.

I particularly disliked their huge hands covered in thick, yellow calluses because they handled hot iron in the factory. I was revolted by the thought of being pawed by them, but it was the violence I hated most. My mother told me of one particularly horrible incident in the village. A drunken factory worker who was married with three young children was enraged because the baby kept crying. He picked it up and threw it across the room. As it lay in the corner, covered in blood, the terrified mother called the village doctor. She pretended the baby had fallen out of its cot onto the floor. Inspecting the bruises, the doctor realised it had been thrown down. He called the husband and warned him that the police should be called, but he added that the result would be his imprisonment leaving the wife and children without an income. He told him if it happened again, he would indeed call the police. The man didn't do this again.

From an early age, my mind was made up never to marry such a man. I decided that I would leave the village to seek work elsewhere and find a different kind of man to marry.

My mother and elder sisters (Antoinette and Maria) went to Nancy for a few days to shop. The new post-war hairstyle for women was short cropped instead of long, flowing hair. My two sisters had their hair cut then persuaded my mother to do likewise, thus losing the bun of long hair she

used to have. Although my mother dominated our family, including my father, she was afraid he would hate it, but as soon as he saw her, he praised her new hairstyle. She was astonished.

My father met her and the girls at our local railway station to help them carry their luggage home as they couldn't afford a taxi.

At school, I was in a class of thirty girls. Every week the best girl would be awarded a medal to pin on her school dress. If a girl was bad, she had to wear the dunce's cap and face the wall until recreation time.

In our village, the church was between the Catholic boys school and the girls school which I attended. The teachers had to be of the same gender as the pupils. The church was called Notre-Dame de Franchepré after a local saint. On her annual feast day, worshippers from all the surrounding villages came to the church to ask for her blessing and forgiveness. I was amused to see them ascending the church steps on their knees. My mother explained it was an act of penance.

As it was run by nuns, my school was ultra-religious. There were prayers at the beginning of the day, prayers after the morning break, prayers after the lunch hour, etc. This was enough to last me a lifetime, and it did.

After leaving school, I remained a lifelong agnostic. I would have received a better education, had I attended the nearest state school, but it was over two kilometres away, whereas the local religious school was in our village.

When I was at school, rumours circulated in the village about the headmistress. One evening, someone went into the church vestry and found her in a compromising position with the priest.

The news got around, but neither the headmistress nor the priest lost their jobs. It seems that whoever caught them didn't make an official complaint to the bishop.

Before I went to school each day, my mother forced me to swallow a spoonful of cod liver oil saying it was good for me. All morning, my mouth had a bitter taste. It put me off fish foods for life. Now, eighty years later, I still try to avoid eating fish.

At school, each of us had a slate with a wooden frame with a hole to which was attached a piece of string holding a writing stick. Our school uniform was a long-sleeved black dress fastened at the back with a big bow. At the top was a little, white embroidered collar. My hair was cut "*à la Jeanne d'Arc*", ie with frontal and short sides.

On top was a pre-tied bow which my mother clipped on me every morning.

For special occasions, my hair was curled around sticks so that in the morning, it was curly. We called the sticks "*tomates*" from tomato canes. They were very painful to sleep in, but my mother would say "*Si tu veux être belle, tu dois souffrir*" - "If you want to be beautiful, you have to suffer".

Although he was two years younger than me, Robert was in the same grade at his school as I was at mine. Once there was a plate of cakes, and he immediately took the biggest. I reprimanded him by saying the first person should take the smaller one. He countered by asking me if I would have done that if I had been first. I said I would, and he exclaimed "*Bien*", adding I had achieved that, but eating cakes would land him in trouble on a later occasion.

My mother was religious and greatly respected priests. When one was due to visit our house to discuss something (like first communion) she received him in style. She baked

cakes and gave us children strict instructions not to eat any, leaving them all for the priest. However, my brother Robert disobeyed and ate some in competition with the priest. He was severely admonished after the priest left.

Robert suffered a traumatic experience at school, he was sexually abused. He and another pupil used to be asked by a schoolmaster to stay behind for extra tuition. The schoolmaster would then masturbate them. The other boy started acting nervously at home, and eventually his mother forced him to divulge the reason. She reported the matter to the police, and the schoolmaster was sentenced to several years in prison. This surprised everyone because he was a married man with children. Robert was always tensed up thereafter, and I believe this experience affected his character. This may have been the reason he tried later to prove his masculinity by joining the Resistance. (6)

Like my mother, I respected Catholic priests because they were celibate. I find the behaviour of Church Of England vicars distasteful because they want and have sex.

I made my first communion in 1926 at the age of eleven. I had to wear a special white dress and my mother had to buy a huge candle for me to carry in the church service. Afterwards, there was a party for the priest and my family. The candle was given back to the church after the ceremony and re-sold to someone else for next year's communion service.

One poor girl in the village died just after her first communion. She suffered a bee sting to which she was allergic. Twenty-five years later I prevented my young children from going barefoot in the grass in case they stood on a bee and got stung.

For the whole of the week before our first communion, our class was lectured on its significance by our nun

teachers. They warned us that all men were evil (except Jesus) and that we me mustn't look at them. Therefore at supper, I looked at my plate while talking to my brother Robert. He asked me why I did this and I explained that I couldn't look at him because he was male. "*Mais je suis ton frère!*"he exclaimed.

It was only then I realised how ridiculous the whole idea was, and I have been looking at males ever since!

One day before Christmas, a priest visited our school and selected some girls, including me. We were made to stay behind after school and were each given a parcel that contained the tunics and wigs of angels. We had to stand in the church during candlelit Christmas mass as a *tableau vivant* representing angels waiting for the Nativity. Then, we had to return the tunics and wigs to the school.

In the early 1920s when I was at school, there was a shy blonde girl who kept herself to herself. She was more or less ignored by the teachers who were all of course devout maiden ladies. I asked my mother about this girl. I was informed that the priest was her father. I didn't understand as I, like everyone else, addressed him as "Father". (7)

My mother was amazed and told me the priest had made a mistake. You are a devil, she said. It was true that I was a mischievous. My mother then explained that the priest was the girl's physical father. Later, I discovered that it was common knowledge in our village that the priest had fathered the little blonde girl and the Church had arranged for the expectant mother to marry a poorly paid sweeper at the local iron ore factory to prevent scandals. It was rumoured the bridegroom was paid to marry her. The poor girl was ostracised for being illegitimate, but she was always well dressed and her mother had money to spend. It was believed that the priest paid.

I remember this little girl with pity and after the Second World War, I learnt that children fathered by German soldiers of the occupation army were called "*Bosch*" a derogatory term for German. (8) Listening to French radio over sixty years after the war, I heard a woman reminiscing how she was so insulted as a little girl. She still couldn't get it out of her mind.

To be a priest was a coveted job; only the most intelligent applicants were accepted. My brother Robert told me a friend of his was trying, and should succeed as he was very good at school. Then I heard he hadn't been able to gain entry to the seminary, so had to choose another career.

Twenty years later when I lived in England, I found the attitude there to priests was very different. My second husband told me he had served in Northern Ireland during the war and had sometimes managed to get weekend leave to neutral Dublin. There he was shocked to see priests drinking in the bars, something that Church Of England vicars would never do.

My son reinforced the point in the 1950s. He told me that at school the local vicar, during his weekly religious instruction lesson, had taken questions from the class. One boy had asked when the vicar wore his clerical collar. The vicar replied that he had learned not to wear it in a public house, because when he had everyone looked round at him and stopped talking, so shocked were they to see a vicar in such a place.

My two younger brothers were lucky in that they never had head lice because my mother made me take them to the barber and tell him to cut their hair *a l'Arab* - ie Arab style, meaning extremely short, almost shaven. Thus nits had nowhere to hide on their heads.

When a washer woman in our village died, my mother heard that when her body was prepared for the funeral wake, her pillow was covered with head lice. The pillow case was burned quickly to prevent them spreading to the mourners.

At school every week, a teacher would come with two small sticks and separate the hair of each girl to see if she had nits (head lice eggs). If so, the girl was given a note to take home to her mother stating that her hair must be treated. It happened to me. My mother applied a strong smelling ointment called Marie-Rose. It was horrible but did the trick. I managed thereafter to keep free of head lice. I was helped because of my *Jeanne d'Arc* hairstyle.

At school, the Italian girls wore pendant earrings. I wanted a pair, so asked my mother. She explained I would have to get my ears pierced and said that would hurt. I hesitated. Then I noticed a girl at school with scabs on her ear lobes. When I asked her about this, she responded that her pierced ears sometimes bled. I decided not to have my ears pierced, and never have.

One disturbed girl in our village reached the age of sixteen without menstruating. Her mother was told by the priest this meant she was not destined to marry but instead to become a nun, so she went through the macabre ceremony, a church service during which she was placed in a coffin. The lid was put on and she was taken away to a new life as a new person with a new name in a convent. It didn't last. She remained disturbed, and after two years was sent back from the convent to her parents. She then married and had two children, having started to menstruate in the meantime.

One day in school, our teacher read out a poem by a schoolboy as a good example. Then she told us it has been

written by Robert Schwartz at the boys school. Recognising the surname, she turned to me and asked if he was a relative of mine. I had to admit he was my brother. When I got home that afternoon, I complained he was showing off, and hit him. I was jealous because he was so much cleverer than me. He used to come top of his class every term and was thus then crowned with a laurel wreath.

The girl who sat in front of me in class was always getting nits because she had very long hair. I saw a louse fall off on my desk. I will never forget that horrible, flat brown insect. I used to dip the end of that girl's hair into my inkwell. I had to stop this because she shook her hair, and ink splattered all over my textbook, and the teacher commented to my mother that I was damaging it.

One morning during the school break, another girl called me a *Bosch;* I was enraged, and dared her to repeat it. She did, and I gave her such a hard slap in the face that her nose started bleeding and she had to hold a handkerchief to it. I thought the bleeding would never stop.

During the long lunch break, I asked my mother what would happen to someone who lost all her blood. She said such a person would die. I was terrified this would happened to the girl I had hit and feared being guillotined for murder! I was relieved to see she was right as rain at afternoon class. She had called me a *Bosch* because I had been born in 1915 while our village was under German occupation and my father had come from German Alsace. My younger brother Maurice was born after our village was liberated at the end of the war. When he grew up he would boast he was the only true Frenchman in the family. He said too that even if someone offered him a fortune to do so, he would never renounce his French nationality.

I was unimpressed and said I would willingly give up my French citizenship for money. Eventually I did give it up, for marriage to an Englishman, but my brother retained his nationality. When he had a daughter in 1944, just after France was liberated, he Christened her France-Victoire (shortened to Francette). He was able to do this as there was a Saint Francoise and a Saint Victoire.

At school, we were told a story about Louis XIV, the most famous King of France. He was out hunting one day when he came upon an old peasant beating his donkey to make it go faster. The King asked what was the hurry; the peasant replied it was going to rain heavily. The monarch laughed and said his meteorologist had assured him there would be no rain, and that was why he was out hunting. The old man retorted that when his donkey's ears twitched there would be rain. The King rode off. Soon afterwards, there was a downpour and the royal hunting party was drenched. On returning to the palace, Louis summoned the meteorologist and told him a donkey knew more about the weather than he did.

At home we drank only coffee; tea was expensive and unpopular in France. My mother called it medicine, and would drink only very strong coffee. However, after she had permanent stomach pains, the doctor told her to switch to tea.

In order to persuade her, I agreed to do likewise. We drank Chinese style tea from French Indo-China (modern Vietnam). I hated it, but after a few weeks I grew to like the taste. Then my mother told me she had gone back to (weak) coffee. She said I could therefore stop drinking tea. By then I had come to like it, and kept up the habit. I upgraded my consumption through buying more expensive Ceylon tea.

My new habit stood me in good stead when I emigrated to Britain in the 1930s. Tea was the national beverage there because coffee was then expensive and badly prepared. When my mother visited me after the war, she wouldn't drink it and insisted I buy coffee beans for her to roast.

At home, we had salami sausages hanging on the wall. The most expensive was pure pork - reserved for special occasions. The cheaper ones were pork mixed with beef. My mother cut slices of that to put in the French bread that she gave to my father and brothers to take to work for lunch because there was no factory canteen.

For his lunch at work, my father and his co-workers would take thick slices of a round loaf baked by my mother. (We couldn't afford to buy long, French sticks). Also, he would take part of a salami sausage; a whole salami was for the family, not for an individual. At midday, he would cut off a slice of salami to eat with each slice of bread.

My father couldn't afford to visit the dentist. so when he had toothache, he tied one end of a piece of string around the affected tooth and the other end to the door knob, then kicked it!

At least he managed to keep some teeth, unlike an old woman in the village, who had lost all hers. She couldn't afford false teeth, so chewed with her gums. They became so hard she cracked nutshells with them!

When I was young, alcohol was an accepted fact of life in France, no one tried to ban or reduce its consumption. On the contrary, even children drank; with each meal they were given wine diluted with water while the adults drank it neat. When my father had Schnapps once a week, I and my brothers dipped sugar cubes in it to absorb the alcohol, then sucked them.

Even soldiers were given a free glass of wine with each meal. This caused jealousy during the Second World War because only the Free French were eligible, not other allied forces. Now in my hundredth year (2015) I am amused how different France is. In its radio broadcasts, there are frequent official messages urging its citizens to curb alcohol intake.

When I and my two younger brothers went out with my father, he would call at a bar and ask for a bock (a beer mug). Women were not allowed in bars, but when ordering beer, the men would shout out "*Pas trop de mousse!*" (Not too much froth) as that took up space in the mug. My father would allow us to sip his froth.

My mother would allow my father to drink one glass of brandy only. We children however always dipped sugar cubes into it, then suck them. My father would then ask my mother to pour in more brandy. She objected, but he explained the sugar cubes had soaked up the contents of the glass.

Chapter Three: Puberty

On New Year's Eve my parents, like others in the village, would call on their friends and neighbours to wish them "*Bonne Annee*".

On each visit they received a drink of Schnapps, and so returned home drunk!

Before going out they let us children suck a sugar cube that had been dipped in Schnapps. We slept well that night!

When I was older, I went to a magnificent dance hall at Strasbourg, the *Maison Rouge* which had eight ballrooms, each one doing a different dance – polka, waltz, etc. Years later, my second husband and I were invited to the fancy dress New Year Chelsea Arts Ball at the Albert Hall. It was very rowdy with couples copulating on the staircase. In those days that was unacceptable, and the ball was banned from the Albert Hall in 1958.

My brother Maurice couldn't stand cheese; he would even smell the cutlery to see if it contained any traces. If so, he refused to use it until it had been washed again.

One day, I and Robert decided to test his problem. We put a tiny morsel of cheese on his plate before his supper (a roll with meat in it). To our amazement, he noticed the smell, picked up the roll, and hurled it against the wall. My mother shouted at him and cleaned the food up.

In spite of this, Maurice wanted to be a chef, and on leaving home obtained a job in a restaurant kitchen where to his horror he was made to lift saucepans and legs of meat all the time. He asked the head chef to be allowed to cook but was told his job was just lifting, so he left, came home, and studied to be an accountant.

Over ten year later, he married and invited us to his new home. We noticed he ate cheese after the meal. His wife had cured him of his childhood phobia.

The law required that fortune tellers who charged for their services register in their hometowns. Madame Gentil in Nancy was reputed to be good; she was a widow with a young daughter to maintain. Through her earnings as a fortune teller, she managed to pay for her daughter to qualify as a lawyer.

Antoinette went to see Madame Gentil, and was impressed. The next time, she took Maria and myself to see her. Maria put on a wedding ring although she was unmarried. When she asked for her fortune to be told, Madame Gentil told her to cut the cards, adding quickly with her right hand if she was unmarried. Maria fell for the trick and revealed her status. Then it was my turn. I didn't want my fortune to be told but was forced by Antoinette, who paid for me. Madame Gentil predicted correctly that I would cross water and marry a man of the cloth.

Maria told me how accurate the fortune teller was, as she had not mentioned a husband although she was wearing a wedding ring. I explained she had revealed she was unmarried by cutting the cards with her right hand. She laughed and then doubted the accuracy of the prediction about my future.

On our journey home, I told my sisters that the prediction meant I would marry a lawyer. She laughed and pointed out that "*homme de robe*" included dustmen (who in France wear a special uniform). I thought it was inaccurate when I married my first husband Eric, even though I had crossed the sea to England to marry him, but my second husband was a "man of the cloth", he became a lawyer.

To be a single mother was a disgrace. One local girl, a former schoolfriend of mine, was impregnated by an Italian immigrant worker during casual sex. Because abortion was illegal, she decided to effect a spontaneous abortion by jumping out of an upstairs window. She thought the jolt would produce a stillbirth, instead all she did was break her leg. Soon afterwards, her family moved away to avoid a scandal.

Another unmarried girl in the village also became pregnant by a factory labourer. He disappeared back to Italy, and the girl asked her mother to help her conceal the pregnancy from her strict father who would be enraged.

Her mother told her father the girl had found employment in another town. In fact, she was hidden secretly in her old bedroom upstairs, which her father never entered. The poor thing was terrified every time she heard someone on the stairs. The baby was stillborn; the doctors said its blood was thin due to the mother's terror throughout her pregnancy. It was kept in the hospital as a specimen.

On another occasion, the police came to arrest a workman who lived with his mother near us. He barricaded himself inside his house and shot at them from the window. The police protected themselves with eiderdown covers to deflect the bullets. We were all ordered away, and in the end he was arrested.

At the age of twelve, I could have sat for the entrance exam to go to secondary school; this was called *La Petite Certificat.* My mother refused to allow me to take it because the results (including the names of children who took the exam and failed) were published in the local paper. She said she didn't want people to know I was a dunce, and anyway, I was going to marry a workman, so all I needed to

learn was how to cook and wash nappies. I should therefore leave school now.

However, a dim-witted friend of mine passed the exam through good luck. At school, she had been forced to copy out a passage of French literature three times until she managed to get it completely right. Then, when she sat the exam, that exact same passage was used for the dictation test, so she wrote it down correctly. By contrast, my academic education ended without my even taking the exam.

We were a happy, big family, and I was the only one to rebel against her lot. I decided that I would work at something different, but what could I get? In 1928, having left school at thirteen and being no scholar, my mother enrolled me at a very small domestic science college next to the school.

In the morning, we would be told the menu for the day. Each item for the next course was put on the blackboard. The price was divided by the number of pupils, so we knew how much we each had to pay for that course. Then the same procedure was adopted for the second course (meat, vegetables, etc). In this way we learned how to calculate the price of each item in each course. Our parents had to pay the price of the meal for that day.

The teacher would then tell us which pupil would prepare which item of each course. We had to eat everything on our plates. In France, it is impolite not to do so; this is because "*service à la française*" meant that one helped oneself from each dish. To leave some would be interpreted by the hostess as indicating that her food was not good enough. By contrast, "*service à l'anglaise*" meant that the butler served, and each guest had to leave something to indicate the generosity of the portions.

After each meal we had to do the washing up. First the plates and glasses were rinsed in cold water and piled up. Then two sinks were filled, one with hot, soapy water, the other with hot, clear water for rinsing. The glasses were done first, then the cutlery, the plates, and finally the pots and pans. Then we also cleaned the dining room and set the tables. Later, I learned that at English domestic science schools, servants rather than pupils did all this.

One day, we had fish loaf for the main course. I didn't like it, but ate it. After the meal, the teacher summoned me and told me not to throw food on the floor. She said some fish loaf had been found under my chair. I protested my innocence to avoid punishment. I never discovered who was the culprit.

We didn't learn the luxury of flower arranging or how to set a table elegantly for a banquet; it was a simple school to train a good housewife. After lunch, we had another teacher from whom we learned to sew, knit, make baskets, etc.

A very quiet girl always sat next to me for support because she was no good with her hands, and I helped her do the tasks that were set. At the end of the course she started at last to become talkative. She told me about her life before coming to the college. She was an only child, very depressed, and tried to kill herself. While her parents were out, she bolted all the doors and taped all the joints of the kitchen door and windows. She then put a pillow in the oven and switched on the gas. She lost consciousness and woke up in bed watched by her parents. They said that on returning to the house they couldn't open the bolted doors so looked through the kitchen window. They saw her lying on the floor with her mouth against the bottom corner of

the door where air was getting in. She said she didn't remember how she got there.

I asked her if she would ever try such a thing again. She said she wouldn't, that she was better now, and thanked me for befriending her at the college. I had heard about suicide before; a man had hanged himself in our village. Our neighbour had managed to get a bit of the rope. She boasted about it to my mother because of the old superstition that keeping such a piece of rope in a purse would ensure it would never be empty.

While I was studying here, my mother had to go to the doctor for stomach pains. (1) He told her to stop drinking coffee, especially first thing in the morning. On my return from school. she told me that she was going to drink tea instead of coffee. I protested, and she explained: "You would not drink tea".

I responded saying I would if she did every morning.

Next day, I forced myself for her sake. I hated it but kept it up for two weeks when my mother said she was better and had resumed drinking coffee. So she made me a cup, but I found it thick and unpalatable. I continued to drink only tea. This turned out to be excellent preparation for my later life in England, where tea was the national beverage, unlike France where it was expensive and drunk only for medicinal purposes, not by choice.

I left the little college in 1929 then helped my mother with the housework and cooking. We were a big family, and everyone in it was working except for me. My two younger brothers were apprentices in the local factory. I was thus the servant of everyone else in the house, and I hated it.

One day, matters came to a head. One of my brothers scolded me for not having cleaned his shoes while another demanded a clean shirt. I told them both to go to Hell and

complained to our mother. She explained to me that I must accept my role in life was to look after a husband and children, so I should get used to it now.

The waiting for my first period made me worry. I told my mother who said that I must be half-woman/half-man. I didn't like the idea. She used to say that the later a girl had her first menstrual discharge, the earlier would be her menopause. She was dead right as far as I was concerned; I didn't have my first period until I was nineteen, I stopped when I was forty. Luckily, I managed to produced two children (by my second husband) after the war when I was in my thirties.

We had nursery rhymes; being French, most were rude. I prefer that to the nonsense ones in England, like "The cow jumped over the moon".

Now over ninety years later, I can still remember the songs of my childhood. Among them were:

"*Joli mois de mai quand reviendras-tu?*
***M'apportait des feuilles pour mon tutu*"**
***Qui sont heureux les chiens qui font caca et pipi daus rue*"**

Lovely month of May, when will you return
Bringing leaves for my tutu?
Which will make happy the dogs who poop and pee in the street.

Some were respectable like:

"*Nous sommes une famille qui est vraiment bien gentil.*
Mais tous les soirs nous nous disputons a cause de nos opinions.

Qui boit son petit verre de Malaga? C'est papa,
Qui boit son petit verre de vin blanc? C'est maman,
Qui porte des vestes vertes? Mon frere.
Et qui n'a pas peur de'un canard? C'est ma soeur"

We are a really nice family,
But every night we argue over our opinions.
Who drinks his little Malaga? It's Daddy,
Who drinks her little glass of white wine? It's Mummy,
Who wears green jackets? My brother,
And who is not afraid of a duck? My sister.

Another song was:

"*Un clair matin l' impératrice avait un garcon un peu imbecile, peu stupid et appele 'Boche, Boche, tete de Kabache.*
En rage elle lui dit tout bas "Tu n'apprend donc jamais rien".
Il répondu "La memoire comme ca vient de mon pere"

This translates roughly as:

One bright morning, the Empress had an imbecile boy, somewhat stupid, and he shouted "Boche, Boche!" - cabbage head.
Enraged, his mother said in a low voice "You learn nothing".
He replied "I learnt it from my father" (who was the German Emperor).

Shortly after leaving domestic service college, I heard that a lady in the village was giving lessons in cutting cloth for fashion firms. I went to see her, but she said her course had

started three weeks previously and therefore I was too late to join the class.

I told her I had won first prize at school for sewing and was sure I could catch up, so she decided to give me a chance. After two weekly lessons, I had caught up with the others. At the end of the course, the teacher said I should go to Paris to work for a fashion house, but my mother wouldn't allow it; she said Paris was the perdition of young girls. Two sisters from my village had gone to Paris where they were befriended by army officers. When they both became pregnant, the officers refused to acknowledge paternity. The sisters returned to Jœuf and their sisters raised their babies. My mother didn't want that to happen to me. She added that in any event `it would be too expensive for the family to pay for me to live and study there. (2)

One day, I trod on a piece of metal, and my foot started to bleed. My mother bandaged me. When she changed the bandage quickly, it hurt. The next night, my father pulled off the old bandage quickly, after which I wouldn't let my mother touch it.

Shortly afterwards, my brother Eugène suffered a terrible accident at work. He was an apprentice at the factory and as he was clocking in, inserting his card into the machine, some fellow apprentice jokingly pulled the lever. The cutting mechanism came down on my brother's fingers cutting the three middle ones off and half his little finger. The doctor said he was lucky because he could still hold things between his thumb and little finger. My brother stayed for a time in the infirmary; when he came home, he would always keep his hands in his pockets. Whenever he had to take them out to eat, my mother ran out of the room and cried.

One Sunday, Eugène brought his girlfriend home to meet our parents. She was called Margot, and was the only daughter of a French couple. She was petite, shy, and not very good looking, but she was very fond of Eugène in spite of his disability. This was because he was tall and handsome. I heard my parents say he could have done better. Margot had never gone out to work.

In 1930, Eugène married Margot. My German uncle came to the wedding; like my father, he was from Alsace. Before the Great War, Alsace-Lorraine was part of Germany, so he joined the German Army, becoming an officer. After the war, he married a rich widow who owned an hotel in the German resort of Bad Homburg.

My father was abstemious for the most part, and only once did I ever see him the worse for drink, at Eugène's wedding. Because of the loss of his fingers in that factory incident, Eugène received a small monthly pension. My mother insisted it was saved in a post office account. When he married, the accumulated amount was spent on the wedding reception.

My father drank freely at the wedding and had to be escorted home by his brother Joseph. He was singing "*Sitzen Unter Dem Kirschbaum*" (*Sitting Under The Cherry Tree*) in his natural German, Alsace having been part of Germany during his boyhood.

At home, Eugène would visit us every Sunday with his new wife. He complained that being French, Margot couldn't cook his favourite Alsatian dishes, so he asked our mother to teach her. I and my younger brothers laughed and said Eugène should teach her. He did, and these lessons became a regular Sunday afternoon feature. Margot was very patient and good-natured; eventually she became a good cook, and Eugène would boast to his friends that his

wife cooked just like his mother. She wasn't so good at motherhood though, it took her years to become pregnant. In the meantime, to console herself, Margot bought a cat to which she became devoted.

She heard that my sister Antoinette had made me a lace dress and insisted I show it to her on the way to a dance. When I called in wearing it, I felt something tugging on it; I looked down and saw the cat scratching at it. Enraged, I gave it a hard smack. It disappeared, and Margot cried, but Eugène confided in me that he was glad to be rid of the animal. It returned after three days, and Margot stopped crying, but when I visited her, the cat ran out of the room to avoid me. Eugène was annoyed that Margot doted on their cat giving it chicken to eat, chicken he had stewed. When I was young, chicken was a luxury, not like today with factory farms.

My hatred of cats originated with the ghost stories my father used to tell my two younger brothers and I at bedtime to quieten us down for sleep. (3) He said one day there was a knock at the door, and when it was opened, a black cat ran out from beside the man who had knocked. This aroused suspicion because black cats mean bad luck in France (unlike in Britain). So the householder looked down and saw the man had cloven hooves. She realised immediately he was the Devil, and slammed the door shut before he could enter. (4)

Eventually, Eugène and Margot managed to have a child. They were overjoyed, but their happiness was not to last. Six years later (in 1945), Margot suffered an untimely death from peritonitis. Eugène was grief-stricken and visited her grave every Sunday.

He noticed every time he was there, there were three fresh roses in a glass. He asked the caretaker to let him know

who brought them, and learned it was a man. Then Eugène remembered his wife used to go shopping in nearby Metz every week, but decided not to try to find the identity of the man. He was obviously Margot's secret lover. (5) Eugène would then come to visit our nearby house to eat until later when he remarried.

When I heard about the flowers, I asked my mother if she knew Margot had been unfaithful to Eugène. Mother said she had suspected so for some time because of the weekly trips to Metz. I protested and asked her why she hadn't told him. She replied philosophically that what he didn't know wouldn't trouble him.

My brother Louis excelled at school. He received a commendation on his education certificate and a prize embossed book at a ceremony attended by de Wendel. He was recommended for university, but our family couldn't afford to send him. Additionally, my father was against it because he thought it would make Louis think he was superior to his siblings and cause friction in the family. Louis left school at fourteen in 1925; as he was too intelligent to be factory fodder, he went straight into employment as a clerk at the local bank after both our parents were checked to see if they had criminal records. When he got the job, our father wouldn't talk to him for several weeks as he regarded non-manual work to be unbefitting a male. Later, he also refused to talk to Maria for months when she had her illegitimate daughter.

Every week, the manager would ask Louis to deliver money to the nearest other branch about five kilometres away. He had to walk. One day he noticed he was being followed by someone. He told the manager, who said he would give Louis a gun for protection. Louis refused. Then it transpired the surveillance was being organised by the

bank authorities. The manager was fraudulently transferring funds; he was eventually prosecuted and sentenced to several years in prison. My brother had to testify at his trial.

The shock affected Louis for the rest of his life. During the Second World War, some Frenchmen made fortunes on the black market. To destroy these ill-gotten gains, the post-war French Government changed the currency; only a fixed amount of old currency could be converted. Rich customers would pay their bank managers to give them extra new currency and attribute it to other customers who had not used up their allowances. Louis's wife complained that when she and he visited the houses of his fellow bank managers, she saw they lived like kings by comparison, but frightened by his youthful experience twenty years before, he wouldn't adopt their "business methods".

Some time after he first started work, Louis gave my mother a fright. When he went to bed, he would leave his trousers on the floor and sleep in his shirt because he had no pyjamas. In the morning, he just pulled on his trousers and went to work. One night, my mother came in and picked up his trousers to hang them over the side of a chair; a large sum of money fell out of his pocket.

She was horrified, suspecting Louis had stolen from the bank. She demanded he tell her where he had obtained it. Louis explained that he gambled, playing belote (6) for money with the local doctor and others every Saturday. Although she disapproved, my mother accepted this.

My brother's friendship with the doctor helped us. One day, my father stubbed his leg against the table and his large varicose vein burst open, squirting blood across the room. My mother told Louis to fetch him. Like most people

then we had no car, so Louis ran to the doctor's home and was given a lift back to our house.

Talking of legs, my mother always said longevity was linked to having good ones and thus being mobile. She predicted that a local man we knew, would die young because he had poor legs, whereas his wife would live long because she had good ones. She was right about this and several similar situations.

In 1931, his teachers informed my parents that Robert should remain at school and go on to university. As he had with our older brother Louis, my father refused for the same reason. Another consideration was that, although university was free of charge, payment had to be made for lodgings. My father said the boys could leave school at fourteen and live at home without the family incurring extra living expenses.

Antoinette married Antoine, an Italian who came to France with his widowed mother and young siblings. They couldn't speak French, so he had to keep them until they were old enough to work. Later, he and Antoinette would move to Nancy where they opened a café. (7) Being from a poor immigrant family, Antoine was deeply ashamed of his origin. When workmen ordered their *café au rum* in the morning, they would ask him about his accent, and he would always reply "*Je suis de Jœuf*".

One day, Robert visited one of the workmen who recognised him and asked if he was the brother-in-law of Antoine. He said he was, and the man asked him where Antoine was from. My brother responded immediately that Antoine was Italian. Next morning, the workman greeted Antoine with the words "*Bonjour Antonio*", which made him livid. His secret was out!

In 1931, my sister Maria gave birth to an illegitimate daughter by her Italian boyfriend. She couldn't afford a doctor, so hired a midwife only. This woman came with a dirty apron, resulting in Maria contracting puerperal fever. She was taken to hospital where she was informed she would lose her hair or her teeth. She said she hoped it was her teeth! In the event, she just lost some of her hair.

The (free) hospital was staffed by nuns; Maria was horrified by their bigoted attitude. In the next bed was a mother of eleven who, to prevent having yet another child, had tried to abort it. The nuns regarded her as deeply sinful. When she started bleeding and cried for help, they ignored her, leaving her alone and in agony for the whole night. She died, leaving eleven orphans.

On leaving the hospital with her baby, a nun said to Maria "Goodbye sister". Maria replied "I would rather be dead than be your sister!"

Maria named her daughter Violette. After several (illegal) abortions she was warned that if she had another, she would die. As a single mother, she decided to give up her promiscuous lifestyle and marry. She found Jean Noet, a divorced restaurateur who was a nasty piece of work. She helped him run his restaurant. My family disapproved though because he was a low class operator and used every form of dishonesty he thought he could get away with.

One day, my mother was helping behind the counter of his restaurant when a delivery boy brought in some carcasses. While the youngster was unloading from the outside, Noet quickly stole one and threw it behind the counter. Later, the boy was brought back into the restaurant by his employer who asked Noet if he knew anything about the missing meat. He denied all knowledge of it, whereupon the employer summarily dismissed the poor, innocent boy.

Observing this, my mother was absolutely disgusted and tried to avoid all contact with Noet.

Poetic justice followed five years later under the German occupation when Noet was arrested for buying food on the black market; this carried the death penalty. He was saved only by Maria's intervention; she spoke to the soldiers in German. (8)

Maria would eventually have another daughter, she and Noet named her Marie-Claude; she was the same age as my son. Although Maria was much more attractive than me, she had a worse private life. Both my husbands were decent men; her bedmates were not!

I was never taught the facts of life, so thought when a woman was pregnant, the baby would eventually come out of her swollen stomach through her navel. At about the age of sixteen, I learned the truth and have never recovered.

When a baby was born in France, the congratulating postcards showed a baby boy in a cabbage or a baby girl in a rose. I thought this was how babies were produced, so I teased my younger brother by telling him he was born in a cabbage and covered in caterpillars.

It was a schoolfriend named Marie Covell who told me babies were produced in women's bellies and led me to conclude they came out of the navel. When I asked her who put the babies in women, she said it happened when men and women were "naughty".

I was disgusted because this meant my parents had been naughty seven times to produce my six siblings and me. I pulled Marie's hair in rage, but she was bigger than me and pushed me away. I never spoke to her again, I was so shocked by the thought of sex.

Chapter Four: Working Life

One Sunday, there was a *Grande Balle* in the *salle des fetes*. (1) Volunteers from the factory were busy preparing the room. The dance floor was reserved for the special guests who could afford it. The opening was to be performed by Colonel Lattre de Tassigny, the man in command of the garrison at Metz. (2)

I needed a dress for the dance. I was quite good at sewing, but my eldest sister Antoinette was much better, so she agreed to make me one if I did the housework and took care of her baby while she did the sewing. I agreed. We found an old brown lace dress which I unpicked, washed and ironed. When it was reworked, it was marvellous, and I was thrilled. My other sister Maria didn't dance and didn't like dancing (although she was the beauty of the family), which pleased me. Often when we went out together arm-in-arm, people used to think we were twins. She was thrilled at that as she was much older than I was, but I suppose I looked older than my age.

I liked to go to tea dances, but my mother wouldn't allow me to go without a chaperone, so I asked my brother Robert to come with me. He couldn't dance, and refused unless I paid him, so I did. When the big day arrived, Robert took me there. We had to walk, so missed the opening ceremony. Of course it was raining. When we entered the building, it was beautiful, everything was in full swing, and I started dancing.

The factory owner de Wendel's young daughter was there. Not realising who she was, my sister Antoinette's husband Antoine, asked her to dance. (3) She consented. Afterwards, his friend told him who she was. He was so terrified at

having danced with the big boss's daughter that he left immediately.

Later, she had an arranged marriage to the son of a rich family. In those days, a wealthy father in France would pay a dowry to a man to marry his daughter and keep her in the style in which she was accustomed. (4)

I saw Colonel de Tassigny who was with his two equerries in full dress uniform with gold epaulettes. I had never seen those before, and thought them very smart.

Before the next dance started, one of the equerries came along and asked me to dance. I was flabbergasted. Anyway, I went onto the dance floor, and he kept treading on my feet. He couldn't dance, and I told him so. When I said my feet were aching, he explained with an air of superiority that he didn't like to dance and that he had been ordered by his Colonel to come and ask me to dance, so he was just obeying.

After the dance, the equerry took me to the table where the Colonel was sitting; the latter asked who I was and I explained I was the God-daughter of the man who was helping to run the show - a reserve, non-commissioned officer. I think he was a corporal or something. I had a glass of champagne with the Colonel, and he told me I was the spitting image of a famous opera singer who sang in Paris when he was young. She had been the toast of Paris, but being a country girl, I had heard of neither her name nor the woman. The Colonel said his parents took him to the opera when he was young and he thought she was something magnificent.

He told me his regiment was holding a dance the following week in their camp at Metz and invited me to come. I told him I was very sorry but my parents would never let me, and in any case, we had no car, and Metz was an hour and

a half away. He told me a car would come to fetch me and bring me back, but I said I was too young, and my parents would never let me go. Then a group of soldiers came, the Colonel was escorted to his car, and went back to Metz.

I carried on dancing. I felt very uncomfortable as all the villagers looked at me wondering what had happened. After the last waltz, my brother took me home.

The news of my drinking champagne with the Colonel spread throughout the village. My father was told about it by his foreman at work who asked about our family and its beautiful daughter. I didn't like the attention.

At one dance, I liked the youth who asked me to dance with him three times. Then he escorted me back to where I told him my brother was sitting. He asked Robert why he didn't dance; Robert said he just liked watching.. My dance partner expressed astonishment to which Robert said "*Au cirque, je regarde les chevaux qui font les cent pas, ici, je regarde les ânes comme toi*". (At the circus, I look at horses pacing, here, I watch the donkeys like you).

My dance partner turned to me and said "*Votre frère est très impoli*". (Your brother is very rude), then departed.

My other brother Louis had to do military service for one year. He wanted to marry his girlfriend, Lucie, before doing it. My father persuaded him not to, saying that he had seen many men complete their service as different characters. If they were already married, they were stuck. (There was very little divorce in France then as it was considered scandalous).

My father said therefore he would give his blessing if Louis still wanted to marry Lucie when he returned from military service and she still wanted to marry him.

Louis couldn't swim because French towns didn't have public swimming pools and we lived far from the coast.

Despite this, he was conscripted into the navy. He was put on submarines but his body couldn't stand the pressure, and blood spurted from his nose and ears. He was therefore transferred to the naval secretariat and made an admiral's secretary. He was given a badge with the letters SM for *Secretaire Marin*. However, he told us it stood for *Sa Mageste*, ie His Majesty. He was told that if there was a risk of him being captured, the admiral would shoot him dead to prevent him divulging secrets.

On completing their military service, bank employees had to re-apply for their jobs as they were considered new entrants. Louis was re-employed, but his friend wasn't so lucky, notwithstanding his previous service.

Louis then married Lucie, and she gave birth to a boy named Alain. Unfortunately, he had cauliflower ears sticking out sideways. My mother advised Lucie always to make the baby wear a tight bonnet. It worked, and Alain grew up with ordinary ears. After Alain was born, I went to stay with Louis and Lucie at Lunéville for three days. Lucie was very annoyed because his bank had just started to recruit female staff. She complained to me that they would be smart and attractive, thereby making the male employees think their wives (who had to do housework) were dowdy by comparison, so she asked me to help her spy out the situation. I walked with her while she pushed the pram near the bank, as though we were simply going for a stroll. She watched the new female employees going in and was relieved to see that they were not particularly attractive.

In any event, Louis wasn't a womaniser; his vice was drinking. I believe a man is either a boozer or an adulterer, not both!

Lucie came from a poor family. Her mother and sister, with whom she had lived prior to her marriage, were both widows. Her brother-in-law had worked at the factory and died on duty in tragic circumstances, so they were allowed to continue occupying the company house.

Each blast furnace took several weeks to heat up. His job had been to check when this had happened. He would listen carefully. One day, hearing nothing, he climbed the stairs to the rim and looked over. The carbon monoxide fumes rendered him unconscious and he fell to his death in the furnace. Amazingly, Lucie, her sister and mother were not distressed. He had treated the three women like slaves, ordering them about, so they didn't regret his passing.

Three months later, tragedy struck again; his infant son, Lucie's young brother, fell dangerously ill and had to be taken to hospital in Nancy, where he died. This time, Lucie was distressed and wanted to bring the body back to the family grave in Jœuf. The hospital told her the cost; tearfully, she said she couldn't afford it. The sympathetic doctor suggested a way out. He told her to dress the boy, take him back by car and register the death in Jœuf. It worked!

I went to live with Antoinette in Nancy to help her and Antoine run their café. Every month, my salary was paid to my mother to save on my behalf. I worked hard, but I was happy there.

All around were iron ore factories and glassworks. The workers started at 6am; my brother-in-law was up at 5am to put on the coffee percolator. The workmen would call in on their way to work to drink a café rum (black coffee laced with rum). The office staff started work at 8am but they didn't drink café rum. That ended the busy time for the café. Antoine said he made his profit in that period.

In Nancy, Antoinette and I used to go to *Café La Comédie*. The first time I went, on stage was a comedian who insulted each person as he or she entered. I was wearing a white slouch hat, and he called out to the audience to look at that woman with a white cheese on her head. I was annoyed, but my sister explained it was all part of the show.

Antoinette and I used to go to the opera in Place Stanislas. One evening, Antoine came with us. Smoking was not permitted as it would affect the singers' throats, so in the interval, he went out for a cigarette. (5) He didn't return. When Antoinette and I met him outside after the show and asked him why, he said he was bored by all the singing over the death of the heroine, Tosca. I thought to myself, what an uneducated yob. In contrast, I developed a lifelong love of grand opera.

Once in the city, I noticed a gypsy woman. She would go around to each house selling wooden clothes pegs she had made and telling fortunes for a silver coin. I saw her talking for a long time to a little boy who used to play with my sister's son. Afterwards, I asked him what they had been talking about. He told me the gypsy had asked him where he lived, whether he had brothers and sisters, and what the woman next door did. I realised she was gathering information, so that when she knocked on doors she could amaze people by telling them about their families and thus persuade them to let her tell their fortunes for payment. (6)

In the workmen's café, the customers used to spit on the floor. Every evening I had the task of pouring two buckets of water over the floor and mopping it clean for the next morning. Some café-bars had sawdust floors to soak up the spit, but my brother-in-law thought that was too low class.

Antoine installed a coin slot machine, a one-armed bandit, which some other café-bars refused to have. He shared the

profits with the supplier. He used a key to open the back and set the winning ratio at one in twenty.

Later, he passed an examination to become an Italian translator in the courts. He also ran an office to help Italian workmen with injury compensation claims. Eventually, he sold the café to concentrate on his new business. He also sold his coin collection but would not reveal to the family how much he received. The proceeds helped finance his new office.

Antoine then showed me the red light district of Nancy and explained why when he walked there no prostitute ever propositioned him. Before such women started working, they spent several days watching the police station and noting the men who worked there (including Antoine as a translator). The prostitutes would never approach such a man for fear of being arrested for soliciting.

I learned other things about police practice from my brother-in-law. He told me they always withheld certain information during serious investigations. This was necessary to check statements from the public. For instance, a young woman was found murdered on waste ground, and it was reported in the local papers. Based on the Catholic tradition of confession, several men came individually to the police, each claiming to be the murderer. The police asked a question about what the victim was wearing based on withheld information. When the false confessor gave the wrong answer, he was told to leave.

When I was helping Antoinette and Antoine, a new, high class coffee house opened nearby. On Wednesday afternoons, Antoinette and I would go shopping while her husband minded the café. Afterwards, we would go to the new coffee house for cakes. It had a huge selection and was self-service. Antoinette was overweight and piled her plate

high with cakes while I took only one. I was very thin when I was young. I had two deep hollows on each side of the base of my neck which my other sister Maria called "*caves à sel*" (salt cellars). (7) Antoinette and I took our plates to a table to be served with beverages by the waitress.

Two ladies at the next table commented to each other about Antoinette's plate having four cakes. She was offended, so the next time we went she selected the cakes she wanted and told me to put two of them on the plate with the one I wanted. That way we each had a plate of a few cakes instead of her having four and me having one. She ate the additional cakes she wanted from my plate. No comment was made this time by the people sitting at neighbouring tables.

My brother-in-law started to grope me. Matters came to a head after I had done the washing up and both my hands were full of plates. He took advantage of this to touch me improperly. I warned him that if he didn't stop I would drop the dishes on the floor. He carried on, and I did as I threatened, breaking several dishes. The incident thus came to the notice of my sister, who told our mother. She ordered me to come home to Jœuf. Later, I was informed that he had tried to rape my elder sister, Maria. This was the final straw for me regarding Latin men. Frenchmen molested women, and Italians were even worse. I was therefore determined to marry a quiet Englishman. I ended up marrying two of them in quick succession!

Chapter Five: In Nazi Germany

My uncle offered to take me back to Germany with him and his wife. I accepted because I was keen to get away from our boring little village and a life of drudgery.

I entered a life of luxury in the big house at Bad Homburg. The only thing I missed was lovely French white bread. In Germany, they ate coarse brown rye bread, which I hated. I also had trouble with my table manners. I ate in the French style, cutting up my food and then eating it with my fork. My aunt told me this was unacceptable, and that I must eat with my knife in my right hand. I had great difficulty at first, and would spill food on the restaurant table cloth. Eventually, I got used to it, and it came in useful when I emigrated to England where it was the norm.

Additionally, my aunt insisted I ensure that the seams at the back of the thick stockings we wore in those days were straight, something I had never bothered about before. She showed me how to avoid the seams becoming crooked. (The only seamless stockings were inelegant, woollen ones). She also taught me how to walk properly and table manners. When drinking coffee, she made me lift up my little finger in a feminine way. In retrospect, she made a lady out of a simple country girl.

Every Sunday, I accompanied my uncle and aunt to church. On the way home I saw uniformed young men; my aunt told me they were Hitler Youths and there would be trouble. They then smashed the windows of Jewish shops. Reports appeared in the newspaper, but the police took no action because there was a Nazi Government.

One day, while I was fetching a cake for a dinner party from a nearby shop, a gang of German children shouted an anti-French rhyme at me: "*Französische Scheiße in die Hose*" (*French shit in your pants*). I tried to hit them, but they ran away. I had encountered anti-French prejudice!

When I was in Germany, I heard an amazing but true story. A group of friends would meet in each other's homes to play bridge and then have a snack. At one such meeting, in an upstairs apartment, a male visitor offered to take the rubbish left after the snack to the refuse chute. He opened it, and, to his horror, saw a human head looking at him. Terrified, he rushed back into the apartment to tell the hostess.

She and the other guests thought he was having a fit, but when he persuaded them to look for themselves, they realised he was telling the truth, and one of them called the police. When the police searched the building, they discovered that a man in one of the top apartments had murdered and dismembered his wife. He was disposing of her body parts down the refuse chute when the head became stuck. The family with whom I was staying were horrified by this incident, but I have to admit I found it amusing.

I accompanied my uncle and his wife to visit her son by her first marriage; he was studying at Heidelberg University. I learned too how to dance and was bought lovely clothes. My uncle liked me and I was invited to the Heidelberg end of term ball. There I met a German count who spoke French. He showed me around the university, in which there were photographs of hundreds of former students on the wall, including one of his son. I asked the Count how he had become a father so young; he explained that he was the boy's university father (ie his mentor).

He wanted to see me again, and my aunt said that if I played my cards right, I could become a countess. I didn't like the Count because of his appearance. He wasn't bad looking, but, like many German men at that time, he had a shaven head. In addition, being an aristocrat, his face was badly scarred from fencing. The German nobles used to indulge in fencing matches without wearing protective face masks; they were very proud of the resulting scars, which proved their bravery. The Count introduced me to his sister with whom he lived in their *Schloss*. She was a very tall, ugly woman who looked at me with disdain because I wasn't German. Their parents had died, leaving the Count head of the family, so she had to do what he said.

After a few months, my aunt had to take over the big hotel she owned at Bad Homburg because the tenant had left. She had run it before marrying my uncle and now had to do so again, and we went there. She made me work there to help the maids. Worn out from having worked all day, I would then have to drink coffee with my aunt's guests. She would tell them I was her French poor relation. By now I understood German, but couldn't stand the people, so I went home.

My mother told me the Count was only eight years older than me, and that as his parents had died he would have married me if I had consented. That situation never arose, so I never became a countess.

When I returned to Jœuf from Germany, the village butcher recognised me as "*la petite Schwartz*". He reminded me, to my embarrassment, of what I did when I was younger.

On my mother's instructions I would return meat she didn't like with the words "*C'est charogne*" (It's carrion) in

front of other customers. He replied his shop sold only fresh meat.

Jeannette, circa 1935 (aged 20).

Chapter Six: South Of France

The year 1934 saw the beginning of the most amazing period of my life. I still dream about it eighty years later. I went to find a new job on the French Riviera, travelling on the cheaper night train arriving in Nice at dawn. It was the most beautiful sight I had ever encountered: the red rising sun over the blue Mediterranean Sea.

I stayed at a hostel for young girls and went to the main employment agency in Nice. For one week, I worked as a relief waitress at the house of the daughter of the former French President Poincare. We had to serve huge portions of the delicacy *pâté de foie gras* (stuffed goose liver). It was surrounded with curly lettuce, which I had never seen before. I tasted it and found it delicious. I wanted more and ate a thick slice of pâté. It was so filling that I needed no more food.

When I applied for one job and went to the house to be interviewed, the current maid opened the door. When I told her the purpose of my visit, she warned me off, saying she had worked there for only one month but was leaving because the lady of the house shouted at her all the time, so I changed my mind.

Then I found employment in the household of a race horse trainer. He and his wife spent the winter at his villa in the South of France and the summer near the Longchamp racecourse in Paris. I did the ironing at the villa while the live-in maid did the housekeeping and cooking. She moved with the family wherever they went, but worked only while they were in the South of France. My employers were a dull, middle aged couple. They asked if I had ever been to a horse race before and when I said I hadn't, they gave me a

ticket for the enclosure at the Nice Steeplechase. The hurdles were covered in brilliant mimosas; it was a lovely, sunny day, but the maid said it was not a patch on Paris because there were no fashion models wearing beautiful clothes.

I went to the races alone, entered the enclosure, and watched with the crowd there. I followed the people to the bookmakers and bought the cheapest ticket. I bought a betting slip for the second race and my horse came in second, but I didn't know where to go to collect my winnings.

A well-dressed middle aged man (as old as my father) explained to me where to go. He then went to another gate to claim his winnings. Then I saw him again and we spoke. He then politely invited me to have tea with him when the races were over. I refused, saying that I had to go back to work. He responded that having tea and cakes wouldn't take long. I hesitated, but as he was so much older than me I refused again but thanked him for the offer. My German aunt's training had made a lady of me!

Jeannette in 1935, aged about 20.

My employer moved to Paris for the summer flat racing season without me. However, I wouldn't leave the South of France as I had fallen in love with the place. I was given an appointment to see the housekeeper of the *Château d'Azur*. She was a smart Englishwoman who spoke fluent French. She asked me to remove my hat and walk around. This was because the family who owned the *Château* would employ only smart, presentable household (non-kitchen) staff. I got the job.

The *Château d'Azur* was the residence of the American millionaire E. Virgil Neal (1) who owned the Tokalon cosmetics firm. It was a beautiful place, especially the garden which had Chinese, Indian, and other parts. Tea was sometimes served in the Chinese garden. The mansion was protected by an armed security guard and his assistant who checked all the locked doors periodically every night. The building had a main staircase. On each side was a life

size portrait of Mr Neal and his wife respectively. Staff were not permitted to use these stairs.
Mr Neal was about twenty years older than his wife. She would visit Monaco once a week, ostensibly to buy clothes. However, the chauffeur told me she was really visiting her lover. (2) Her dressmaker would actually visit the *Château* to make her clothes.

On arrival at the *Château,* a woman from a top fashion house was there to take my measurements for three uniform dresses. The material was thin, beautiful cotton and decorated with tiny flowers. I was allowed to choose the colour from blue, pink or white. I chose blue. I wore no apron or hat. I was allowed to use make-up.

The next day, I received my three dresses which fitted perfectly. I felt like a million dollars. The family spent the winter in Nice, so when they went to Paris for the summer, I had to return the dresses to my employer. I was warned that my salary would be docked for any misbehaviour. I learned this applied to the chef as well; if there was a smell of cooking in the *Château* when the guests arrived, his pay was reduced.

I became great friends with Emily (Amelie), the lady's maid there. She was from Alsace, near where I came from. The male staff looked down on us as being "slightly German". Emily didn't care because she felt her position was superior.

The mistress of the house would receive visits from women from the top fashion houses showing her the new styles. Emily would be in attendance and help Madame choose. Emily would receive payment from the representatives before each viewing to secure the recommendations. In addition, Madame had her own full-time dressmaker, who came every morning. I asked her how she coped. She

replied that she bought dresses and re-modelled them for Madame. Emily received the cast-off clothes and shoes of the mistress of the house; she gave some to me ahead of the other staff.

In addition to two full-time security guards and several domestic staff, there were six secretaries because the perfume laboratory was attached to the *Château.*

The valet, who had his own dining room, took me to the master bedroom. I was stunned to see the walls covered with pictures of nude women. On the middle of the bathroom door was a life size picture of a woman showing her pubic hair. I screamed because I thought it was a real woman, at which the valet burst out laughing.

The Neals had a son who was sent to Eton public school in England. The boy would spend his school holidays with his parents in Nice. When he came there, he stayed in his own bachelor suite attended by a middle aged bilingual (French and English) maidservant. Although still young, he was engaged to be married, but his fiancée was tragically killed in a car crash. (3) Wealth cannot buy good luck!

I had to wait by the front door when Mr Neal was going out. As soon as he appeared, I had to open the door for him, then go quickly to the waiting car and open its rear door for him to enter. The chauffeur remained in the driving seat; he was too good to open the door. Instead, a humble housemaid like me had to do it.

Mr Neal and his wife ate with their guests at a large table in the dining room. She was vegetarian, and would have a large plateful of seasonal produce, while her husband would have meat like everyone else. After the meal, when I was on duty, I collected what was left and took it into an adjoining room for the four secretaries to eat. It was so delicious that I sometimes took a mouthful *en route*. The

wife's vegetarian plate went back to the kitchen for her use only. I and the other servants ate in a staff dining room downstairs and were served by a special maid, who also laid and cleared the table. At Easter, the gardeners made an Easter egg, as big as a child, from flowers. Renée Neal kept inviting famous people to occupy her husband while she went out to meet her lover. Her private chauffeur took her to the apartment she had bought for him in Monaco; I heard this from Emily.

Another of my duties was to sew a pad of cotton wool into the right shoulder of the owner's vest because he suffered from a frozen shoulder. He changed his vest every day, so I sewed this in each morning.

Having been brought up in a workman's cottage without books, much less bookshelves, wherever I worked as a maid, I would be fascinated by the fact that the house had a library room. Before going to bed every night, I would hide a book from the library under my dress. Once in bed I would read as much as I could before falling asleep, then secretly return the book the next morning. Eighty years later, I regret that; I believe straining my eyes reading small print in the dim light of the maid's bedroom, contributed to my blindness in old age.

I decided to improve my studies by learning English; I paid for some English lessons at the Berlitz School on my day off. I had noticed that the Riviera was full of notices "For Sale" to appeal to rich English visitors. At first, I was amazed that property was advertised so, and couldn't understand why under "*À Vendre*" would be "For sale". (4) In French, the word "sale" means dirty. The teacher, a fellow Frenchwoman, would not allow any French conversation, everything had to be in English. It paid off, so I was beginning to understand.

She also told me about the English Protestant Church in Nice, explaining that the service was conducted in English, unlike Catholic churches where it was conducted in Latin.

I followed the service by looking at the hymn numbers and the singing in my hymn book. I noticed that "knee" was pronounced "nee". I also noted the words of *The Lord's Prayer* - "Hallowed be thy name" and concluded wrongly that "Hallowed" was English for God (similar to Allah in Arabic). Instead of "Hallowed be thy name" the French *Lord's Prayer* uses the phrase "*Soit sanctifie*" which means "Be sanctified" It was not until I emigrated to England that I discovered my mistake.

After the service, the vicar would stand outside the church and thank each member of the congregation for attending. I was amazed; Catholic priests never did this and instead behaved as if they were doing their congregations a favour. After a Christening, the priest would be given a box that contained drages (sugared almonds).

I would go to the casino at Cannes. As I was a local, I was allowed in without an entrance card; everyone else had to have a special identity card with a photograph. Bank employees were not given one. Like all casinos there was a security man patrolling the gaming tables. He asked to see my entry card. I explained that I did not have one because I was a local. He smiled and always allowed me in; he told me he never forgot a face. One evening, he recognised someone at a gaming table who had been barred from another casino in France for cheating. He tapped the man on the shoulder and asked him to leave.

The highlight of the social year on the Cote d'Azur was the ball on the last day of the Spring Carnival. My friend Emily and I bought some cloth for the ball. Everyone had to be dressed in that year's carnival material. Men wore it

over their dinner jackets with gold braid. We had dresses made of it.

The Carnival lasted a whole month culminating in the Battle Of The Flowers. Each year, a special song was written and performed in the street by a band. Men singing it were allowed to kiss a woman on the cheek when these words were reached in the song. During carnival month, women not wanting to be kissed would walk on the right hand pavement.

The fat old Aga Khan had a villa near Nice. His chef would complain to the other staff than if he remained on the job he would become de-skilled, as his employer ate only very light lunches in an effort to lose weight. On his golden jubilee in January 1936, Nizari Ismaili Muslims put the Aga Khan on scales then gave him his weight in gold. He used this donation for charitable purposes.

In the summer, the Tokalon household moved away taking only personal staff including Emily. Staff were laid off until the next winter; the rest of us were dismissed and would have to reapply for our jobs in the autumn. Our dresses would then be waiting for us.

I managed to find another job there working for an elderly American Jewish couple. The husband was a banker who had left the USA to avoid a scandal. Their daughter had died in suspicious circumstances, the details of which I never discovered although it appeared to have been an accident. Anyway, the parents moved to the Riviera with their orphaned 9 year old granddaughter.

They had a succession of three nannies in two months because the young girl was so bossy. Their first nanny had come with them from America, but became homesick and had to be sent back to the United States. Her replacement was recruited locally.

I took the job because I wanted to learn English. Unfortunately, I found the old couple spoke mostly French because they had a friend who spoke French like a native and helped them. This friend was married with two daughters and had lived in Cannes. He often had supper with the couple at their hotel where they were living while seeking a villa with his help. I was warned by him about their granddaughter, but he introduced me to the couple for the job.

I would have to take the granddaughter roller skating in the afternoon. Afterwards, we went to a restaurant for chocolate drink and an éclair. Then I would take her home for supper. I was given the necessary money to pay for everything.

She was very spoilt. I asked her if she needed a full-time nanny. Her reply was "I need someone to amuse me".

While working for them, I ate matzo biscuits at Passover, the Jewish Spring Festival, when unleavened bread must be eaten. I loved them. Over eighty years later, aged one hundred, I still eat them.

I accompanied my employers, the Herzog family, when they saw visiting American friends at the *Grand Hotel*. I tried to get one of them to take me to America, but they said they would not steal the servant of a nanny from their friend.

The Herzog family then decided to send their granddaughter Nancy to the Lycee at Nice. I would take and collect her, staying at home during the day cleaning the villa and helping the cook. I decided to better myself, and gave my notice.

Chapter Seven: Strasbourg

After returning to Jœuf, I lived with my family (my mother, father and two younger brothers). I complained to my mother about the climate in North Eastern France being so much colder in winter than the Riviera. She laughed and replied that the whole population of the country couldn't live in the South.

In October 1935, the Abyssinian War broke out and all the Italian workers in the iron ore works at Jœuf were recalled for military service. (1) Their places were taken by Algerians who were housed in a huge workers' barracks. Widows of Frenchmen who had worked in the factory staffed the canteen. One of them obtained permission to take old food bags home as fuel for the fire. She collected the coffee powder left in them, which was enough for both her and her son.

Being men, the Algerians wanted sex, but because they couldn't speak French, they would accost young men in the street and ask them inarticulately "Where can I find a young woman for sex" or in other words "Where is the nearest brothel". (2) The Frenchmen misunderstood, thinking this request was where to find an unmarried girl (ie a Mademoiselle). They would therefore direct the inquirer to any house where such a person whom they didn't like lived. On arrival, the poor man was told to get lost because no respectable Frenchwoman would have anything to do with an Arab.

My cousin in Strasbourg had a friend working in Paris who found me a new job there. I had to live in as a housekeeper for a family of four. The boys were at boarding school; the man of the house ran a factory for

artichoke liqueur called *Arti*. Every weekend we all went to his villa on the River Seine outside Paris. I used to go shrimping in the river by lowering a bundle of twigs with some meat inside. The next day, the bundle was hooked into a boat full of shrimps. Then we ate them immediately with relish.

The man also went shooting in the autumn. His wife always went with him, but one time he also took his sons. He left them on the banks of the lake to avoid them being near the shooting. Then tragedy struck, the boys were attacked by a swarm of bees, and jumped into the lake where the eldest boy, aged twelve, was drowned.

We all returned to Paris for the funeral. The boy was buried in the family tomb. After the burial, bees swarmed around the grave. The cemetery attendant said he had never seen bees there before. The family went away for a month to recuperate. I went back to their country house by the River Seine where the housekeeper and her husband lived. I spent my time in the small rowing boat catching shrimps until the family returned to Paris. I went back to Paris with them, but the atmosphere was so morbid that I asked my brother to write a letter telling me to come home because my mother was ill. I then left my job in Paris and returned to Jœuf. (3)

I needed a new job, so asked my mother about my aunt in Strasbourg. I love Strasbourg, it is a beautiful old city with a magnificent cathedral. There was a legend about its famous astronomical clock which was built in the Fourteenth Century by a Swiss engineer. After he had completed it and been paid, he said he would build an even bigger one in his home country. To prevent this, the town ordered he be blinded. After he had suffered the penalty, he asked permission to touch the beloved clock before he

returned home. He was allowed to. The clock then ceased to work because he had disconnected its intricate mechanism. It was not possible to repair it until the Eighteenth Century.

There were also rumours that German girls would entice men to cross the Rhine bridge and be kidnapped to be conscripted into the German Army (because Alsace was still regarded as part of Germany there).

My mother arranged for me to go and stay with my aunt while I looked for a job as a maid. She sent a group photo showing me; it was the only one we had, and we were too poor to have many taken. It was arranged that my aunt would meet me at the railway station.

The photograph was so bad that my aunt didn't recognise me there. After waiting an hour, I took a taxi to her home while she walked back annoyed.

My aunt helped her husband in his repair shop. In addition to mending watches he had the contract to maintain all the public clocks in Strasbourg. One day, a doctor's wife came in with a watch to mend. My aunt asked if she needed a maid; the woman said she was indeed looking for one, so I went to see her and got the job, having agreed to perform all the duties specified. I would arrive in the morning with my key to the kitchen and start cleaning it, then prepare breakfast while the doctor and his wife got up.

Strasbourg had a high reputation for its doctors, and my employer was a leading one. He would visit patients accompanied by students, who could be useful. One patient was a farmer, and the doctor couldn't diagnose his problem. Afterwards, one of his students mentioned a disease transmitted by goats to humans. On his next visit,

my employer asked the patient if he kept goats. He did, and the mystery was solved.

Dr K (4) told me he had trained as a young doctor in a hospital run by nuns. He was infuriated because when carrying out operations the old nuns would point out where he should make the incision.

After two years, I was dragged into Dr K's marital problems. One day, I noticed his wife was missing. He asked me to come with him for a trip in his car. We went to his wife's parents' house. He got out and went to the front door. In spite of his repeated banging, he was not allowed in, so we returned to his home.

Dr K's mother moved in to help him. She told him that I would have to go; as I was young and unmarried, it would be unacceptable for me to be living under the same roof as a "wifeless" doctor, so I went back to Jœuf.

Later, I was summoned to appear as a witness in his divorce proceedings. My fares and expenses were paid. During the two years I worked for Dr K, he had earned a million francs. (5) Only being an assistant receptionist however, I couldn't give much relevant information to the court.

While I was alone in the waiting room, his wife came in and greeted me: "Jeanette", she exclaimed, "I had to leave him because he was a morphine addict". (6)

My sister Maria and her husband ran their restaurant *Le Glacier* in Place Stanislas, Nancy. It was the biggest one in the town, and she employed eight waitresses. Nancy was the capital of the old Lorraine Province of France. Place Stanislas is the beautiful main square. It is dominated by a statue of Stanislas pointing towards Poland, because he was the former king who was then given the Duchy of Lorraine by his son-in-law, King Louis XV.

The waitresses would arrive at the restaurant at noon and prepare the *hors d'oeuvres*. (7) Then they would serve the meals and pay the money to Maria on the till, but they kept the tips, which were their only payment. They were low class, immoral women, and were over-familiar with male customers. If one propositioned her, the waitress would name a price and make the appropriate arrangements with him!

No one, not even Jean Noet was allowed in the kitchen; that was the chef's domain, although he would let me in. When Maria noticed this, she was amazed and asked why her younger sister could enter while she couldn't!

The chef had a speciality which he would cook for me for 2pm after the lunchtime customers had left. It was *champignons à la crème*. A female customer liked it so much she came every week to eat some. Then she told the chef she was going on holiday to Longchamp for the races with her servants, including her personal cook.

She asked him to let her have the recipe so her cook could prepare the dish for her on holiday. The chef agreed and wrote it down for her. I asked him why he had given away his personal recipe. He laughed and said it took him twenty years to perfect and he was not going to divulge it. The next time the lady came to the restaurant after her holiday she told the chef that her cook couldn't make the dish like he did. Only he understood why he had omitted a vital ingredient.

Each cooked meal lasted for seven days, so if one had not been ordered by then, the waitresses would be given a bonus for selling it by recommendation to customers. Maria therefore told me never to order anything in a restaurant that was recommended.

The café served oysters. She told me that even when open they were still alive until they were eaten. Diners would squirt lemon on the open oyster and it would move. Once, one didn't, and the diner complained it wasn't fresh, but Maria told him she had just opened it. The thought of an oyster being alive when eaten disgusted me, and I have avoided eating them ever since.

Once, my brother took me to a restaurant for a meal. (8) Six open oysters were served on a plate. I refused to eat one. My brother told me if I didn't eat them, he wouldn't pay for the meal. I was in a difficult position because I had no money. I looked at the open oysters, they were alive, and moving because of the added lemon juice. They reminded me of catarrh, and I couldn't eat even one. Luckily, he didn't carry out his threat. He ate all the oysters and paid for the meal.

He told me a joke: oysters should only be eaten if alive. They are served with lemon juice and so squirm. One day, a customer in a restaurant noticed that one of his oysters wasn't moving, in spite of the lemon juice. He protested to the waiter that it must be dead and thus inedible. The waiter told him not to worry because it was used to lemon juice.

Jean Noet had trained as a cook but on his days off insisted his wife prepare meals. He said he needed a complete rest from his job.

There were some amusing incidents in Maria's restaurant. One was when a champagne cork shot off the bottle with such force that it smashed into the crystal chandelier and damaged it. Jean Noet didn't see the funny side as it proved expensive to repair. Because of this, from then on, I opened champagne bottles outside.

In those days, lobsters were bought live without their claws being bound. One was put in a saucepan of boiling water to cook and jumped out, running around the kitchen floor, flexing its claws. It was caught only with difficulty and put back in the saucepan. Learning my lesson, I always put a lid on the saucepan and held it down immediately after putting in the lobster.

To give it flavour, the chef would insert a "*bouquet garni*" (i.e. sprig of bay leaf, carrot, onion, parsley and sorrel) into the boiling water in which the lobster was cooked. The lobster would go red and the chef would humorously say that the carrots gave it that colour!

In the restaurant, my brother-in-law would force me to drink alcohol because (being French) he thought it was part of my education. I didn't mind the wine, but couldn't handle spirits, so when he wasn't looking I would pour the contents of the glass into the big flower pot on the window sill. I hope the plant appreciated it!

One day, someone fell over in the restaurant. Jean Noet heard the fall and rushed to the scene then cried out "*Regarde tout le monde, il n'y a rien sur le sol!*" (Look everyone, there is nothing on the floor!) - that way he prevented the fallen man from making a claim. (9)

Jean Noet with Maria, smiling, outside their restaurant, 1937.

Maria would send me down to the restaurant cellar to fill a bottle with wine from a barrel there, from the tap at the bottom. Below the tap was a bowl to catch the falling drops.

I then noticed that the bowls under the barrel taps in the restaurant were always empty, because rats drank them dry. By contrast, the saucers under the two wine barrels (one for white wine, the other for red) at my family home had to be emptied frequently because they became full of the dripping from the taps, as we had no rats.

One day in the darkness of the cellar as I went to the tap, I trod on something and heard a squeak. I lifted my foot immediately and, to my horror, saw a large rat scurry away. From then on, whenever I entered the cellar, I made a loud noise to frighten away the rats.

Jean Noet's hobby was coin collecting. (10) He concentrated on those struck by the Emperor Napoleon III who reigned from 1852 to 1870. He asked all his customers to look out for such coins so he could buy them. It took him two years to collect a full set. Curiously, the most difficult

to find where the little copper centime pieces. The two little coins he needed were found by one of his workmen customers, hidden away in a collection of buttons left by the old lady who lived next door to him. Jean Noet bought them eagerly and nearly kissed the man for completing his collection. He had them set in a specially constructed, velvet lined, wooden display box with a space for each coin.

Chapter Eight: To England

Knowing some English from my studies and my employers, I decided to go to England. My family thought I was mad. When I announced my intentions, my mother was aghast and warned me of the purported dangers. Having failed to dissuade me from leaving France, she asked my eldest brother Eugène to try. He warned me about the white slave trade and explained that a procurer would buy a young girl like me a drink, spiked with a strong tranquilliser. She would then wake up as a sex slave in a foreign brothel. I replied that I would be safe, as I don't accept drinks from men.

Eugène then warned me about England. He said it was a perverted country, where the men were homosexual because they were educated at boys' boarding schools where they were forbidden to have girlfriends. I laughed and said that I was female, I would therefore be safe. Eugene gave up.

France is a varied country. Originating from Alsace near Germany, my parents were tall. When my mother saw a regiment of short men from Southern France, she called them schoolboys. When I moved to England, people thought I was Dutch or German; they didn't recognise me as French because they thought I was too tall.

All our family were slim, but my brother Maurice put on weight after he married a non-Alsatian woman. My mother was disgusted. She was from Alsace and thought its culture was superior to that of France proper, as the latter used more fat. So when she saw Maurice and his wife, she told the poor woman it was all the French food that was making him fat.

When I arrived in London, I went to a hostel recommended by the French Embassy, from where in case of revolution or war they would send me back to France. It was a beautiful pension called *Le Foyer Pour La Jeune Fille Francaise En Angleterre*. (1) I met Mademoiselle de Maigret who ran it. I was given a nice room where I met another girl who told me where was the dining room and every evening we would meet Mademoiselle de Maigret at seven o'clock for dinner. We were not allowed to speak a word of French at the table.

In the morning, we would visit museums and places of interest, but we had to tell the porter downstairs where we were going and when we went out. Each day, one of the guests decided where we went and how we would find the way there. The next day it was my turn to choose. We had a good time and decided that the policemen in England were wonderful.

In London, I went shopping with another girl. I was amazed to find that sweets in England were much cheaper than in France. At one shop I asked for some nougat. The assistant replied: "Do you mean nugget?"

The next time I bought sweets in London, I asked for nugget. This time, the lady behind the counter responded: "Do you mean nougat?"

My friend couldn't stop laughing. I realised that in English, educated people used French terminology.

After a week there, Mademoiselle de Maigret called me to her office and asked me if I would like to go to Yorkshire for two weeks where a nice family had a nanny who had been there years and years but had to go away for a fortnight.

I said: "Yes, I would love to go. What, Yorkshire, marvellous!"

I left London by train and arrived at a small village called Womersley. Somebody picked me up at the station in a car and took me to an enormous house called Womersley Hall. The maid showed me to my room, and I was told the couple had three children: a boy and two girls. The boy was five years old, and my duties would include getting them up in the morning. (2) Before that, I had to fill three small glasses with water and put some raisins in them. They had to drink the water to get to the raisins inside. They would then dress and, if it was raining we would go to the schoolroom where I would teach them a little French. If the weather was good, they would go riding with someone on small ponies. Then we would have lessons. In the afternoon, we would go for walks or again have lessons.

In the evening, I would put them to bed, dress myself and go downstairs to have dinner with the family. (They would always have a visitor dining with them). It was an enormous dining room with a huge log fire, where we would eat and then go to one of the two big lounges. We used a different lounge each alternate evening, to have a coffee while the other room was aired. Then I would retire and go to bed.

The children were very well behaved and, if I said something not quite correctly, the sisters would grin and I knew the words were wrong, but their brother would correct me and there was a lot of laughter.

One Sunday, the grandparents came to stay and we all went to church. There was a special row for us where I could follow the service in English and sing English hymns with them, which was a great lesson for me. But luckily, when the collection came, the grandpa of the children gave us all some money to put in the collection box, for which I

was very grateful as I had none. Then we went home to lunch with the children and dinner without them.

One day, I was told that the person who owned the house was a high military man and he threw a big dinner party. They were sorry I couldn't come, but Madam asked me: "I would like to give them some French *hors d'oevres*. You could show the cook how to do it. It would be a change".
I said I could because I had been to domestic science school. I added that for *hors d'oevres* I would just use what was available. There was however no garlic. That night, I went into the kitchen and showed the cook how to make *hors d'oevres*. Her face was a picture when I put vinegar, oil, and all sorts of things on plates. She couldn't believe what she saw, but apparently the dinner was a great success.

After working at Womersley for three weeks, I returned to *Le Foyer Pour La Jeune Fille*...in London to find a permanent job. (3) I was very sad to leave. I was told that one of the family's friends, also a military man who was an English/French interpreter for the army, had to go to London. I was told I would go with him by car. I had met his wife and the children when we went blackberrying in the countryside.
When we left Womersley Hall in the car, my escort asked me how to pronounce a lot of military terms - tanks, special guns, etc. I didn't know what they were, much less how to pronounce them.

Eventually, we arrived at the pension where I met with Mademoiselle de Maigret who told me I could get a paid job as an au pair, but I would be treated as domestic staff , live with the kitchen staff, and learn "kitchen English".

Instead, she advised me to take unpaid residential work where I would be treated as a member of the family and learn the King's English. (4)

I told her I was not a rich girl and would like pocket money, but decided to follow her advice and take such a post in Eastbourne to take care of two young sisters who went to school there. Their mother was a very nice, tall, slim widow. She met me at a London hotel for an interview, and I was hired.

When I arrived at Eastbourne, I saw it was a lovely seaside town. The girls were very, very nice, aged about nine and twelve. There was a charwoman who came in every day, and an enormous, placid dog. My duties were to take the girls to school, fetch them back, make tea, and the rest of the day was more or less my own. Throughout 1937 and I938, I had lots of free time, which was very enjoyable.

Eastbourne was then as now a genteel seaside resort for middle class holidays and retirement. The main venue was the *Grand Hotel*. Dances were held in its magnificent ballroom. Unaccompanied ladies of a certain age paid to attend, and the hotel provided professional male dancing partners (whom it hired). I heard that some of these women bribed the men to perform sexually for them in their hotel rooms after the dance.

In view of this inappropriate atmosphere, I decided to avoid the place. I was young and attractive so didn't need to pay a man to dance with me, much less to give me *affection*.

While I was staying at the French hostel in London, I was very hungry as we were given only light, English-style luncheons. However, I adored cornflakes, which we didn't have in France; we were given one plateful at breakfast, so I paid the maid to buy me a packet every day together with a pint of milk. I took them to my room after breakfast where I had a packet of sugar. (Every day I eat cornflakes with milk and sugar).

After a few months, I returned to France to visit my family. My brother Maurice collected me and my luggage by car from the nearest train station. His first words to me were: "*Tu as l'air dégoûtant*". (You look disgusting). I retorted that he was not thin himself. I realised though I had gained a lot of weight. No cornflakes and French food soon cured my obesity.

Chapter Nine: Mrs Munday

One day in December 1938, after I returned to Eastbourne, I went to the Wintergarden by myself for a tea dance. (I avoided the *Grand Hotel* because of its reputation). There I met a very nice man called Eric who was sitting at a nearby table with an elderly couple who were friends of his parents. The couple were staying there to look for a house to buy; they had come back from India where the husband had been an official. He retired to be near their son at university. Eric was on three months leave from his post in Nigeria. (1) He asked me to dance.

He had worked for a bank in Brazil where he took part in running races and was so good that he was offered money if he would take Brazilian citizenship, represent the country in sporting events and train other runners, but he decided to remain a British citizen. He told me that no adult Brazilian female was a virgin because they were all promiscuous. I didn't ask him how he found out!

Eric was also a keen gardener and in 1937 he had sent some seeds to Beverley Nichols, for which he received a letter of thanks. (2)

Eric and I got on very well and went out a lot together, as I had much free time while the girls were at school. We went to Beachy Head and other places. We fell in love and he took me to meet his family in Eastbourne: his parents and unmarried sister. (3) Then we decided he would come to France to meet my parents. I went there first in January 1939 and he followed shortly. My mother liked him as did my two married older sisters, who by now were married. We stayed at my sister Maria's hotel. (4) My sister-in-law

Margot told us that a new English dance called the Lambeth Walk had become popular.

My mother asked my sister what would happen for any children I had as I was Catholic and Eric was Anglican. My sister answered humorously that any unborn children would be Church Of England but would become Catholic at birth. Anyway, to please my mother, I requested permission from the Catholic Church to marry a non-Catholic. I had to go to see the Bishop at his palace in Nancy. I kissed the ring on his wedding finger, then made my request to marry a Protestant. It was granted on condition that any children I had were Catholic. After returning to England, I and Eric married in church on February 24, 1939. (5)

I had thus married before I reached the age of twenty-five. This was important for a provincial Frenchwoman in those days because if she reached that age without marrying, she was classed as "*une seulle fille*" - maiden lady. On the Saint Catherine's Day after her twenty-fifth birthday, she put on "*une coiffoire de Sainte Catherine*" (Saint Catherine's hat) and accepted the status of an unmarried woman because it was publicly assumed that no man would marry her; she had "missed the boat". This was common because a million young Frenchmen had been killed in the Great War, so there was an equivalent surplus of nubile young women who never found husbands. (6) This situation was exacerbated by the fact that then (unlike now) there was very little divorce or adultery in France, especially away from Paris.

Eric's brother had two young daughters. One day, he invited the Doctor for the evening. Everyone was watching the magic lantern (this being before the age of television). One of the girls sat on the Doctor's lap, and he held her

steady. To his horror, he noticed that her heart was on the right. He told her father quietly that she would not survive beyond her eighth birthday. They debated whether to tell her mother. Eventually, they broke the sad news to her.

Six years later when I had my first baby, Eric's sister-in-law, by now the mother of only one daughter, visited me and picked up my baby boy. Turning to me she said sadly: "I would have given anything for a son".

After our wedding, Eric went from Liverpool to Lagos, Nigeria. His job was to buy as much of the local produce as was needed in England such as groundnuts (peanuts), cocoa, and a type of red berry which was shipped home to make margarine. (7)

It was impossible for me to get a ticket to travel with Eric on the same ship, so I followed a week after he left. I went to Liverpool to meet two friends of his who had married a couple of years before, and the three of us travelled to Lagos together. (8) I was told where to sit for meals at the table, which was next to the Captain. I tried hard to sit next to Eric's friends as I didn't know anyone else. I was told however, that it was the "Captain's order and you obey!" so I did. We were served first and with much more attention than the other tables. At every port we visited, a letter from Eric was waiting for me.

While sailing the Atlantic, we saw whales blowing huge spouts of water high into the sky. We also marvelled at the shoals of flying fish skimming over the waves.

On the voyage to Africa, everyone wore as few clothes as possible on deck because of the hot sun. Most of the other passengers were returning to the tropics where their blood had thinned. Mine hadn't, and, as a result I was the only passenger to receive frequent mosquito bites. I put citronella on my skin, a liquid that smells very strongly of

lemon. Still the mosquitoes were not deterred. They must have liked my French blood.

Jeannette with her first husband on their wedding day.

Jeannette with Eric's parents Jesse and Cecilia Munday at Eastbourne, 1939.

Jeannette in 1939.

Chapter Ten: In Nigeria

I arrived in Nigeria in late August 1939, just before the outbreak of the Second World War. (1) All the other Europeans said it would be over in six months, but I replied it would be more like six years. I was right. I was hoping that in spite of the war I would still be able to visit my parents. I was wrong on that.

My new husband was waiting for me in Lagos at the port; we spent the night there with some friends.

We left for Onitsha the next morning, the place where the John Holt company owned a large building; we lived in a large apartment over the office, by the River Niger.

From our apartment, I could see the main road as well. I would sometimes see a gang of prisoners going to do some outside work. The African warden wore a uniform and carried a small wooden stick.

The natives washed themselves in the river; the men were naked; the women wore loin cloths and washed separately. The men hid their private parts by tucking them between their legs; when they saw a white woman, they didn't turn their backs as they considered this to be very rude. Instead, they said: "Good morning, sir". (They used the designation "Sir" for all Europeans, male and female).

Our apartment had no plumbing; we collected rainwater from an outside water butt and urinated in a pot. I threw the contents of the latter out of the open (glassless) window. After one such incident, one of our servant boys came up to the flat complaining of being drenched by my husband. Eric said: "It's only water", to which the boy responded: "It be pee water!"

The heat was dreadful because fans didn't exist then. When you went to bed under the mosquito net, you would have to quickly tuck the net back to be sure no mosquitoes would come with you under it. You also had a blanket because the nights could be very cold. If you perspired, the blanket would absorb the sweat to stop giving you a chill or cold of some sort.

In the early hours of darkness, the moisture would become very cold, so one wrapped oneself in an absorbent woollen blanket instead of sheets. (Now, seventy-five years later in my hundredth year, I still do so). The feeling under the mosquito net was like someone strangling you and just giving you enough air to breathe. Anyway, I got used to it. Also, one couldn't get up during the night because of insects on the floor and mosquitoes getting inside the nets.

In Nigeria, I lived like a queen; I was assisted by seven African manservants: two cooks, two gardeners, and three house boys. The kitchen consisted of a stove in a hut near the bungalow. I went in to teach the cooks how to make soufflés. It was so hot in there that I came out drenched in sweat, and Eric told me off. I had to change my clothes.

There was a huge avocado pear tree in my garden. I also had a lime tree and paw paws. We ate the paw paws for breakfast with lime juice. We also grew groundnuts which the cook would roast, grind, and use to make delicious groundnut soup. I grew cucumbers, tomatoes, yams, and a mango tree, but my vegetable patch was unsuccessful.

I heard the reason the natives grew their own maize and vegetables in a higgledy-piggledy manner. It was to stop the Devil travelling through the field, as they believed he could walk only in a straight line.

In Nigeria, the cookhouse was always a separate building otherwise the heat it generated would make a European's

home unbearable. This was because the stove was like a campfire, ie a piece of metal on top of burning logs. I was amazed what wonderful, different meals could be prepared in such a way, especially curries and palm oil chicken. No European went into the cookhouse because of the oppressive heat.

One day however, I had to see the cook. As I went down the stairs to the cookhouse, I saw a large lizard on the step looking up at me. I was too petrified to kick it away as I thought it might counter-attack; I screamed in fear. The headboy came in; I pointed to the lizard, but he just grinned and clapped his hands, frightening the reptile away. Then he gave me an odd, frustrated look as though I was clueless.

I told the cook what I wanted. A gold prospector who was staying the night with us had brought us two snipe he'd shot. I explained to the cook how I wanted them cooked. The prospector showed me a piece of rock with a thin gold layer. Later, I learned the gold mining had been ended because the amount mined didn't justify the cost.

In Nigeria, Europeans took quinine every day to prevent malaria; this medication caused me great pain during my menstrual periods, so I decided to skip it for a couple of days. Malaria ensued, and I was confined to my bed for a week. I had shivering fits interspersed with profuse sweating which lasted three days. I looked forward to returning to Europe.

To deal with the problem of malaria-bearing mosquitoes, the Europeans tried to avoid creating any stagnant water in which insects could live. Therefore, no pineapples were allowed near the European quarter because the hollow in the leaves filled with water. This was sad because each

pineapple was covered with beautiful little blue flowers, one from each bud.

We Europeans all wore mosquito boots to stop insects climbing up our legs and stinging us. At a dance one evening, the doctor's wife screamed suddenly in pain and lifted her long evening dress. I and the other woman took her into the lavatory and stripped her to find the problem. Her back was covered in bites. Giant ants had bypassed her mosquito boots by crawling up her long dress and then bitten bits out of her bare back.

Ants were a problem in Nigeria, they were huge and could give you a nasty sting. They advanced in a long column a foot wide. When a column was on the march, trying to stop them coming towards you or your house was very difficult. Eric warned me not to try to stop the advancing column by stamping on the ants because, if you did so, they would crawl up your leg and start inflicting painful stings. The only way to keep the column away was to pour boiling water along it. They would then disperse. In any event, if you put a sealed packet of sugar on the kitchen shelf, within two days the ants had gutted it and eaten all the contents.

I wore trousers tucked into my boots, which were made of thin leather. One day, a huge tarantula spider gripped my knee. I tried to shake it off but it held on tightly to my trousers. In desperation, I screamed with fear. My headboy came running and saw the problem He said: "I do it" and went off to get a box of matches. He lit one and held it near the spider, which immediately relinquished its grip and jumped off.

Like Europeans, Africans caught malaria. Most couldn't afford mosquito nets; prisoners were sprayed with citronella at night. (2) While travelling to and from Africa,

Europeans also smeared it on the skin as mosquito repellent.

In spite of all these privations, I enjoyed my time in Africa. I was young and it was an adventure. Because of our circumstances, Eric didn't want children and we didn't start a family. This turned out to be a blessing, as he was soon to die.

A few weeks after I arrived, Eric said he was going to teach me to drive. There were few proper roads in Nigeria then; mostly there were dirt tracks that were not wide enough for more than one car and even then, pedestrians would have to stand aside. We heard about Europeans who suffered accidents in that way.

I was nonetheless thrilled to be learning. Our vehicle was a truck with a flat, roofless back. I learned quickly, and one night Eric said he was going to teach me to drive in the dark. There was no electricity and thus no street lights. There were no L plates either.

When I received notification of the date of my driving test, Eric took me out for a practice run. To my horror, we came to a very wide ravine with only two planks across it. I screamed that I couldn't carry on, but Eric insisted and anyway, it was impossible to turn back. He told me to just keep driving straight ahead. As I drove across the planks, they moved. I was horrified as if I missed a plank the van would fall into the ravine. My heart was in my mouth, apparently though, it wasn't as dangerous as I thought.

I passed my driving test two days later. I was proud, and decided to drive alone. There was a makeshift shelter in our garden consisting of four wooden posts supporting a corrugated iron roof. On returning from my drive, I drove into the shelter. As I did so, I knocked over one of the posts, and the corrugated iron roof fell on the van. I managed to

get out, but the noise caused all the servants and Eric to come out. They checked to see if the vehicle was damaged, but no one asked if I was all right; there was however no damage done. Except to my ego!

Eric and I had to drive up country to arrange purchases of palm oil from the native farmers. We took turns driving. We were in an open top car; behind us sat our two servants: James and his assistant Dopey.

I noticed that when I was driving, they always turned round with their feet over the end of the vehicle. When I asked James why, he replied: "When Missus do drive, we be ready to jump".

They had a low opinion of my driving, and they were right. When I returned to England, I failed my driving test several times.

In Nigeria, snakes were venomous and had to be guarded against. Every night, our car had to be covered with a tarpaulin to prevent them from curling up inside and then biting us as we got in the next day.

One particularly dangerous species was a small green snake called the aye-aye because it was so quick the victim had no time to say even these words. (3) One Englishman told me how he had noticed one near his foot and was terrified that his life had come to an end. Then, to his relief, the snake slithered away instead of biting him.

Once, while driving by day from our home to the company warehouse about two miles away, I saw a snake on the road. I accelerated to run over it, but Eric saw it too and ordered me to stop until it had slithered to the side. He explained that if the car went over it, the snake would jump up into the engine and stay there in the warm. When the car stopped, it would emerge and bite anyone in the vicinity. The snake should thus be allowed to go its own

way in peace. When we arrived at the warehouse, the African night watchman was asleep. Eric had to shake him repeatedly before he woke up.

At Onitsha, I would see legless lepers going along the road on wheeled trolleys. Each time I saw the same leper again, I noticed that fingers or limbs had rotted away in the meantime. Luckily, after the war, a cure was found, so this sad sight has gone.

There was a Catholic missionary from Ireland known as Father Joe. (4) He had been in Onitsha since he became a priest. His skin was red from cooking with palm oil, which was made of the red palm oil kernels that were exported to Britain to make margarine. He was very small and thin but had a big smile.

Aided by his African worshippers, he had built a Catholic Church near Onitsha. While doing so he wore only shorts. The African women were very inquisitive and asked him "You be white on your knee, on your arms, on your chest and your legs. You be white all over?"
He replies "Yes!"

Father Joe told me how he had nearly lost his life when he arrived to commence his missionary work. The locals decided that, as he was white, he must be evil and they should therefore eat him. So they started boiling a huge pan of water. Terrified, he started to pray. Then the chief appeared and saved his life by telling the people "He be good man".

Father Joe lived like a native. For breakfast he ate plantain, which was like a huge banana. (5) It was dried in the sun and then crushed into powder which was made into porridge. He seldom travelled, as he was growing old; he stayed next to the church he had built and would live there until he died.

Father Joe took a confession from me and granted absolution. Then we had tea. I asked him why the meat was so tough in Nigeria whatever the cut. He advised me to wrap it in banana leaves for two days before cooking because that acted as a tenderiser. I also told him I had received some seeds from my English in-laws which included a packet of cabbage seeds. I planted these without success because the leaves acted like a flower instead of growing together to produce a heart. Father Joe said he had learned that if a stick was pierced sideways through the cabbage stem and left there, the leaves would grow inwards.

I loved gardening, but couldn't do it in the daytime because of the great heat. Instead, I preferred to spend the evening gardening instead of going to the club for cocktails with the other Europeans. Father Joe told me the best vegetable garden was the prison garden.

Without telling Eric, I called the African prison warden into our apartment. The prisoners waited in the road while I asked him if the prison garden had a surplus of green vegetables as I wanted to buy some because my own vegetable patch was a failure. All the vegetables we Europeans ate were tinned ones shipped from England. He said he would sell me some.

A week later, the Warden stopped his prisoners on the riverside road outside the apartment and brought me a little sack of beautiful French beans, tomatoes and lettuce. I was thrilled; I hadn't seen French beans since leaving England. I paid him and we both smiled with pleasure.

Two weeks or so later, we did the same again, but as I opened the bag, I found among the other vegetables a very long twisted cucumber. I had never seen one and asked him what it was. He explained that it was a snake tomato. When

I cut it, I found inside it was red and smelled like a tomato, in any event, my cook knew exactly what it was.

I was thrilled about the snake tomato. I decided to tell Eric because he was beginning to ask why the prison guard always stopped outside his office. When he heard what I had been doing, he burst out laughing. I believe the reason he and I were never ill in Africa was because of the lovely, green, fresh vegetables.

People wore no deodorant in those days, especially Africans. European and African sweat smelt different and this was mutually unacceptable. I once saw an African woman walk past a perspiring Englishman, holding her nose! (6)

Once I lost my glasses and asked my boy to look for them. He came back and said: "I look 'em, see 'em, but no find 'em".

I kept asking him why he didn't bring them. Eric laughed, explaining that in Pidgin English "See 'em" meant merely that he had seen them and thus knew what they looked like.

The next day, my boy came in covered in sweat carrying the glasses. He had remembered that I had visited a friend's house and must have left them there, so he had walked all the way there to fetch them.

Eric and I would sometimes go upriver on the Niger in a long boat to buy produce. When we saw another boat coming the other way, our boy would shout greetings to the crew of the other boat. I asked the boy if he knew them; he always answered: "He be my brother".

I couldn't believe one man could have so many brothers. When I asked Eric, he said the word "brother" meant of the same tribe, rather than of the same parent.

He explained that Nigerians would recognise other members of the tribe by their facial markings. When a

baby was born, a witch-doctor would create tribal markings on its face by making cuts into which grit was placed to create ridges. Any other man with the same markings was a brother. Eric then told me to ask our houseboy each time he greeted someone as his brother: "Same father, same mother?"

The answer was always no; they were merely members of the same tribe.

We went all over the country buying produce. On the riverboat journey there were few mosquitoes, but we were plagued by sandflies - like tiny little specks of soot. They would land on your hand or face and sting. You didn't even have the pleasure of killing them because they were barely visible, but you couldn't catch malaria from sandflies.

At Onitsha, one would get tinned food imported from England on the John Holt ship. I always opened our tins to ensure the food was edible. If there was a whoosh of air when I inserted the tin opener, I knew the contents were inedible. Once when this happened, I gave the tin to the houseboy to dispose of. Each tin had to be crushed or burned and then buried to prevent it filling with water and becoming a breeding ground for mosquitoes. I didn't ensure the houseboy burned the tins. To my horror, I saw Dopey, the junior boy, eating the meat from the tin. The next day, I was amazed to see him suffering no ill effects at all.

Eric and I had to go to the bush for a few days every month to buy bags of red palm kernels, cocoa beans groundnuts from the African farmers. We went in a truck with our two houseboys James and Dopey riding in the back. Every three hours I would take over driving from Eric to give him a rest.

As well as buying produce, we traded brightly coloured, very thin cotton from Lancashire for African women to use as loin cloths and big turbans. I bought some and used it for a dress. I had to make it by hand because I didn't own a sewing machine, and anyway, in those days, sewing machines were peddle powered. The first time I wore it, African women stared at me, dumbfounded that a white woman would wear the same brightly patterned cloth as they did. I didn't know if they were flattered or not by my imitating their style. In any event, I found this thin cotton very comfortable; it was unbearable to wear nylon in the African heat.

An African man was walking his cow when the wind from the car made the animal fall over with its legs in the air. It was a funny sight and our boys laughed. I learned the man was taking the poor beast to be slaughtered; it was unharmed, but Eric gave the owner the price of a new cow. Then he insisted on taking over the driving.

"I am all right", I protested.

"But I am not" was his reply.

While on these long drives around the bush, Eric and I developed a game to alleviate the discomfort. In the villages were bare-chested African women. For the sight of "half-coconut breasts" on his side of the road, he got three points; for "bag of shot", two points; and for "razor strap", one point. I got the same points for any sightings on the passenger side.

African women travelling in the bush would protect themselves from rape by outlaw bushmen using a novel device. A woman would wear a loincloth and a twine of string between her legs like a sanitary towel. It was the same colour as their dark skin and was thus invisible. It prevented penetration!

Once, Eric received a letter from the headman of a town we had visited previously stating that our headboy James had fathered a child there and compensation was required. Eric grumbled but sent the requisite payment and never heard anymore about it.

If any bushman was convicted of theft from a farm, he was sentenced to a period of imprisonment at Onitsha. There, prisoners had three meals a day and a mosquito net at night. They worked on road mending. They actually thought they were staying at a grand hotel!

One day, I told Eric that I wanted to visit the prison. He agreed, so I arranged it. I was received by the Governor, a young, ex-public schoolboy who spoke French. He told me he had trouble with one prisoner, a wild bushman who had been sentenced to several months for stealing from a farm.

While inside, he was given soap to wash himself, regular meals and a mosquito net, luxuries he had never had. During the day, he worked with the other prisoners on road building. When his sentence was completed and he was told he was free to leave, he was distraught and asked why he was being "sacked". He refused to leave, and was given a few jobs for a little while until finally the prison forced him out. (7)

Shoes were a luxury for Africans then. If it started raining, any African fortunate enough to be wearing a pair would take them off and carry them on his head under his umbrella to keep them dry and clean. The natives even played football without boots (which they could not afford).

The most arrogant of the Nigerians were the Hausas. The men wore long white robes and were very proud because they considered themselves superior to the Christian Southern Nigerians. Like other Moslems, when Hausa men

urinated, they lifted their robes and squatted down like women.

The Doctor's wife couldn't have children and instead doted on the dog she had brought from England. One day, it disappeared. She was distraught. Her African servants were sent to search for it, to no avail.

She then put up notices offering a £5 reward, a huge sum in Nigeria then where the basic currency was a "ninnie" (quarter of a penny). Still the dog wasn't found. Then, one night in the Europeans' club, one man said to another in a loud voice that the only time the Doctor's wife would see her dog again was when an African appeared wearing its skin as shoes, having eaten the flesh. She heard, and burst into tears. I took her into the lavatory where she sobbed.

To have a fat belly was a sign of wealth and importance to African men. (8) To enhance this, when delivering a baby boy, the midwife would purposely cut the umbilical cord away from the navel so the child would grow with a protuberance from his stomach. Portly African men walked around proudly with their robes stretched out from their bellies like pregnant women, but from the additional umbilical point. (9)

An African man wouldn't sleep with his wife while she was breastfeeding as if she became pregnant the milk supply would stop and the child would die. Richer African men would therefore buy a second wife, so the first one could thereby then be left to breastfeed while the second wife helped with the housework (but incurred the jealously of the first). An African man was judged by the number of wives he had.

In 1934, a woman in Canada gave birth to quintuplets. The documentary about this extraordinary event called *Five Times Five* was shown in Nigeria in 1940. (10) The

natives were disgusted because they believed only animals produced more than one child at a time. If an African woman had twins, she was ashamed and would quickly kill one of them so she could say she had borne only one child.

My headboy James came to me and asked: "White women have five piccins in one go! She be English?"

I replied that she was Canadian. He was pleased these babies were born in a country not connected with Nigeria and exclaimed: "Good, she be an animal!"

In 1940, between boat trips to Onitsha, I heard about one of the John Holt managers in another city. He was well known as a teetotaller, so never drank at social gatherings. Everyone else drank gin or whisky at palm oil chicken parties, or before eating Nigerian curry, but not him. Anyway, no one drank alcohol before sundown because of the heat.

Then he felt ill and the doctor was called. The diagnosis was alcoholism. Nobody could believe it. It was discovered he was a secret drinker; even his wife didn't know. He would send his headboy to buy whisky which he would hide under his pillow. Every time a bottle was emptied, the boy would buy a replacement. The manager was dismissed from his post and sent home, to everyone's amazement.

There were English bachelors employed as managers by John Holt and the Colonial Administration. Each one would have a bungalow and three African servants: a cook (called cuckoo), a headboy, and a gardener. The headboy was given money to supply his master with meals. Sometimes, a single Englishman would be posted to Nigeria. To obtain sexual relief, the man would pay his boy (African housekeeper) to procure him an African woman who would become the white man's secret, resident mistress.

When a manager returned to Nigeria from leave in Britain with his new English wife, she took over the preparation of meals. The headboy hated this because he could no longer buy the food and make a profit from it. There was one instance I heard about when the headboy tried to kill his master's new wife. He secretly laced a meal with the fibrous centre of an African artichoke-type plant. These fibres were indigestible and stayed in the lining of her stomach, irritating it. A doctor would find it impossible to diagnose. The woman became ill and was taken to hospital. The cook was interrogated and said it wasn't him, but the headboy who had fled; he was the one who had taken the food into the dining room. Luckily for the wife, the hospital doctor was able to diagnose the problem, and rinsed her stomach.

Word got round and, from then on, any newly married manager would get a new headboy who would be hired on the basis of the manager's wife doing the cooking.

Ju-ju men (witch-doctors) would do the same when paid by an African. They would put poisoned glass around the intended victim's hut so that he would cut his bare feet. They would then tell him his death was imminent, thereby scaring the poor man to death.

If the master had a dinner and unexpectedly invited extra guests at the last minute, his cook was always able to provide enough food. I couldn't understand how this was done until I learned that on such occasions the cook would ask all the other cooks to let him have the necessary extra food.

At that time, I read a book called *Justice And Juju In Nigeria*. (11) It described how before British rule, the bodies of victims of human sacrifice were impaled on huge thorns on the trunks of juju trees. British administrators

prohibited the practice and cut down the juju trees about ten years before my arrival. My curiosity was aroused and I decided to try to find a forbidden juju tree. When we were out of Onitsha buying produce, while Eric was supervising its weighing, I went off secretly into the bush looking for a tree that had grown since they were all cut down. I found a juju tree about my height and looked for a stone to break off one of its thorns to prove I had, yet couldn't break one off.

I realised it was getting late, then noticed from my watch that it was 6.30pm. Nightfall was 7pm sharp. It became dark within a few minutes in Nigeria. I panicked because I wouldn't have time to get back home. Then I saw a woman with a baby in her arms. She pushed it towards me and it screamed with fear at its first sight of a white woman.

Meanwhile, Eric returned home and asked where I was. Dopey, the assistant houseboy pointed in the direction I had gone. They came out looking for me.

After nightfall, I was relieved when a torch shone on me and a voice called my name. I promised Eric I would never venture into the bush again without telling him.

One day, while I was sitting on the veranda reading a book, a huge praying mantis landed on my lap. I moved my skirt to get rid of it, but the more I did so, the deeper the insect gripped. I screamed with fear. The houseboy answered and grabbed it, pulling it off with some difficulty, then threw it to the ground.

That evening, Eric and I were invited to a dinner party. There were about eight European couples there; we were all sitting drinking in a big room lit by Tilley lamps when a bat flew in. The women all covered their heads with their hands. The host called the headboy to bring his tennis racket. As the bat was hit, it was driven into my face then

onto my lap. I was terrified, but the boy picked it up and threw it out of the room.

The periodic sandstorms caused my nose to be congested with all the particles stuck to the skin inside. I kept scooping up water in my palm and sniffing it, to try to dislodge them, to no avail. Eric said that wouldn't do any good and told me to use Vaseline. I did, but again to no avail. The native Nigerians who lived near the Sahara Desert were used to it, so wore scarves across their faces.

Englishmen in Africa wore long woollen socks. I had knitted some for Eric. The second pair were perfect and I had joked to my mother-in-law that they were so perfect, he would never wear them. She responded "Many a true word is spoken in jest". She was right.

They also wore long baggy shorts and no underpants because of the heat. This meant that when a man was standing with one foot on a rest, seated women got an eyeful because they could see his private parts through the wide trouser leg. Once, when I was sitting next to an Englishwoman with her husband who was standing talking to us, he rested one foot on a chair revealing his wedding tackle through his shorts. I didn't mind at all, but his wife was embarrassed and told him to stand up straight.

One night, when Eric went to bed early, I sat down on the chair by his bed to kiss him goodnight through the mosquito net. As I did so, I squashed his glasses. Luckily, he had another pair which were on his bedside stool.

For recreation, I played a little tennis, but it was too strenuous in the heat. Instead, Eric persuaded me to play golf with him There was no golf course in Onitsha, so we played in the bush. The boy would help us find where the ball had gone. I hit the ball into some stones, but the boy jumped back from them. Curious, I lifted up the largest

stone with my golf club and I too jumped back. There was a large snake coiled up under it. I didn't play golf again, anyway, I was no good at it.

A young man was sent from England as an assistant to my husband. He had no car, so someone had to drive him everywhere. As very few Africans could drive at that time, Eric had to do it. The newcomer lived in the flat next to ours; it had its own staircase and entrance. We advised him of the do's and don't's of living in Nigeria. For instance, after a game of tennis at the club, one would go straight home, take a shower, then put on a dry shirt before returning to spend the evening in the clubhouse. He laughed at our advice and paid the price for it. The following week, he had to go to the hospital because he was suffering from prickly heat, as his salty sweat had inflamed his skin. His armpits and chest were raw and red.

Another precaution was always to shake mosquito boots, shoes or slippers before putting them on, in case a scorpion had got inside as they liked the dark. One day, Eric heard through the window (12) a piercing scream which I still remember vividly three quarters of a century later. The boy rushed in to tell us that the master next door was injured. The man had got out of the bath and put on his slippers without shaking them. While he was bathing, a scorpion had got into the slipper and stung him as he put his foot in it. He had rushed out naked into the garden screaming with pain. Eric drove him to the hospital immediately. Unfortunately, I missed this rather interesting sight as I was the other side of the house. He was treated successfully, although when he returned he was using a crutch with a swollen foot.

A district commissioner (local governor) came out to Onitsha with his wife and her sister. This impressed the

Africans and my boy came to tell me: "He big man, he have two wives".

The sister-in-law was a keen horse rider, but the horses in Nigeria were fiercely excitable Arab horses and were uncontrollable, unlike those back home. Eric had been a keen horse rider in Sussex, and had won cups for it, but wouldn't mount any of these horses, and prevented me from doing so, even though I had had riding lessons in England.

The Commissioner's sister-in-law was more foolhardy; she insisted on riding the local horses. When one was stung by a horsefly it would go berserk. She was thrown several times until one fall killed her. In those days, riders didn't wear crash helmets under their riding caps. (They were introduced after the war).

Some Swiss merchants arrived in Onitsha to buy cocoa beans for Swiss chocolate. The spoke poor English, and I was introduced to them as a French speaker. Eric didn't speak French and became jealous of my speaking to them. This was the reason for my avoiding the club by saying I was a light drinker. Anyway, I preferred gardening in the evening to drinking.

I was told there was going to be a big festival in the main square of Onitsha to honour a recently deceased local chief. People from all the surrounding villages were coming to watch. The witch-doctors and some white people in Onitsha had been to such festivals before and were not going again. I had never been to one, so decided to go.

The son of a chief who was home on vacation from studying in England offered to take Eric and I to the festival, and explained what was going on. Just before I went, the wife of the John Holt supervisor saw I was wearing open sandals and advised me to change into proper

shoes. I ignored her, not knowing what the consequences would be.

The festival consisted of a re-enactment of the deceased man's life by performers wearing feathers and beads, miming incidents in his life. First, a pregnant woman danced and then cried. Then a baby boy was shown to women who celebrated his birth. Then a schoolboy appeared, and so on, until all the stages of the dead man's life had been depicted. (13)

I thoroughly enjoyed it because the student explained everything, but during the performance I got something that would cause me pain. A week later, I felt an excruciating itching of my big toe. Because it was under the nail, I couldn't scratch it. I went to see the European doctor who explained I had a worm in my foot, a common local ailment caused by going barefoot in a public place. Insects laid their eggs in the dust. He said he could give me some ointment, but it would take a fortnight to kill the worm. It would be better to ask my headboy to remove it as the natives knew the problem well.

I did as advised. When I told him, my boy James recognised the problem exclaiming: "Mrs got jigger!".

I paid him and, taking a long needle, he slid it under my toenail and slowly, skilfully pulled out the worm showing it to me stuck on the end of the needle. It was a white, bristly, threadlike worm about a centimetre long.

"Look, got it. He be all right now", he said, and I was.

I never wore open toe sandals in Africa again. Apparently, the insects inject eggs into human toes which develop into burrowing worms. They embed themselves between the flesh and the toenail like a splinter. As they move, the pain is terrible.

I had bought some Rhode Island Red pedigree chickens from another European. Unfortunately, they couldn't tolerate African insect bites so pecked off all their feathers. I cured the problem by asking the headboy to bring me a pail of petrol. We dipped each bird in it, killing the parasites. The chickens became good layers but I received only some of their eggs. The servants stole the rest for their families. When my boy brought me the eggs each morning, I protested at how few there were. With a straight face he responded: "There be no more eggs".

Eric and I were offered leave in South Africa instead of England, which was being bombed. He had however received a letter that his mother was suffering from terminal cancer, so he wanted to see her before she died. He did see her, but was himself killed on the return journey to Africa. His mother outlived him.

Preparing to leave Nigeria, I gave my Rhode Island Red chickens to a friend I knew at the club. He took them and housed them in a pen in his garden. The next night, his supposedly placid Cocker Spaniel got into the pen and killed them all.

I also had to give away my beloved parrot, Polly. It had been gifted to me by a departing expat when I arrived in the country. I found it to be very friendly and intelligent. It bonded with me because I fed it, but my African servants hated the bird because it made a mess on the floor under its perch; it also disturbed their afternoon rest. From 2-4pm – the hottest part of the day - everyone, including the servants, went to sleep, but the parrot remained awake and used to imitate its former master calling "Boy" for his servant. This woke our headboy James, who hearing the call thought it was Eric.

This led to an unfortunate incident. One afternoon while the houseboy was having his nap, the parrot woke him up with its call "Boy!". Annoyed, he hit it whereupon the enraged bird flew off its perch and dug its sharp beak deep into his calf and wouldn't let go in spite of his pulling at it. I heard his screams of pain and rushed in to help him. He was bleeding. I said softly: "Polly, Polly, come on". The bird disengaged and came to me. The boy never hit it again.

Luckily, I had no time to grieve for my former pets as I was busy packing all my cutlery and small furniture into a big crate to be kept until our return.

We were told we were going back to England in a convoy that was taking all sorts of produce to Liverpool. With us was an enormous, flat-bottomed boat full of aviation spirit which must have come from somewhere in South Africa. The Commodore was the officer directing the convoy; the Captain was second and had no say in the matter.

The Commodore decided who sat at his table in the dining room. He liked to practise his French on me, so I was always seated next to him while my husband was placed next to the Chief Engineer who was the third ranking person on the ship. One day, the Commodore asked me if I noticed that he always tapped a biscuit sideways on the table before eating it. He said it was to shake out any weevils living in it. He added that he even did this at home, out of habit. I copied him and always tapped biscuits on board.

We left and after the first dinner sitting next to the Commodore, we spoke a bit in French. He was pleased to have someone to converse with; unfortunately, I found his French very difficult to understand but chattered on because I knew he was trying to impress everyone. He told me we were being accompanied by two destroyers which

would escort us to a place somewhere in the ocean. There we would be left waiting for two destroyers from England which the Americans had recently given to Britain. During the wait, the engines were switched off to avoid attracting the attention of U-boats. The engineer showed me around the engine room. I was amazed by the amount of heavy machinery. The new destroyers escorted us to Liverpool while the two original ones would wait to escort another convoy to Africa.

I asked the Commodore why there were so many tiny little flags going up and down every two minutes on deck. I called it hanging out your washing. He said it was because no radio signals could be given to the rest of the convoy (to follow at a certain distance) in case U-boats listened. It was a way of communicating to one another silently.

The Commodore ordered the ships to zig-zag in order to confuse U-boats. This caused the wall panels to crack, and our Captain complained loudly to him. I head then shouting at each other. The Captain protested: "This is my ship. Don't damage it".

The Commodore retorted: "It is my convoy!"

When we were shown to our cabin, we were told never to shut the door because of the zig-zagging which would cause us to be locked in. We complied, but in any event the doors could not be locked during the war to make escaping easier in case of sinking.

We went past Sierra Leone which I was told had the hottest damp climate. While there we were constantly soaked in sweat. We dozed off.

There was a rule on the ship that staff could kiss any woman having a snooze on deck. (14) One of the stewards told me that he was unlucky because he never found me asleep while I was resting on deck.

One day at dinner, which was the only meal we had with the Commodore, I was talking with my hands as usual and knocked over a wine glass. It broke, and I felt sorry but he said: "Never mind. Now listen to what's going to happen".
The steward came and picked up the pieces of the glass from the floor. The Commodore told him to leave the galley door open. Two minutes later, everybody in there was toasting Mrs Munday: "Hip, hip, hooray to Mrs Munday" three times.
I asked: "Why do they do that?"
The steward replied: "Because you broke the glass, There is an old superstition in the Merchant Navy that when a wine glass is accidentally broken, it is a sure sign of a safe journey".
I said I could break another for extra luck, but was informed that good luck only followed an accidental breakage. The breakage had been caused by my French gesticulation. My husband used to say that, if my hands were tied, I would not be able to speak.
Later, the Commodore told the Captain: "We cannot sail too close to the flat-bottomed ship with the inflammable aviation spirit".

Where was it? It was supposed to be a certain distance from the next ship in the convoy as a safety measure on account of its cargo. This meant the convoy had to slow down; if it came too near, the Commodore would send a signal by flag telling it to fall back a bit.

The delay made us twenty-four hours late at the rendezvous off Dakar to join the two destroyers waiting for us on the second leg of our voyage. However, a U-boat was also waiting, under the water. It too was wondering why the convoy was late for its rendezvous with the destroyers, so raised its periscope. The destroyers saw the periscope and

dropped depth charges. They must have hit the U-boat because a little later, oil came to the surface.

At six o'clock the next morning there was a knock on our cabin door: "Please would you come on deck?"

I dressed quickly, went on deck, and was shown the patch of oil from the U-boat. I was told it was because I had broken that wine glass. Actually, it was the twenty-four hour delay caused by the flat-bottomed aviation fuel boat that had saved us. We duly joined our new destroyer escorts and arrived in Liverpool safely. The first thing we saw there was an enormous barrage balloon which it was thought would stop the German planes coming over the city; it was not a success, the city was bombed.

When we docked at Liverpool, we received food and clothing ration coupons. The first thing I did was to go quickly to a shop and buy a pair of very warm fur boots and a winter coat. We of course had a book of clothing coupons apiece as we couldn't buy anything without them. A ration book was also needed for food. The boots I bought were navy blue with square toes, as that was the fashion. We travelled by train and then a taxi straight to my in-laws at Eastbourne.

Eric Munday, date unknown.

Chapter Eleven: The Young Widow

While in Eastbourne, Eric volunteered for the Home Guard. When it was time to return to Nigeria, he was informed that owing to the shortage of ships caused by U-boat raids, there was room for him and him alone on the voyage. The place I was to occupy had been commandeered for an expert in groundnut oil extraction (to make margarine). I would have to follow at a later date on another cargo ship. Sadly, my husband bid his terminally ill mother goodbye expecting to receive news of her demise in Nigeria, by a twist of fate, however, she would learn of his death when his ship went down with no survivors having been torpedoed by a U-boat.

It happened like this: one morning a letter came from the John Holt company addressed to Eric's mother; she had the same surname as me (Mrs Munday) and seeing it was postmarked Liverpool, she handed it to me thinking it was to inform me as to when I was to join Eric in Nigeria. It wasn't, rather it stated the three ships in his convoy had been sunk, and there were no survivors. (1) The letter asked that she should please break the news gently to her daughter-in-law (ie me). I would have been married exactly two years on that date.

The shock of the letter stunned us. We couldn't believe there were no survivors. I would learn later there had actually been one survivor from the convoy; he had been rescued and taken to Sierra Leone, for all the good it did him. He caught yellow fever there and died shortly. (2)

I grieved too for the widow of the Chief Engineer on the company ship, the *Jonathan Holt.* He was devoted to his only child, a young boy who would make model ships while

his father was at sea. Before departing on his last voyage, Eric said the Chief Engineer was downcast because while he was on leave, his adored son had died of meningitis. I now felt sorry for the poor mother, having lost first her son and then her husband in quick succession.

Seventy-five years later when I had reached the age of a hundred, I remembered how lucky I was to have survived such a near death. I believe Fate plays a vital part in people's lives.

My mother-in-law and sister-in-law heard there was a good fortune teller in Eastbourne. I went to see this supposed clairvoyant with my sister-in-law in tow, taking something which had belonged to my late husband. I can't remember exactly what it was.

On arriving for our appointment, we were received by a woman in a room with a crystal ball on the table. She took hold of Eric's chattel and looked into the ball. She said she could see a young man with a head bandaged in a foreign country, dazed, among strangers. She added that he would come back. My sister-in-law told her mother and it made her happy, but I didn't believe the gypsy. Her predictions were wrong. My husband hadn't survived and wasn't living as a stranger elsewhere.

This made me think about the gypsy woman I saw peddling her wares in Nancy when I lived there with my sister in 1930. (3) Her predictions came true!

Alone in England at this time with my parents-in-law and maiden sister-in-law, I was absolutely devastated in more ways than one.

Having come to terms with my husband's death, I had the unwelcome task of disposing of his effects. (4) The main item was his photographic negatives. His hobby had been landscape photography on which he lavished much time.

He would for instance spend hours waiting for the exact point during the sunset to take a good photo.

I decided this huge collection of black and white negatives were of no commercial value or interest to anyone, so sadly I burned them while reflecting that this was what had been a man's lifelong passion. (5)

A man was found sitting in a field near Eastbourne. When the air raid wardens questioned him, he spoke perfect English but was eating bread and wurst. At that time, this German sausage was unobtainable in Britain. He was arrested and taken to the nearest police station, where he was interrogated and found to be a German spy who had been parachuted into England. He was sentenced to death. (6)

It was prohibited to walk on the seaside promenade. Once, when coming home from a dance at night, I strayed near it. Two wardens stopped me and asked for my name and address. I explained to them I was staying with my mother-in-law in Blackwater Road. My foreign accent aroused their suspicions; they escorted me home and rang the bell. Then they checked that my mother-in-law knew me, and left. I had avoided being arrested as a spy.

The *Grand Hotel* Eastbourne had a magnificent ballroom with a spring floor. During the war the building was requisitioned by the Royal Air Force, but the ballroom was locked to prevent service personal ruining it with their heavy boots. They complained, saying that if the Germans invaded they would use the ballroom.

The nearby church was less fortunate. Instead of being machine-gunned, it received a direct hit from a bomb; the people sheltering there were all killed. (7)

The next day however, there was some light relief. Lord Haw-Haw announced proudly on the German propaganda

radio station that there had been a successful raid on the industrial town of Eastbourne. We all laughed; the only activity here was residential. (8)

Chapter Twelve:
Training With The Red Cross

After a time, I decided I couldn't stay in England during the war. I remembered that one of my father's brothers had emigrated to Ohio, so I went to the American Embassy asking if I could emigrate there. I was told I could if my uncle invited me, but I didn't know his address. I was asked to give his name and his full address, but I knew only that he lived in Ohio. I was told Ohio was a big state and that it would be impossible to trace him. I went home devastated.

In January 1942, all unmarried female British citizens between the ages of twenty and thirty were conscripted. (Britain and Japan were the only countries to have female conscription in the Second World War). As I had become British by marriage, I was liable for military service and was called up for the Army Territorial Corps. The prospect of me saying: "Yes sir, no sir" and with the unpopularity of France at the time (due to its having given up all its navy to the Germans), this didn't appeal to me. I certainly had to think seriously about it. For a time, my late husband had been secretary to Mrs Philipson, Member of Parliament for Berwick-upon-Tweed. (1) She lived nearby in Sussex; I called her, and she asked to see me immediately.

After talking with her, we decided to go to London where we would see a friend of hers who worked for the War Office. (2) First, we went to lunch at the Scots Guards' Club, then she went to a room to have a chat with him alone. (3) He told her the only way for me to avoid the ATC was if I would pass the necessary examinations to become a nurse because nurses were in short supply. It was then

decided I would definitely pursue a career in nursing. I didn't like that idea very much either, but it was that or the ATC, so I became a nurse.

To join the Red Cross, I needed a reference, so asked a distinguished relative of my mother-in-law. He was an Alderman of the City of London and might have been elected Mayor, but couldn't afford the costs that would entail. He wrote a reference for me saying he had known me for several years and I came from a family of substance. This was borne out by my passport which had as my then address Château *d'Eu, Nice*.

On returning to Eastbourne, I enrolled in the Red Cross, but before I could become fully qualified, I needed to do thirty hours voluntary work in a hospital and then take three examinations: one on first aid, and two on home nursing.

One examination was oral, the others were written. On completion of these I became a member of a Voluntary Aid Detachment – a VAD - in a military hospital and didn't go into either the Auxiliary Territorial Service or the regular army.

I went to see the Matron of Saint Mary's Hospice near Beachy Head, where I would do my voluntary work, explaining my situation to her. She looked at me very sternly and I knew exactly what she was thinking: "You want to be a nurse? I'll teach you!"

She agreed to take me on to work there. I asked her to let me do as many hours as quickly as possible. She said: "I think two or three hours a day would be sufficient".

I agreed, and duly arrived on the Monday morning to commence my duty. I was put in the sluices cleaning bedpans. I don't know how I managed it; I was given the bedpan from which I had to remove the paper with wooden

tongs kept in a glass of disinfectant. Then I emptied the bedpan, washing it in boiling water and placing it upright to dry. I was glad to go home, but I couldn't face a meal as I had that picture and the smell in my mind at all times.

The next day I went again to the sluices. The third day, I thought Matron would let me go on the ward. Oh no! I spent a whole week in the sluices. Matron thought I'd give up, but I didn't.

The next Monday morning I was told to go into the women's ward to help make beds, etc. That ward was very nice; all the patients were bedridden. There I learned how to make beds and make myself useful until one day a lady told me that the woman in the next bed had stolen her property. This wasn't possible however as the accused patient was unable to get out of her own bed, much less reach her neighbour's. I tried to persuade the lady that she must have misplaced it, but she was adamant that the other lady had indeed stolen her property. When I asked her what it was, she told me it was a little embroidered handkerchief. We made her bed and tidied up all around, then lo and behold, an old white handkerchief was found.

"Is that your property?" I asked.

The lady replied: "She must have put it back while no one was looking".

Problem solved!

Two days later, I was transferred to the men's ward, a very large room. All the patients were extremely old; one special patient was a Nineteenth Century war veteran. He was nearly a hundred years old, and every day when I made his bed, I asked him what regiment he was in.

He would reply: "Today I am in the Air Force".

An Air Force cap was then put on his head after he was washed and cleaned. The next day he could be a naval man,

then he had a naval cap. He seemed like a very nice man, and I liked him a lot, but Sister told me to be cautious of him. She gave me the following advice: "If he asks you for a bottle to pass water, for Heaven's sake go and get one as quick as you can because by the time you come back he'd just tell you that you've been too late and the bed would then be wet...He's really not a very nice chap".

By contrast, I found him quite pleasant. As I was French, he told me about the time he was in France during the First World War. Suddenly, while I was making the bed he called: "Nurse, a bottle!"

I went to him and said I'd be back in two minutes.

He said: "No, no, don't rush. I can wait".

"Are you sure?" I asked.

He replied: "I can't wait because she told you that I can't wait, but I can".

I brought the bottle and said: "Yes, you've been very good. You can wait".

He said he hated Matron and she didn't like him, so when she was on duty he called for the bottle and wetted the bed, so it gave her a nice lot of work and she couldn't do anything about it!

"Ha, ha", I said, "you're a naughty boy, but I like you".

"I like you too", he said.

And I never had any trouble with my little man.

My last day there, as I got out into the street, the air raid warning sounded, and I saw a little girl all by herself. I just grabbed her, rushed back to the hospice and hid under a table until the all-clear sounded. I asked her if she knew where she lived. She replied "Yes", and off to her home we went.

Children from London were evacuated to Eastbourne; most were lower class Cockney kids. As a Red Cross

member, I had to help look after them. We wrote their names on labels to be stuck to their coats and put them on trains, each with a small case and a gas mask. Before they went, we fed them in the local cafés. I was amazed at their table manners (or lack of them). When served with peas they used neither spoon nor fork, instead they scooped them up on the flat sides of their knives which they then put in their mouths. I was afraid they would cut their lips. I asked Matron if I should stop them but she said: "No" and explained they were from poorer homes and knew how to eat like that.

Every night, while I was at the hospice, I used to go to the Red Cross building where I made a lot of friends. We talked and they helped immensely in preparing for my exams. One morning, I presented myself by appointment at ten o'clock in the Red Cross centre to take my written nursing exam. I more or less answered all the questions correctly, I think, except for when I was asked what do you do for bed sores? I couldn't remember if it was boric acid, but my exam was duly finished.

In the evening, when I went back to the Red Cross centre, they asked what I had answered to this and that question. They had the paper, and when I said boric acid, everybody roared with laughter and said I wouldn't get many patients in my hospital and I realised why.

Next day, I went for my first aid examination. I entered a room where an old sister was standing - a big lady - while an elderly doctor was sitting at the desk. He asked "What is your name?" without lifting his head up. When I pronounced my name and address, he looked at me and said: "You are French".

I replied: "Yes", and naturally he started babbling a bit of French to show the nurse he could speak it as well as I

could. I didn't understand much of what he said, but nonetheless got on very well with him.

He asked me a few questions about first aid, then told me to go to the nurse who was standing nearby. He said that she had a broken arm and I should put a sling on her. I started putting on the sling, I was nervous and couldn't remember if the knot should be tied on the sling on the injured shoulder or on the other side. I had to plump for one and as I went towards the one, the sister looked at me, and with her spare hand pushed the sling onto the other side. I understood at once and followed her instructions with a good outcome. I would have missed that. Then it was time to say goodbye, as all my exams were finished.

Four or five days later, we were told the examination results had been posted on the Red Cross noticeboard. I rushed straight there after breakfast to check if I'd passed. I remember vividly four stone steps at the entrance; the results were in two columns on the noticeboard. I looked at the first column and couldn't see my name. I noticed it in the second column, but didn't know what this meant. I thought the first column contained passes and the second, failures. I went down the stairs thinking I'd failed when one of my commandants asked me if I'd passed. This was Jane Newman, a great friend. I told her I'd failed, but she said I couldn't have and led me back to the noticeboard.

On seeing it, she told me I had indeed passed, pointing out that the columns had nothing to do with it; P stood for passed while F stood for failed. The letter P was against my name. Jane told me we must go out and celebrate. (4)

At breakfast, I usually had only buttered toast, so I was preparing myself to celebrate on an empty stomach, I didn't drink. However, this was an exception as it was a special occasion. We went to the hotel next door, where the

barman knew her very well, as she owned a hotel nearby on the seafront which her father had left her (and which still exists). The hotel she was running was conveniently situated on the Parade at Eastbourne. She ordered two Pimms No 1's. I'd never heard of this drink before, but it was lovely, sweet with lots of vegetables and fruit inside it. I drank and enjoyed it.

I was elated and loved the taste, so I ordered another one. I paid for all their drinks until it was time to go home to my mother-in-law. When I started to stand up, my legs wouldn't support me, and I sat down again telling Jane Newman my legs had given way.

She said: "You're drunk".

I replied I had only drunk fruit juice, but she told me the Pimms had spirit in it. I had to hold onto her going down the stairs, still wobbly, but the fresh air did me good. Jane left me at the door of my mother-in-law's house and disappeared. I entered the house and told everyone I had passed but wasn't feeling well. I went to bed and spent nearly the rest of the day asleep. They were under the impression it was due to my excitement.

Chapter Thirteen: The Reluctant Nurse

Brookwood Hospital (1) was a long walk from the railway station and there were no buses, so the nurses would sometimes ask soldiers to escort them. We were however warned never to allow men from General Patton's army to accompany us because American criminals were given a "get out of jail card" if they joined his unit. We were shown the badge worn by Patton's men so we could avoid them. Some Canadians were also under Patton's command.

Some of the Canadian soldiers were from Quebec and thus spoke French, so I tried to converse with them in French but found them incomprehensible because they were speaking a Mediaeval dialect, so I decide to ask them to speak to me in English.

The Canadian soldiers couldn't deal with the English climate. More of them died from pneumonia than were killed in action. Their graves are in the Canadian section of the huge Brookwood Cemetery - the largest in Britain; over 235,000 people are buried there.

I joined twelve other girls, some older than me. I met our Red Cross Commandant who was distinguished and a nicer, youngish person.

The Commanding Officer's wife came there to recuperate as she had undergone an operation in London. She was, I was told, a former Princess who had escaped from Russia. She spoke seven languages and encouraged me to speak French to her, as in Russia that was the court language. Matron also told me (though I didn't understand why) not to worry about what the other nurses said about me because I was French. Later, I found out that in England, Frenchwomen had a reputation for immorality.

Our Commandant took us back to a long, narrow nurses' dormitory where, opposite the door, were two windows. The best beds were each side of these windows. The Commandant told the most senior of us to assign the beds and that she would see us all the next morning after breakfast. The sister took charge of us like a sergeant major and went round to each of us inquiring about which ward we were going to. Then she looked at me and said: "And you, Froggie - what ward are you on?"
I replied; "Brushfield". (2)
She said: "Brushfield!" and turned to the others saying: "Poor bugger, they don't even give her a chance. It's not fair. Okay now Froggie, which bed do you want to choose?"
I said: "The one near the window".
She said: "All right, she'll have that one and I'll have the other, and the rest of you arrange yourselves". So that was that.
Later on I was puzzled and asked what Brushfield Ward was for. They said it was a women's ward. If any nurse started to flirt on the men's ward or misbehave in any other way, the sister would transfer her to Brushfield the next day. They said that as I was French they wouldn't even take the chance of placing me on a male ward.

The patients on each ward used to allude to the sister as "skin and blister".

After breakfast, we all met our Red Cross Commandant. He took us first to have our gas masks fitted. We were medically examined, given injections for anything that could happen, and issued with gas masks.

We had to roll up our sleeves and were told some of them would hurt and they could also indispose us. If so, we were told to report to a civilian doctor on the premises for the VAD. I knew a lot about these injections because I'd had

them when I went to Nigeria in the tropics, which was called the White Man's Grave. (3) Then we were taken to see Matron, who received us one after the other.

We had lunch in an enormous dining room where some of the staff of the "mental side" would also eat. Afterwards, we would collect our dirty plates and on the way out deposit them on an enormous table to be washed. We had nice, clean uniforms, and I don't know how I managed to drop a piece of beetroot on my white apron. I had to walk to the dormitory with my hand on my stomach trying to hide the offensive mark. It would happen to me!

In the morning, I arrived on Brushfield Ward, which was small compared with the others. The Sister seemed very nice; in appearance she was very big, mature, and had a Scottish accent. She greeted the five of us and gave each one our duty details. She looked at me and exclaimed: "You're French, ah", then she started telling each nurse: "You do that, do that, do that". When she came to me, she said: "You will do TPR".

I had never heard of TPR; I looked at her dazed and told her so. She looked at me with a grin and said in a whisper: "Oh my God, what are they going to send me next, you don't know TPR?"

"No, I'm sorry". She asked one of the others to explain to me what it was, then she went away and came back with a tray, a thermometer, a watch, etc. When I saw the tray, I told Sister: "I can do that".

She replied: "You've just told me you didn't know what it was".

I said: "No, I didn't know what TPR was".

"She said: "Oh, at least you're one who is not afraid to tell what you don't know anyway".

For once she gave me a smile, and I carried on.

The Sister was the only qualified person on each ward. She was in her office doing paperwork, writing reports, etc on Brushfield Ward, and learned everything.

One of the patients said to me: "Nurse, look at all the lovely greenery outside; wouldn't you like to go and pick a few leaves?"

I told her I thought that was forbidden. She said: "No, it's not really forbidden. You see we've got a vase there on the table which looks so naked. Don't worry, you go and pick a few branches and I will keep an eye on Sister. We'll tell you when she comes".

So I took a pair of scissors, went outside, and started cutting a few branches. Suddenly, an elderly man appeared from behind the bushes. Apparently, he was a harmless mental patient who did a bit of gardening. He saw me cutting the branches and began talking to me incessantly. I kept watching for Sister and picked another two or three branches, then went back to the ward, very pleased with myself. Everyone was laughing, and one of them said: "Did you hear what the man said to you?"

I responded: "No, I'm sorry, I couldn't understand what he was saying".

Apparently he swore at me incessantly and there was I smiling at him. It amused most of the ward for a long time, but not me.

A few days later, one female patient had something wrong with her head; she was all bandaged up with no hair showing at all. She told me her boyfriend was on leave and would be visiting her that afternoon. She thought she looked awful and asked me if I couldn't redo her bandages to show some of her hair. He would be horrified to see her, she said. I obliged, which was forbidden, but I managed to make her look a bit better and with some lipstick she

appeared quite attractive. I didn't see the boyfriend when he came and as I was off duty. I went back to the lodgings as usual to lie in bed, so tired. My poor legs!

We VADs were not qualified nurses and things could get chaotic. Once I had to treat a female soldier by rubbing cream on her infected nipple. I went to the medicine cupboard, but couldn't recognise what bottle to select. I asked what had been used on this patient before, but no one knew, so I selected what seemed to be a good cream and applied it liberally.

When the doctor inspected, he scraped it off and applied the correction lotion.

On the ward, it was a routine that at eleven o'clock in the morning we went for a ten minute sit down and coffee with Sister, so that we could talk about our problems or anything. One morning I was told (as I was Sister's pet by then) to go and attend to a patient who had meningitis and I was to stay and sit with her all day. I was asked not to remove her locker or anything in the room, but just dust around. In short, I couldn't make the slightest noise, as this would make her ill. Thus, my only duty that day was to sit quietly with her.

I was dusting the room as instructed when in came a big bully who used to live in Portugal, very upstage and county, with big teeth. Miss Greenhaugh had volunteered to come to England to work. Without a by your leave, she walked into the room, took all the furniture out in the corridor and said: "This is how we clean a room in England, not the way they do in France".

I couldn't argue with her because the noise would upset my patient, then she just disappeared. She was a Grade 1, the highest a nurse could attain in the VAD, and I dared not argue. Therefore, I put back the furniture as quietly as

I could, but Sister passed along the corridor, giving me a look and not a word.

Then eleven o'clock arrived and we went to have our coffee with Sister. I knew I was going to get told off for not doing what I was told. But then I got lucky when Madam Greenhaugh looked at Sister and said she had just told Mrs Munday how to clear a room properly; it was a private room, the only one there. Sister looked at me and looked at her. Though I didn't like the woman, I could have kissed her because Sister realised that I didn't complain about others.

The next day when I arrived on duty, my little patient had gone. That morning, I was told to put on an enormous gown tied at the back of my uniform as I was going to treat an ATS (army girl) who had scabies. I went to the private room and saw her there. She was a big girl but very nice. I was instructed to tell her to undress, have a bath, and give me all her uniform which I put in a bag. When she was having a bath, I cleaned the inside of her boots with disinfectant, returned to her and there she stood naked.

She had washed her hair in case of nits, but then I put lotion on her scalp to make sure there were none left. I sat her on a stool between some twelve small electric bulbs to heat her body, then painted her all over with Danish lotion. As I did so, it made a pattern with her profuse body hair. The poor girl, I had never seen such female nakedness before. As she sat before the lamps I asked her if they did anything for her?

"Yes", she said, "it itches like mad!"

After her bath, a few hours under the lamps and my disinfecting her clothes, she dressed herself and returned to her unit, cured.

A patient was brought into the private room; he couldn't move as he was a prisoner, absent without leave. He had to have a sunray on his hip. I brought the lamp but the flex wasn't long enough to reach, so I pushed the bed towards the lamp and told the patient, which I usually used to do, that he mustn't stay longer than two hours, and I would be back to see to it. I left him there, bed away from the wall near the lamp and merrily worked elsewhere. Suddenly, I looked at my watch, and it was twenty minutes later than two hours. I thought I'd killed him because this ray would hurt the bone if it was there too long. He couldn't ring for help as the bell was too far away for him to reach.

I started running along the ward when Sister saw me. She shouted: "Fire or haemorrhage?"

There was a strict rule in the hospital against running through a ward, except in cases of fire or haemorrhage. I apologised and went there slowly thinking my patient would be dead, but the boy was clever. He couldn't ring the bell as I had moved the bed away from the wall, so when the time came, and I wasn't there, he kicked the lamp so it turned to the wall. I could have kissed him; I didn't, but I was relieved. Again, I spent the rest of my off-duty in bed. All this tension was a bit much for me.

Jeannette in uniform, about 1942.

At the hospital we also treated outpatients for allergies. One ATS girl came complaining of uncontrollable coughing since she had been posted to Southern England. She worked in the kitchen. The doctor told me: "We are going to have fun".

He instructed me to put a handful of flour in a pillowcase then hold it over her mouth and face to test for an allergy. He then clapped his hands on the pillowcase so the flour went up her nose. Immediately, the ATS girl started coughing violently. She was allergic to flour and had to be taken off kitchen duty.

On another occasion, a soldier we dubbed "The Artful Dodger" (4) complained of itching all over. The doctor told me to attach small bits of cloth from shirts, tunics and blankets with plasters to the man's arm. He was told not to wash his arm for a week and then return. When he did so, I removed the three plasters and pieces of cloth. Two revealed normal skin but the blanket piece when pulled off , exposed raw skin. The soldier gleefully exclaimed: "Oh good, I'll be out of the army".

The doctor replied: "Oh no, you will be issued with bed sheets."

If the soldier had been allergic to his shirt or tunic material, he would have got his desired discharge.

After making ready, a young ATS (female officer) for the theatre, the sister told me "You take her". I put her on the trolley and pushed her towards the theatre. At the entrance, I met the surgeon who was going to operate. He turned round to me and said "Do you want to see it?"

I replied "Yes please".

Then I had to get ready. One of the nurses put a gown on me and I went to the theatre, but I was a bit late. The ATS had a swelling under her arm. The surgeon had already

made the incision, and a lot of puss seeped out into the kidney dish. I just saw the liquid coming out and he said to me "You know what this is?"

I replied that it was streptococci, and off he went. He turned round and said to me "You will find she will laugh".

I didn't say anything, then I wheeled her back to the ward on a trolley. She laughed because she had been given laughing gas. (5) Then I put her into bed and she started crying her eyes out. It was a reaction to the gas.

I was then asked to move to Ward One, a very big ward. I loved the women's ward, but here was I now being a nurse to military men.

The only thing I didn't look forward to was when you had to prop up a hefty man on his bed, it was heavy lifting and bad for your back. Two nurses would hold one another's hand behind his back.

In the hospital, there was no lifting gear like now. I and another nurse would have to raise each soldier out of bed. By the end of the day, my back ached. Twenty years later, I suffered a slipped disk. (6)

One beautiful, sunny Sunday between 2pm and 4pm there was not much to do, no visitors and the changeover back to the unit. A new patient would not come until Monday morning. I looked out of the window and noticed that all the windows outside leading onto the garden were absolutely filthy. As I had nothing much to do that afternoon, I decided to wash them. I fetched a bucket of water, put some newspaper in it as a sponge, and used other newspaper to dry them afterwards. I asked for volunteers. I had a few.

We went out and started cleaning the windows. We could see through them now. Sister was in her office, not moving, and ignoring what we were doing. Anyway, job done, I

packed everything away feeling very satisfied. I wonder why Sister didn't mention anything and I didn't tell her. (7) Of course, it is unusual when a patient returns to his unit, to make him wash the window of the ward before he goes.

Ward One was five times the size of Brushfield; one side overlooked a beautiful garden - all glass, very light and airy. In the summer, beds were put on the veranda outside so the recuperating patients could enjoy the sun. At the end of the ward was Sister's office, so although she was very energetic, she had no time to have coffee with us. The ward was full of bedridden patients, who were waiting for or recovering from operations and was joined to another very long ward, not so light but still very big.

The problem was that Sister's office was in the corner. At the other end of the ward was a private room. In the morning, I reported to Sister who gave out the work for the day. That day, I was responsible for blanket baths. My task included covering the patient with a blanket and uncovering the part you had to wash. As we were female we would wash a patient only above the waist and below the knee. If he couldn't wash his private parts, a male nurse would do it.

One of the first lessons I learned in the hospital was that patients who made a big fuss had nothing seriously wrong with them. The ones who needed watching were silent. I soon learned how true this lesson was.

One day, a patient ran screaming around the ward with his pyjama trousers down. He shouted that he was going to die. The sister got male orderlies to pull his pyjamas back up and asked his problem. He said his urine was blue; the sister explained calmly that it was caused by the purple ointment which had been painted onto his bad throat. She then asked for the orderlies to escort him back to bed. (8)

With my third patient, things didn't go so well. When the job was finished, I soaked a flannel in soapy water, asked the patient to finish himself and call when the flannel needed rinsing and a dry towel was needed. Shortly, he called me back, and lo and behold, he had washed his face. I told him I had washed it, but he didn't answer. I reassured him that everything would be all right and said I would finish him off. I didn't know his name, if it was Penous or Penis as my accent wasn't very clear. I thought then it might be John Willy, and I didn't want the patient in the bed next to us to come out with the usual remark: "If it's good enough for the President of France, it's good enough for you mate!" (9)

Therefore, before I went to my next patient, I asked one of the nurses: "What do you say?"

I explained and she said: "It's simple, you say wash your private parts but you never have to say it. They knew it was but this one was an exception".

I felt very uncomfortable and very grateful to her for not mentioning it to any of the other nurses. After all, I was French.

There was a sergeant who used to live near Eastbourne. He worked in the kitchen, and I told him I used to get the *Eastbourne Gazette* for my former in-laws there. He asked if I would pass it to him; I did so. His superior was a former bricklayer. I asked him why as a former chef he wasn't in charge. He said it was because to be promoted he would have to take and pass a first aid examination, which he refused to do.

On the kitchen ward, the first thing was the register of the new patients when they arrived. With each one, I had to write his name; opposite that I would put 1. The next day I

would put 2. This meant the doctor knew at a glance exactly how long the patient had been on the ward.

One day, a patient came to me and said "Nurse, do you want me to do your register?" I said I didn't know.
He replied "Oh, that's all right, I did it for the other nurse. I'll do it, I will enjoy it, I have nothing else to do!.
So I said "Yes".

Our sister had to cross the garden to visit me during my night duty. At a hospital dance, I chatted to a sergeant. He told me the night sister had been frightened on her round by a prowler, so wanted to telephone him to escort her every night.

I asked him to give me the warning of her time of inspection; he agreed and would thus phone me when he had been summoned to escort her. I would be having a snooze on two chairs drawn together. His phone call would wake me, and he would say: "The skin and blister is coming". I would immediately get properly dressed, sit up and look busy. As a result, my night duty report said I was the only nurse always smart and working on inspection! The sister didn't realise I knew when she was coming; had she arrived between midnight and 2am, she would have had a shock. I was on the chairs without an apron or cap and dozing in the warm, treatment room.

On night duty, as I walked round to see if my patients were all right, I shone my torch on one bed as I couldn't see anyone there. I was a bit frightened but I realised as I uncovered the blanket near the pillow, here was a man right under them. He told me "You've just woken me up, Nurse".
"Yes, but I thought you had gone. Must you sleep all covered up?"

He said "Yes, I can't sleep any other way without my head being covered by the blanket".

Then making a chaise longue in my little office, I stretched my legs and had a little snooze until I wrote my report in the early morning.

The next night, one of the patients came to warn me that he would not be sleeping much that night as he had missed his tea and was starving. I told him I would see what I could do. As no staff were allowed in the kitchen, I sent an emissary from the ward to ask the chef from Eastbourne what they did with the leftover buns from afternoon teatime because some of the patients missed them as they went out for the afternoon. There were always plenty as they were not all that good so many were left uneaten. Also, the patients were allowed out in the afternoon and went to the café in the village.

What do they do with these buns? When he returned, he told me they were thrown away. Back went my emissary to ask if the still had any now. The answer was yes. Then, with an empty pillow case he would go on the quiet to the kitchen where it was filled with buns which he brought back to the ward. Then he went around the beds asking each patient "Do you want a bun?"

All the buns were eaten that night, and every night was a repetition. As I was the only one in charge, nobody would see it. The love of a man goes through his stomach! I could do anything with my patients. On night duty, one was supposed to be in bed by 11.30am the following day.

At the hospital was a Welsh soldier working as a humble orderly. He asked me if he could borrow a white coat the doctors wore. He said he had told his relatives that he had a responsible job in the hospital and to back this up he wanted his friend to take a photograph of him in the

doctor's coat. I found a coat and loaned it to him so he could maintain his assumed status with his family. I understood his attitude; orderly was the lowest job in the hospital.

Officers were housed in a separate building. I was treating other ranks, who could be rough. They noticed that my name was Mrs Munday and asked about my husband. I decided not to reveal that I was a widow, because that and the fact that I was French, could lead to unwelcome sexual advances, so I said my husband was serving abroad with the British forces. It worked, and I was not propositioned. In those days, married people didn't openly have affairs like they do now.

One morning, Sister told me to work on a private ward. Mrs Dixon had arrived, and from now on, my duty was to take care of her and her room until further orders. (10) We got on very well and spoke a lot of French. It was lovely not having loads of walking to do. It certainly gave my legs a lot of rest. She was a petite woman, good looking with a strong guttural accent. She would pronounce Russia as "Rushia", and I started copying this bad habit. We went for short walks to start with and then increased the distance as she grew stronger.

While she was there, I never saw the Colonel. I don't know when he came, probably while I was off duty or at lunch, I really don't know. He was very nice, I think people liked him, I certainly did. They were both roughly the same size and build. Matron would come and see him every day, and, whenever I saw her, I always received a beautiful smile. It is now important to remember that Matron's promotion came from the Colonel, so I did my job well. I liked her anyway.

Through Mrs Dixon I met Major Milton, the head of the Small Arms School in Bisley, his wife and two young daughters. The Major and his wife were a charming couple. She did a lot of work in London among the poor and old. I got on very well with them, and we met often.

Although she was a civilian, being the wife of the Chief Medical Officer, Mrs Dixon was entitled to stay in her husband's hospital. She left because she was feeling fit, healthy, and ready to go, and we said goodbye.

The week after she left, I received a note from the Colonel to tell me that his wife would very much like me to come to their hotel for dinner on a certain date. I went there, a bit anxious as I was under the impression that war-time meals were not lavish, but it was a lot better than I expected. I was surprised the Colonel was such a cheerful person in private. We laughed a lot and everyone thoroughly enjoyed it. I started going to these dinners more often.

When I met Major Milton, he asked me if I would like to go mushrooming in the woods as his wife would dry them for the winter. I said I would love to, but the only mushroom I knew was a wild mushroom called chanterelle which I loved, a type of little yellow, umbrella mushroom. This may have been the only one I knew, but he knew more. He duly came and fetched me to the wood. It was a revelation; there were a lot of civilian men who would pick all sorts of mushrooms at the weekend. They were a great delicacy and a restaurant paid a good price for them.

To go anywhere, one needed a car; Major Milton would take me mushrooming in his. I went back to the hospital with enough chanterelle to ask the cook to prepare them for my dinner at midnight. When I sent a patient with them to the kitchen and told the cooks how they should be prepared, they told the boy that I shouldn't eat them as

they would be poisonous, but if I really wanted them cooked for dinner and insisted, they would. Shortly, a plate came back with my chanterelle, very well cooked, which I thoroughly enjoyed. In the morning, while making the beds, the chef sneaked to the entrance of my ward; this was forbidden because he was dressed as a cook. He wanted to see if I was still alive. The cooks thought they would have a dead nurse on the ward.

One Sunday afternoon, I had tea with Mrs and Major Milton who invited me to come to a small party in the mess of the Small Arms School at Bisley for their silver wedding anniversary. I would attend with Colonel and Mrs Dixon. I accepted and was also told that I would meet a senior commanding officer, who was a bachelor of a certain age but very wealthy, and, they were sure, I would like him and you never know. "You would marry him if you could". I smiled politely and in due course we went there.

It was a nice little party where we were shown lots of captured films of the German parachute regiment during their jumping and all sorts. I met the gentleman in question. He was tall and wearing civilian clothes. He was Major Milton's commanding officer, but didn't want to over-awe me by wearing his uniform, so he was quite nice but very placid and stately.

I felt a bit uncomfortable and we chatted very little. I learned later that he found me a bit too lively for him. Bang went my wedding! It made me laugh.

There was a Free French camp near us which had a small hospital from which cases were brought to us at the Connaught and sometimes I had to translate what the doctor said to the patients. A French medical doctor who spoke no English either, sometimes accompanied him, and I met them. He had escaped from France, and didn't use his

real name but an army one because of possible retribution from the Germans to his family in France. His real identity was never revealed. One was called Chevalier, the other Darling, and we got on very well together. They would sometimes come with a patient, but rarely. Usually, the patient would arrive and I would explain his case to the doctor later.

One day, a young man arrived for an injection in his spine. A very, very long needle, very thin, had to go up his vertebrae right through the middle of the column. I explained what would happen to the patient and the doctor said he must sit on the bed. He stated also that it was very important for him not to move it as if that very, very thin needle would break, it could never be retrieved and would be very dangerous. I translated, and the patient said it was all right; he asked me if I would hold his hand while it was being done. I asked the doctor if this was all right, and he replied: "Yes, anything he wants, Nurse".

The patient sat on the bed in the operating theatre and held my hand. When I saw the needle, I felt uncomfortable, I dare not look, but gradually the needle went into his back; he was pressing my hand, and I could feel literally the needle entering his spine. When it was finished, the Doctor said: "Good man, good boy", and looked at me.

I was white. He told the nurse to take me away and give me a strong, sweet cup of tea. I had nearly fainted.

A few weeks before, I was invited to the French camp for tea on a Sunday afternoon. Being late, I rushed towards the hospital front gate. I had decided to wear civilian clothes under my greatcoat, which was prohibited. I was rushing when I saw three sisters walking nonchalantly towards the gate camp. I didn't dare pass them as my greatcoat hiding my civilian dress had a slit in the back, and I knew they

would see through it as I passed them shortly, so I started walking slowly, but so did they. One turned round and said "Go on nurse, we're not in a hurry, you go".

I couldn't do anything but try to walk in such a way that my greatcoat wouldn't open at the back, but it was impossible.

They saw my dress, called me back, and told me the rule that one didn't wear civilian clothes under one's uniform. "Go back to your room and dress properly", one of them said.

Yes, I went, but not to my room as I thought I'd never get there and then to the camp in time for the afternoon tea, so I waited about fifteen minutes knowing that by that time they would be on the bus and, true enough, they were. I walked gingerly to the bus stop and arrived for tea a bit late, but never mind I got there in civilian clothes. I stayed there for supper so returned after dark, out of sight.

One night at the hospital we were pleased to discover that we had fresh fish (a rarity during the war), but the next morning when bathing I noticed pimples all over my stomach. I felt perfectly well and went to work on the ward, but saw a notice that said anyone who had developed pimples on the stomach should immediately report to the medical officer. I did so, and was told the fish had been unfit for human consumption.

I heard ten people had been affected, including four doctors. Everyone else had been unaffected because they had put vinegar on the fish. Although I suffered no ill-effects, from then on I always put vinegar on my fish, even though I didn't like it.

On another occasion, while chatting to a friend, I mentioned that I had a tiny little pimple at the top of my neck on the hairline. It kept getting between the teeth of my

comb, and it hurt when I pulled it. She laughed and told me to go and see the medical officer who would deal with it, so I did. He looked at it, I don't know what he did, but he took a swab, tapped me on the shoulder, and said "All right, you can go now. It's done now. It won't bother you anymore."

That was my first operation. (11) As everybody knows, everybody else's operation is always a minor one, but anything to yourself is major. Then back to the ward.

As there was universal conscription in Britain, there were all types in the forces, including criminals. One such was a female soldier who was sent to the Connaught Hospital for treatment. She boasted she could open any lock. To prove it, she asked me to tie her hands behind her back holding a hairpin. She used it to successfully open a locked door. Unfortunately, some nurses were no better. I used to put my money safely in my locker. One day, I found the banknotes missing. One of the other nurses must have managed to unlock the door. From then on, I paid my earnings into a Post Office account.

On one occasion, a female patient came to me at my tray of medicine for her daily ointment to be put on the sore on her breast. I read my doctor's notes and couldn't understand the Latin name, so asked her to point out in which bottle on my tray it was in. She said she couldn't remember, so I picked a bottle at random and rubbed the contents on her breast.

On my day off, I went to the main road waiting for the bus. A car stopped and the driver asked me if I would like a lift to the town. He was a nice man, so I said yes. I got into the car and went off to town, which wasn't a big place, but it was something to do. When I returned, Sister called me to her office and, in no uncertain terms, told me not to thumb a lift on the road. The bus was there for us. I told her I

didn't thumb a lift, but the man asked me and I was glad to accept.
"That's what you say", was her reply. Apparently she had seen me accept the lift.

I wasn't used to walking, so soon became exhausted by having to patrol the wards. The VAD had its own convalescent home, so I was sent there to recuperate. For lunch and supper there I was fed with Swiss chard (a type of spinach). It saved me because it was full of iron!

From our quarters to the main gate of the hospital was quite a long walk around the corner. It was then a good fifteen minute walk to catch the bus to the railway station where the trains were not very frequent. In the grounds there was a shortcut to the bus stop, but it was out of bounds to everyone and was marked "No Entry" because it led to a path through the garden of the administrator's neighbouring house. Being me, I ignored the prohibition.

Later, I heard about it when I went to dinner with Mrs Dixon. She said Dickie, as she called her husband, had told her that the head of the private mental hospital in the grounds had seen a VAD nurse walking through his garden. He couldn't see her very well from the house, but it was always the same one who came into the forbidden part to take the bus. Colonel Dixon said to her: "I bet it is Jeanette".

Eventually, I found out someone had recognised me, knew my name and told the Colonel. I promised never to go that way again.

The VADs were all upper class girls who had produced references. One of them couldn't live without horse riding, so she hired one from a stable nearby, permitting her to indulge her passion whenever she had time off. My fellow

VAD nurses used to ask me what my father did for a living. I replied he was an engineer. (He worked in a factory).

Also, during the meal the Colonel mentioned that the next day he was doing a tour of inspection of the wards.

"Will you be on duty, Jeanette?"

"Yes, but please do not recognise me, pretend you do not know me", was my reply.

A year or so before, one of the VADs had been recognised by the Colonel during his tour of inspection. He had stopped where she stood near the bed in the presence of Matron and a doctor. The Colonel asked her: "How is Mummy and Daddy?"

After that, the girl had Hell as she was hated by everyone who thought - who does she think she is?

So I asked the Colonel: "Please pretend you don't know me when I'm standing near the bed of my patient".

This was because he was accompanied by Matron, the Ward Sister and three doctors. He duly passed along and merely looked round winking at me. I didn't move. The inspection finished and all was well. My patient said to me: "Nurse, the Colonel winked at you".

"Of course not", I responded.

"Yes he did", the patient insisted.

I said: "He must have had something in his eye".

The patient wasn't so sure, but he had seen it.

Because I was born Marie Jeanne, all documents on me had that name on them, though my friends always called me Jeannette. I was amazed that the next morning my Commandant asked me to come into her office where she handed me a letter. It was addressed to me as Jeannette, Knaphill Hospital.

She asked me: "Is that for you?"

I opened it, and sure enough it was. How did they know? Inside the envelope was a photo of an airman's coffin being lowered onto his grave, and a letter.

It was from a friend of a Czech pilot whom I had known in Eastbourne while I was training. He knew me only as Jeanette. With it was a photo of a military funeral. The sender knew the pilot liked someone called Jeanette who worked at a hospital in Knaphill. He wanted me to know that his friend had been killed in action.

My feelings towards illness and death were not conducive to love and romance, though all the other girls managed it. I wasn't worried, I was quite contented. Was I dedicated to become a fully qualified nurse? I didn't know.

I found a portrait of myself on a big white sheet of paper. It showed me working on the ward and was in colour painted by a patient. He gave it to me before he was discharged.

Also, there was another poor little patient who escaped from France, a student, who had a kidney removed He gave me a piece of marquetry with *Gros Point* - a poem. I have looked everywhere and cannot find it but I do remember it because the poor chap died.

I also received a poem in French written by a student who had escaped from occupied France. By the time he left, he had learned some English.

Another drawing of Jeannette by one of her patients.

Often, my patients would come to me and ask me to settle a bet. They noticed I was wearing a wedding ring and was known as Mrs. One of them wagered that my husband was in the navy while the other thought he was in the air force. Because they were all in the army, they thought I wouldn't have a man there, it would have to be the air force or the navy. I told them that neither was right, but they didn't believe me.

Back on the ward, I wrote the name of a patient and his treatment - eye wash - on a piece of paper. For privacy, I put a screen around the bed because I didn't like people seeing my work. I looked at the patient and asked him which one.

He replied: "Which one what, Nurse?"

I said: "Which of your eyes should be washed?"

He replied: "I'm sorry, Nurse, there is nothing wrong with my eyes."

"No, what are you in for?"

"An operation, tomorrow".

I went back to Sister, gave her the paper, and said: "Look, there is nothing wrong with his eyes".

She said: "I know that, can't you read? It's a high wash with an H".

I replied that I didn't know what that was.

"Oh, I'm so busy. Wait, go and ask next door; one of the girls will show you."

I went to the ward to see a Grade 1 nurse.

"Do you know what it is, a high wash?" I asked one.

"Of course, everyone knows what it is."

"Okay, then, come and show me".

"Oh, I can't. I'm very busy".

"Sister said you come and show me".

"All right, prepare the trolley".

I asked: "What do I put on the trolley?"
"Do I have to tell you everything?" she snapped.

I put everything I could think of on the trolley then duly went to her and said it was ready, asking her if she could come.
"I can't yet".
"Look, I've waited long enough; Sister is going to be cross. Come and show me. I'm sorry, I don't know what it is," I said.
"Do you mean to say you stood there, wasting my time and Sister's time and you didn't know what it is? You go and tell her".
"No, you go and tell her".
"Oh no, I don't, you go and tell her. Come on". And in we went.

We told Sister, and she told the Grade 1 Nurse to go back to her ward. She took me behind the screen, showed me the letter, and told me I did it very well. I wondered what the poor boy was thinking when I left him.
One day, as the doctor was inspecting, he noticed that I and another older, unattractive nurse, were standing on each side of the bed. He told us only one nurse was needed there and asked me as the youngest to leave. The patient said he wanted me to stay instead. When the doctor asked him why, the soldier said: "Because she has healing hands". The doctor smiled and allowed me to stay.

After about six months at the Connaught Hospital, my Red Cross Commandant informed me that I had been made a Grade 1, the highest you can go in the Red Cross. She gave me a little brooch to pin on my apron with the initials G1, which meant when a doctor came, he could see at a glance that I wasn't a newcomer, but a slightly more experienced nurse.

One day, I knocked the big toe of my left foot against one of the beds. The next morning, I had difficulty walking to the ward. Nobody took any notice, including me, but although it wasn't painful, my toenail became black. Thankfully, my leg was all right, but every day afterwards however the toe became blacker and blacker until eventually it was jet black.

One day after I had showered, wiping my feet, the nail on the black toe came off into the towel; it made me feel sick, but underneath was a very pale new nail.

Eventually, Sister called me and asked what was wrong with my leg as I was walking so badly.
"Oh, there's nothing wrong, I don't know".
She said: "Report to the MO".
He had a look round and said: "Go up to bed".
He sent me to a private room where there were two beds. In the other was a girl who'd had her bones crushed in a motorcycle accident.

I spent two days as a patient, but they never found anything wrong with me. (12)

My roommate was a dispatch rider whose fiancé was a doctor serving with the army, so she was well treated and alone in that room. When I arrived, I was told to undress and go to bed. Sister told her she would now be all right as she would have a companion. Later, the girl said to me: "Thank God. I'm lonely".
I went to bed and as soon as my head touched the pillow, I was apparently snoring.

Dinner came. I was served, and the girl told Sister: "What a companion, she's been snoring ever since she's been in that bed".
I said: "It's all right, I'm awake now". But not for long, and again I snored unwittingly. The next morning, the

doctor came, had a good look around, and said: "I can't see anything wrong, but we'll keep you in another day, and if you're all right, off you go".

I stayed another day, apparently just waking up for my meals, and according to my companion, snoring. Anyway, the doctor came and told me I was discharged and should go back to the ward.

I said: "What did I have?"

He said: "We don't know and anyway you can walk properly now."

Off I went. Those two days in bed did me the world of good.

I was moved from the dormitory to a room on the first floor where all the facilities were; I shared with a girl everyone called "Little Margaret". Margaret Martin was a tiny little thing. She was small, unattractive, and of a certain age, much older than me, but I didn't ask. We got on very well. She used to be a lady's maid to a rich old woman, and went all over the world with her. Her employer would have left her everything, and begged her to stay on, but Margaret joined the Saint John's Ambulance Brigade to help the war effort (and possibly meet soldiers).

She used to get up for breakfast whereas I didn't have any, merely a cup of tea, toast, or a biscuit which I ate on the ward. I was always the last one, rushing in. Margaret would eat her breakfast then say: "Wake up Jeanette, I am going to the ward".

Then it was time for me to wash quickly and dress. As soon as I arrived on the ward, the first thing I wanted was a cup of tea, and that was my breakfast.

Margaret was so different from me that we complemented each other. I kept in touch with her after the war, and she would visit me after I moved to Kingston.

She played with my young son who said "I love you".

She exclaimed "That is the first time that any male has said that to me!".
She then got a job in a German military hospital that dealt with displaced persons. We lost touch. I wonder what became of her in her last days. I am sad to think of her as an old maid.

There was to be a party one Saturday at Connaught Hospital when you could invite anyone you liked for coffee and sandwiches, and a little dance. So I invited the French doctors - five of them - knowing they would come. They accepted, saying they would be delighted; they arrived in full uniform looking smart with their golden epaulettes.

We were however supposed to do the washing up for half an hour during the evening. Everybody had their turn; luckily Little Margaret volunteered; she didn't like dancing because no one ever looked at her or asked her to dance. She said "I will do your duty on the washing up".
I was delighted. It was noticed, but I had my excuse.

Sister was always terribly busy when the doctor came in the morning to do his inspection; he would pick on one of the Red Cross nurses and say: "Come on, help me, come on".

After dinner, I went back to bed when all the girls saw me and told me there was a sergeants' dance nearby, and it would be great fun.
"Come on", they said.
I said: "No, I couldn't stand on my legs; I am too tired".
I had an inferiority complex because they were always very energetic, while I was very drowsy. They looked at one another and one said: "Come on, we'll toughen you up".
I asked how.
"You wait a minute", was the response.

They fetched two footbaths, put them down in the floor, and poured water into each of them.
They said: "Sit on the chair".
Two of them then grabbed one of my legs and dumped it into cold water. I screamed. They then alternated from hot water to cold, and repeated the same routine about five or six times. The same procedure was followed with the other leg. and they said now I would be all right.
I exclaimed: "Now I am dead!" And went straight to bed, but fortunately, a few days later I did go to a dance. I didn't enjoy it much as I kept thinking of France and my late husband. I was the only widow out of all the Red Cross nurses.
They liked to accompany me because, being French, my accent would attract lots of men who wanted to hear me talk. I didn't know why. I would refuse to dance because I didn't feel strong enough after a day standing on the ward, so the other nurses would dance with them. I think that might be why I was taken out, to attract the men, but wearing my wedding ring put a stop to any flirtation.
I had a good time, although I was the only one who didn't dance, but I didn't care. I thoroughly enjoyed this excellent party.

At one dance, a sergeant asked me to dance. It was a twirly Scottish dance and I said I couldn't do it. He told me I'd soon be able to. I joined him and found he taught me exactly how to do it. I congratulated him afterwards saying: "You did very well".
He exclaimed: "I was a top professional dancer".
He didn't ask me for another dance.

All the soldiers had to dance in army boots since they were not allowed civilian dress.

The next day, Margaret asked me if I had complained and hadn't wanted to stay with her in the double room. I asked her why. She said that, when the Commandant realised she was doing my duty, she asked Margaret privately if she would like another room believing I imposed on her too much, and she thought Margaret would like to get away from me. Margaret turned down her offer.

On Sunday afternoon, the wards were usually quiet, but not this Sunday. At two o'clock, two soldiers arrived in a state of fright asking to see a doctor immediately. One was holding a snake in his hand. It was big, and its head had been squashed; the other soldier was holding his comrade's arm. I was told that while they were sitting in the woods nearby, the snake bit one of them in the arm. Straightaway he yelled, and the other soldier crushed its head with a brick or stone. The uninjured soldier took out his knife, cut out the bite, sucked the blood and spat it out, then they came to us.

I took the dead snake to the doctor; he asked me what type it was. I didn't know, so the officer told me to ask the soldiers. They didn't know either, and the wounded man was getting frantic to see the doctor. I assured him the doctor was studying the situation.

Eventually, the nonplussed doctor went to treat the soldier. My shift ended then, and I was replaced by another nurse. I never found out what had happened. (13)

Normally, I got good reports. This was because I had devised a method. As a Grade 1 nurse, I accompanied the doctor on his morning round of the ward.

He would go to the first bed, pull back the bedclothes, inspect the patient, talk to him, read his notes, and specify his medication or anything else. While doing so, I would

quietly tell the patient the details of the new times of his medication.

Then the doctor would move to the next bed and quick as a flash I would stay at the first bed pretending to rearrange the pillows and whisper in the patient's ear: "Please remember what he said because I won't, and I have got to". "Don't worry, Nurse" was always the reply.

After the doctor left, Sister would go to each bed and change the notice on the board at the end of the bed and in her book. During the day, the patient would call out and say: "Nurse, I am due for my medicine".

"Yes sir" I would reply, and follow the same procedure all round, each patient remembering his own medication or whatever. Therefore I was very good because while doing my duty, a patient would call me and say: "Look Nurse, I should have so and so. Would you ask Sister?"

So I would go to Sister and tell her that I thought so and so should have so and so. She would look in her book and say "Yes, very good Nurse", and I was given the medicine or whatever was necessary. Therefore, I never forgot anything, which was a feather in my cap.

The sisters liked me and would chat with me. They all complained about the military rule which prohibited them as officers from having non-officer boyfriends, even NCOs. This greatly restricted the potential number. By contrast, being a VAD, I was not subject to such a rule, but I imposed it on myself. At the hospital dance, the men were all in uniform, and I only accepted invitations from officers, whom I recognised by their epaulettes having pips or a crown.

One day, I reported as ordered to the skin ward; it was an enormous ward on the first floor which catered only for skin patients. Arriving in the morning, every window was

shut with wood for the wartime blackout - no air until natural light appeared. The smell of the diseased skin was dreadful, especially first thing in the morning when I hadn't had any breakfast at all. I hated it the minute I arrived. I only started breathing when those big wooden shutters were removed so natural light and air could come in. We nurses did the treatment without gloves as rubber was in extremely short supply. You couldn't buy rubber hot water bottles, for example. Only doctors were privileged with rubber gloves, and then only for operating.

The "treatment room" was a long table in the middle of the ward. There were two nurses each side of the table. It was full of pots with creams, which nearly all had Latin names. At each side of that table was a chair for the patient to sit on. It was quite impressive. The patients would start queuing up as soon as we started. I never saw a patient in bed when I arrived there. They all seemed to be walking around.

As soon as we went into the room, I and another nurse took up our positions on the right or left and the patients started queuing for their treatment. The first patient would arrive and the rest waited in line each with a piece of paper that stated his name and the treatment he required.

My first patient on the ward was very good. He knew exactly what to put on his sore which had been there for a week and was getting better. He also knew the exact position of the pot of cream, which helped. The nurse opposite me had been there quite a time and was very efficient, quickly reading all these pots in Latin, but I wasn't.

The day passed without any mistakes on my part, I think. I must have been getting on well as three days later the queue of patients on my side was getting longer. I was doing

well until one morning, as I was working merrily on the sores, putting on cream, etc. The doctor came in just as usual. He saw I had a long queue of men while the other nurse of the other side had only two patients waiting. The doctor went to the patient last in my queue and asked why he didn't join the other queue. The man answered "No sir, please, I like Nurse Munday to do my sore because she's got healing fingers".

The doctor smiled and walked away to my queue to see how I was doing.

Then he looked at me and said "Nurse, are you trying to catch little birds?"

I didn't understand what he meant, then without a word he took a swab and removed the excess pile of cream I had put on the man's sore. He wiped it all away and then with a spatula took one twentieth of what I had administered and smoothed it on slightly saying "This is how to do it".

He grinned at me. During coffee time I found out what he had meant about catching a bird. It wasn't flattering.

Some of the patients had to receive arsenic in increasing daily doses. When I administered the arsenic drops. I always trembled a bit. It was all right for one or two drips, but as soon as I had a patient with more drips. I was shaking, thinking I was going to kill him, and so one extra drop would accidentally go in the water. Then I had to throw the water with the arsenic away, and start again. Then I controlled myself. I am sure while I was there (which thank God wasn't long), the arsenic consumption on my ward must have been terrific.

I still didn't like all these shutters closed - no air - working with electric light until the morning came when there was a bit of air in the room. That sickly smell of skin nauseated me and I wondered how long I would stay in that place, but

the next day while I was putting on my gown, I scratched my finger with my little Grade 1 brooch which had to be worn on the uniform underneath the gown. It was a very slight scratch, about three inches long, no blood, just a red mark. I carried on but when I went to have coffee with Sister, she noticed it and asked me horrified: "How did you get that?"

I said: "Oh, I scratched it this morning, Sister. It's nothing, it didn't bleed or anything, it's just a bit red".

She said "You're not going back on the ward".

I wondered why.

I was sent from the skin ward to another one. Was I glad! Apparently, any cut on the skin meant you were forbidden to work on this ward as toxins could get into your bloodstream. Therefore, with a gay heart I left the ward, knowing jolly well I wouldn't go there again. Had I known, I would have scratched my hand the day I arrived. Luck was on my side.

On leave from the hospital, I would visit my ex-mother-in-law's boarding house in Eastbourne. I stayed in the attic room to leave the main accommodation free for paying guests. I paid for my keep, but didn't enjoy it there, so soon stopped going. The first problem was the food, there was less of it, and it was inferior. In the hospital, we were not subjected to rationing.

Worse however were the air raids. We had none near the hospital, but Eastbourne was used as cross-channel target practice by German trainee pilots. They would dash across the sea flying low so as not to be recognised, then swerve up on Beachy Head and quickly drop their bombs on Eastbourne. They would fly just above the water so the ack-ack guns on the shore couldn't tell if they were friend

or foe. By the time the warning came, they were halfway back to France.

Because of this, it was decided we would have a new type of local warning which, unknown to me, they called the cuckoo (14) because it sounded like a cuckoo call. Then the all-clear would sound. A big warning would come later if the planes went further inland.

One day, I went all alone to the chemist to buy something when suddenly I heard "Cuckoo, cuckoo". I didn't know what it was. The middle aged man behind the counter grabbed me by the neck and tried to push me under the shop counter, but I wouldn't have it, thinking he must be drunk. Eventually, he managed to say: "It's the warning!" Then I heard the bombs drop; nothing much was hit except a church, which suffered some damage. (15) That was my first contact with the cuckoo. There was though an earlier warning than the cuckoo, our black cocker spaniel called Beetle. He could hear aircraft before any human. He could also differentiate enemy planes from British ones. If a German plane was coming, Beetle hid under the table, and we did the same.

My sister Maria's cat was similarly perceptive. During the Nazi occupation, Maria's husband had taken it in from the gutter as an abandoned wet kitten; it was devoted to him. When they lived in a fourth floor apartment in Paris after the war, the cat would sleep on the warm television, but would jump down and wait at the door ten minutes before Jean Noet arrived. It could sense him entering the building downstairs.

One evening, I was in my room at the very top when an air raid began. I hid under the pillows as I knew they absorbed bullets. I heard the enemy machine guns' staccato fire on the roof. When it was over, I rushed downstairs to find my

ex-mother-in-law and her daughter hiding under a table in the basement. They said they had shouted to me to come down. but I couldn't hear because of the pillows. I wondered why none of the airmen billeted in the other rooms had bothered to come up and warn me. I soon learned that during an air raid, it was every man for himself!

The bombing of Eastbourne got so bad that my in-laws moved to their Auntie Pat's in Buckinghamshire; she had a little cottage in a small market town called Princes Risborough. (16) Her husband was a tea taster; he could differentiate between all the producer countries. It was said such men didn't live into old age because, although they didn't swallow the tea they tasted, the harmful residue remained in their mouths. True to the saying, he died young.

When I was there, often at night we would see enormous fires. What happened that evening was a bomber came over from Germany, the British would put a lot of haystacks there and when the plane came, they would light these stacks of straw making bonfires here, there and everywhere so the Germans thinking there was a town there, would drop their bombs. Of course, there was nothing there and the people of Buckinghamshire were spared. That was clever.

For a rest, one would be sent to a small place, just a reception station they called it. I was told to report to East Grinstead in Sussex with another VAD nurse. Carrying a suitcase each, we took the train from Brookwood to East Grinstead and then a taxi to the outstation mansion which had been requisitioned by the army, a lovely stately home with most beautiful gardens, flowers everywhere. It was the

home of a very wealthy man; the army had taken it over. The soldiers called it Bloody Grinstead.

When we arrived, we met our Sister who was very old and a bitter type of woman, an Irish Catholic who had returned to nursing because of the war.

We were given a room each; there were about ten or eleven other VADs there. The move to East Grinstead made me happy because the work was lighter. I just received new patients and evaluated them before sending them on to the appropriate ward in the hospital. Patients would arrive from camps around the country, and eventually, after seeing the doctor, would be sent here, there, or anywhere.

My happiness ended when I was put on night duty, which I hated, though the East Grinstead outstation was certainly a rest after Brookwood. The rules there were lax and we were allowed to put badges on our uniform. I was told the patients didn't have much wrong with them. I asked one male orderly if anyone would die there. He said: "No, they are not allowed to die in the so-called hospital in the house".

I enquired: "They don't ask permission before they arrive and they die?"

He replied: "On, no, then you would take the corpse back into the ambulance and say 'This is where he died because no one could die in a camp reception station!'"

There was a psychologist who came every so often and also a board of medical doctors who would examine men who tried to get out of the army by all sorts of methods. The board consisted of about eight doctors who would judge them. We nurses had a flat in East Grinstead where we would eat and would clean the place ourselves, bathroom, etc. We were about two miles from the town centre, with very few buses passing the house, but

everything there was free and easy. We were allowed to pick as many flowers from the garden as we wanted.

In our living quarters, each of us was responsible for blackout once every so often. We knew when, to put the blackout blinds and, of course, I had forgotten my turn and instead I had decided to go to London with my friend that day to do some shopping. Then I told this friend of mine, screaming: "Oh, I should have put the blackout up".
She replied: "Don't worry, someone will see it and do it".
In due course, when they realised the blackout wasn't done, there was a hue and cry, and someone put it up. Later, I was told off. Of course, Colonel Dixon told his wife the blackout wasn't done for nearly two hours and he said: "I bet it was Jeannette".
She said: "Why do they always blame the poor girl?"
But of course, it was me. When I had dinner with them, they mentioned it to me.

Night duty consisted of a few patients who were jumping about. One of the VAD nurses would cook the meal which was left for the two of us at night. She prepared bits of steak and things for us to cook, which the other cooked after the duty in the ward. The next day, we swapped around. Early morning, we all had breakfast together and slept across the garden. There was a lodge there, and there was enough room for the night staff to go and sleep there during the day.

Sister didn't eat with us. At breakfast on the first Sunday morning, she arrived and addressed me saying: "Would you be ready by ten o'clock, as we are going to church?".
She knew that, being French, I was a fellow Catholic. One mustn't miss church, of course, as a Catholic. If not, you will go straight to Hell when you die. Everyone had to grin. The others left while I dressed and met Sister.

So on Sunday morning after I had been working all night, she forced me to go to church with her. To my horror, I found it was a two mile walk. I returned exhausted, with no time to sleep properly before work started again on my next night duty shift.

The next Sunday, my partner said: "Get ready, you've got to go to church and a little walk".
I told her: "I'm not going".
"Oh, she'll make you go. You'll see".
Sister arrived and said to me: "Get ready".
I said: "I'm sorry, Sister, I'm too tired, I'm not going".
She was livid, as though I was the Devil Incarnate, and showed it in many ways. She made my life Hell there.

My roommate warned me that the Sister would get her revenge. I replied that she should not do anything illegal, but my roommate was right.

Also on night duty there was an orderly who was a hairdresser who used to have his own salon. He was Italian, and when I was chatting with him, he said: "Gosh, your hair needs some attention".
He said when we were free during the night and I was doing the cooking, he would come to cut and wash my hair. I thanked him. He said he had to keep his hand in as after the war he would go back to his own salon.
One day, I washed my hair, he cut it, put in the curlers and in the morning, removed them.

When Sister saw me, she was furious and asked how I had my hair done on duty. She also went to the sergeant in charge of the orderly and he reprimanded the poor man. I don't know what really happened. The orderly stayed on, but we never did that again. He used to do the hair of all the other girls, but of course they were not on duty. From then on I was the *bête noire* of my Sister, and did I suffer!

On the nurse's Red Cross apron, there was a belt, and at the outstation we were allowed to sew a badge on it of any unit, a member of which we treated. Unfortunately, being on night duty, by the time the soldier arrived and I had asked him for his badge, he had already been targeted by the day staff. So when I had them at night, they had no spare badges to give. At breakfast, I told the nurses I was going to sew some on my belt. They told me I had no chance because they would do it before me. I bet them I would have my belt full - I had a thin waist - in two weeks, I was due to be off duty. We bet, and they all smiled because they knew I couldn't win.

I wrote to Major Milton at the Small Arms School. In there, they had all sorts of units learning to use their weapons. I asked him if he could get me some badges as being in a camp reception station we were allowed to decorate ourselves. In due course, I received an envelope with all the badges, including a magnificent badge, very rare, of the Bomb Disposal Unit, which I put in the front of my belt. All night, having nothing to do, I sewed them on, and in the morning said "See, done!"

The other nurses asked me where I got them, and when I told them they said that wasn't fair and I hadn't won my bet, because I hadn't acquired them properly. Anyway, we laughed.

The next Sunday at 11am, while I was fast asleep after night duty, I was woken by a knock on the door ordering me to see Sister. I had to get up, put on my uniform, and go to her. All she wanted me for was to tell me that at church she had prayed that I be forgiven for non-attendance. After that, my sleep was ruined.

Luckily for me, an army nurse noticed that I was being harassed by this sister and wrote a letter of complaint to

the Commandant. He came to the reception hospital and asked the nurses, who confirmed the situation. Then he transferred me back to the main hospital, so I escaped from that sister.

A few miles away from us was the Cottage Hospital for badly burned airmen. We were asked to volunteer to go there after dinner at night and talk to them, have coffee and a dance to make them get used to seeing people again. Their faces were always the first to be burnt when a plane caught fire. The hospital was run by Archibald McIndoe from New Zealand, the top plastic surgeon of his day. A lot of plastic surgeons from America came to learn his technique. These patients had everything they wanted except a face.

I volunteered to go there every so often with other VADs. A car would collect us and then come again to bring us back home. When we arrived, a sister took us through a room where, sitting around a table, were very high ranking British and American medical officers. She introduced me, pointing out that I was French. We walked along, and one of the officers at the table looked at me and said "Would you sit here please?" and brought me a coffee.

The other girl with me left and I sat drinking coffee with an American officer. He asked me many question: where was my husband; how did I come to England...? I also asked some questions of a very high ranking officer who had a chestful of ribbon medals. As a subject of conversation, I asked him what was the purplish ribbon which was very simple with no other colour. He blushed and said it was the Victoria Cross. I was flattered to be talking to him.

I spent an hour or two there. I can't remember exactly how long, then the other girl came from the other room

telling me of the horrible sights she saw. VADs talked to these men and had coffee with them, though some could hardly drink any. They could dance if they wanted to; apparently, when they were better, they were allowed visitors. The wives were shocked, of course, and their children would scream, run away, and wouldn't go near their fathers. It was understandable. At the Cottage Hospital, I was asked by the specialists to make them tea and biscuits, while the other four nurses went into the ward to cheer up the defaced airmen. McIndoe was teaching all these officers around the table where I sat the technique for burns.

One of the pilots treated by McIndoe had bailed out over the sea and survived for three weeks in a rubber dinghy. What saved him was a seagull falling into the dingy; he survived by sucking its blood.

I learned that McIndoe was vain and always wore a green carnation. He was having an affair with the chief nurse, while his wife and daughter were in America raising funds for the unit. Apparently, his wife had written saying she was homesick and wanted to come back, but he replied that she must stay in America to raise more money.

The women on the ward came out shaking with horror stories. All four nurses said they wouldn't do another visit as it was too unsettling.

After the second time I was there, I came back to the camp reception station nearly in tears. I couldn't take it and never went there again. Had I done so, I would have had a nervous breakdown. I couldn't understand why I was such a ninny, but I have a vivid imagination, and it really made me depressed. I went back to the Connaught Hospital on night duty.

My friend suggested we should go to a village called Knaphill near the hospital. It had two or three shops and a post office. As we had the whole afternoon off, we would also go to see her aunt, who had a house in the village and had been living there for years. It was a good idea. She had a beautiful house, and she was a nice lady. We had tea, cake, and a good chat.

By chance, I was telling them that I was going on night duty and I would have to buy an alarm clock as I had difficulty in waking up. Being in charge of the ward, I had responsibilities. The aunt looked at me and said: "Oh, we have a little clock [with] a very good alarm. How long will you be on night duty?"

I said it would be for one month. She asked me if I would like to borrow it and I said yes. I promised I would bring it back, or my friend (her niece) would in a month's time. I left with my little alarm clock, which was very loud and very good.

When I finished night duty, I packed to return to ordinary duties. (On night duty, a nurse had a room to herself). I accidentally dropped the alarm clock on the floor; it seemed all right. There was a little repair shop in Knaphill village where the lady, who had loaned it to me, lived and where the clock had been repaired before. I went to this shop and asked the jeweller to check if it was all right. He gave me a funny look and asked me to return in a couple of days. He said the price would be low. He asked me my name; I told him Mrs Munday, and he gave me a ticket. Later, I found out that as I left the shop he phoned my friend's aunt and told her the clock had been brought in by a young foreign woman wearing British Red Cross uniform who called herself Munday.

"Do you want me to phone the police or will you?"

She asked him not to, as this woman was a friend of her niece, explaining the position. We laughed about it and I told the Dixons when I went to dinner with them.

The first new year after I became a Grade 1 Nurse, I decided to spend in Scotland as I knew they celebrated Hogmanay there. I travelled to Edinburgh like an officer in first class, which was very nice. (17) Then I walked the short distance to the *Grand Hotel* where I had a celebratory meal.

I was seated with a couple and we waited as the haggis was ceremonially brought in on a huge tray preceded by a kilted man playing the bagpipes. As the haggis was paraded around all the tables, each diner took a piece of it from the tray and ate it with turnips, potatoes and, of course, whisky.

At midnight, everyone cheered and toasted with whisky. Then the door to the dining room opened and a man came in. For good luck, he had to be dark-haired and carrying a piece of coal, so he was the first person we met in the new year. He went around the tables, at each one getting a glass of whisky. By the morning, everyone was drunk.

On New Year's Day in Edinburgh, a black-haired man carrying a lump of coal for good luck would knock on the door of each house wishing the occupants a Happy New Year. He would always be given a glass of whisky in thanks. By the time he reached the end of the road, he was dead drunk and unable to continue.

I loved Edinburgh, so went there whenever I had a few days leave, using my VAD free first class travel entitlement. I stayed at the *Grand Hotel* and met Scottish bankers. At dinner one night, I asked one for career advice after I had completed my military service. He recommended banking, saying it was an easy way to earn a living because all you

had to remember was the French word *sacre* (saved) standing for sale or receipt. (18)

Having spent my leave in Edinburgh, I was back on Ward 2. It was marvellous to be in a private bedroom on the first floor, instead of the dormitory. We were not allowed to wash our underwear in the bedroom, but we had a special place where we could hand wash any of our clothes, hang and iron them. Although it was also forbidden, I hung my washing in the same bedroom. My little friend Margaret would take it down as soon as it was dry so no one would see it when our room was cleaned. I had a lovely petticoat which I washed with some bras then hung them up to dry. When I went to fetch them later, my bras were there but my best petticoat had disappeared. I looked everywhere, came back to the room, and told Margaret: "Look, someone has pinched my best petticoat".

She said: "Oh, don't worry. She will have to wash and dry it so therefore twice a day go up there to see if it is hanging on the line. If it is drying, take it".

True enough, one morning my petticoat was hanging there. I took it and dried it in the bedroom. I never put anything valuable in the laundry room again.

Talking about laundry, Colonel Dixon sent a letter to everybody stating that pilfering from the hospital was absolutely dreadful. Pyjamas, pillowcases, everything was disappearing, and he gave us the number of things that were stolen every week. This was because ration coupons were needed to buy new clothes. Something had to be done; this was a big warning to everyone. And it would be my luck when Sister told me: "This week you are on laundry duty. Therefore, in the morning you collect all the dirty washing from the ward, pyjamas, pillow cases, etc, which

must be put in a pile. A sergeant will come along with an orderly and a big book."

Everything was all right until the day before I was going to hand over the laundry duty. That night I did my inventory and found I had listed pyjama trousers as missing. I looked everywhere but couldn't find them. The sergeant came the next day. I got on very well with him and told him: "Look, I'm a pyjama trousers short and I've got to hand over the laundry. I don't know what to do. What do I do?"

"Oh", he said, "wait a minute, you".

Then he told the orderly: "Give me a pair of pyjama trousers".

A dirty pair was handed to him; he put his great big feet on one leg, grabbed the other leg, tore them in two, and put it in the linen bag.

He said: "Two pairs of pyjama trousers!"

My inventory was then perfect. I stood still with mouth wide open, looking at the sergeant and his big feet in astonishment.

In France, this was called *Système D*. I never understood what that meant. Now I discovered it meant beating the system.

Saturday was changeover day. Any patients who could be released were discharged in the morning. New arrivals came in the evening and their treatments commenced on Monday. Sunday was thus very quiet.

A notice was posted in our Commandant's office advertising an officers' dance at a nearby camp. It was supposed to be a farewell party as the regiment was being posted away.

"If you would like to attend, please write your name. Ten of you will go and Matron will be choosing".

Everyone put their names down and a few days later, mine appeared with nine others VADs as having been approved. When the day arrived, ten VADs and ten sisters were waiting. A bus arrived with twenty officers to partner us. They all got off the bus and I looked at them thinking it would be my luck to get the smallest one, thin with glasses, not handsome.

Matron called a nurse's name, then a senior officer called an officer's name and these two were introduced and got aboard the bus. Then the next nurse was introduced to another officer, and so on. When the names Mrs Munday and Captain Garner were called, I knew I had the small officer. Off we went to the mess where the was a band for dancing and tables. We all sat there and chatted. My officer was a bachelor who lived in Manchester, but we didn't really get on. I was very sad and kept thinking of my late husband Eric. I danced a few dances with Captain Garner; he wasn't a very good dancer either, and I was bored. I thought I would go to the ladies and sit in there for a few minutes to give me a little rest. Everybody else seemed to get along very well together.

While I was there alone, a sister arrived and we chatted.

She said: "Your officer is very nice".

I said: "Yours is nice too".

She replied: "Don't talk to me about mine! He keeps talking about his children, his wife, and what he'll do after the war. I am bored to tears. Do you like mine?"

"Yes, he's very nice".

"Do you want him, because I don't".

"You don't want him?

"No, he's a bachelor, so it's all right".

"Okay, I'll introduce you".

We went back to the room where I introduced these two to each other and he politely asked her to dance.. They got on very well. In the end, I let her sit next to him, and I sat next to the father with three children. We had a good chat, and everybody was happy on the way back. Sister told me they were going to meet again. I said: "Good luck, they went well together".

I don't know what happened eventually, but I did a good turn for someone by leaving the other officers free, and I had a good time in a way.

If you went out at night and missed a meal, you were entitled to have a roll and cheese. A friend would go and collect it when she ate her meal. Little Margaret would always go to collect my bread and cheese and a thermos flask of coffee *au lait.* I thoroughly enjoyed the food when I came home late, but I didn't like the coffee as it kept me awake, so Margaret enjoyed drinking the thermos coffee in the bedroom after her dinner. That way, we were both happy; she never forgot to collect my supper in the dining room even if I forgot to ask her. War-time meals were never gargantuan feasts and I was always starving.

That Saturday, lots of us were collected in a big lorry to a dance in a mess quite a few miles away. There I danced with a very tall, slim subaltern who had a slight foreign accent. He was Spanish, but spoke French as well. I asked him what he was doing there, but he wouldn't tell. It was obviously a secret. Anyway, we chatted. He danced very, very well. Then he mentioned that he wore glasses. He wasn't wearing them, so I queried him.

He said: "Oh yes, I have. I have what they call, as you should know as a nurse, contact lenses".

I had never heard of them. I asked: "What are contact lenses, are you pulling my leg?"

He said: "Oh no, I wouldn't do that. He was a very serious type of chap, then he said: "I will show you".

We went aside, left the dance floor, and found a little narrow place with no one there. He took something out of his eye, some thin jelly, but somebody pushed him and on the floor it went.

He said: "Oh no, I must find it, must find it".

Two or three people including me looked out, and it was found. Somebody gave back that jelly thing, and without ado, he pushed up his eyelid and put it back. The rest of the evening, we talked about his contact lenses. They were not known then anywhere. I hadn't heard of them. I thought they were magnificent because you couldn't break them. Now I know more about them, I don't think I would like to wear them myself.

After the dance, we were all collected in the lorry and taken back to the hospital. I was amazed at myself because now like everyone else I could go dancing at night and work all day without feeling overtired. No more inferiority complex!

There was a special place where nurses collected medicine and gave samples for testing daily. The chemist was a civilian woman in her 40s. It was very unusual to have a civilian in a military hospital; she must have been very good.

When I went to collect results for samples, I became friendly with her. As I walked back to deliver the results, I noticed the name of a French youth who had had a kidney removed. I was horrified to read that the kidney which had been removed was the healthy one. He suffered from a deformity which meant his kidneys were twisted. This had caused the surgeon to confuse them.

One day, a young boy of about eighteen, very thin, arrived with Dr Chevalier. He had just escaped from France, had kidney trouble, and would require the removal of one of them. He couldn't speak to anyone in English, and when he heard he should have an operation, he asked me if I could assist and stay with him while it was being done.
Dr Chevalier said: "Certainly. Anything".
I was dressed and went to the theatre. The operation started - I dared not look but I had never fainted in my life. Instead, I grabbed Sister for support. She helped me out of the theatre. as soon as I was in the fresh air, I was all right. I didn't go back into the operating theatre again.

The youth stayed a long time with us. He passed the time by embroidering a poem on a tapestry which he gave me before he left. I had difficulty in not crying because I knew too much through my curiosity about the test results. He was sent to a Free French nursing home.
For a long time, I had a big corn on my little toe. I was sent to the camp next to the hospital where there was a chiropodist. As I arrived there for my appointment, I was challenged by the sentry who shouted: "Who goes there?"
I didn't answer, and walked on.
He shouted: "Halt!"to which I replied: "I am expected", but he demanded I say the password, which I didn't know.
He barred the way with his bayonet, and two other soldiers appeared. I was frightened. An officer arrived to deal with the situation and I showed my appointment paper. I was allowed in escorted by a soldier. The chiropodist didn't like the state of my feet. I didn't tell him that my corns were caused by having to wear my sister Maria's cast off shoes when I was a child.

I was due for a change and wondered where I was going. To my amazement, it was the Officers Ward. I didn't even

know where it was. Anyway, there I went. It was on the first floor, somewhere quite a little way away. It was a very small ward, around four beds and one sister who did all the treatment because VAD nurses were not qualified to treat officers. It had a beautiful sitting room like an enormous, luxury apartment. I hoped looking at it that I would stay there forever, but it was not to be. Sister was very experienced and not as young as the usual one. Of course, she didn't have much work there and her duty consisted of being a qualified nurse, not a clerk with lots of record keeping.

My night duty ended. I was pleased as I no longer had to sleep in the daytime. I went on leave, and on my return, the only two patients there was an ordinary officer walking about, and a guards officer who, while on leave, had a crash near the hospital and was carried straight in. He couldn't be moved. As soon as he was well enough, he would be sent to another hospital. He was very nice.

Of course, my duty consisted only of cleaning the ward and making beds, which I was really qualified to do. As for the other officer at the time, I didn't know what was wrong with him. He seemed to be going in and out, and the doctor, whom I knew vaguely by sight, would come and go into the sitting room with him and talk. I also knew he was not allowed to use the toilet as that was out of bounds to all the patients. I was told, that ward was mainly for suspected VD sufferers, (19) which frightened me a little, but you can't catch it through lavatories. Thank God!

A smart looking youngish woman came up the stairs, gave me her name, said she had an appointment, and asked to see the sister. I told the sister, who told me to direct the woman to the little sitting room on the left. I did so, and a few minutes later the sister walked in with the other officer,

who was this lady's husband. She took him to the little sitting room where his wife was waiting, and shut the door. Then the doctor arrived and saw the couple in the sitting room; he left them alone. A short while later, I saw the lady coming out. You could see she had been crying, and was quite a bit distraught. She didn't even say goodbye, went down the stairs and, I suppose, went home. I didn't know what had happened.

Later, I found out that when a soldier caught VD, if he was married, he was forced by his medical officer to write a letter informing his wife, telling her about his infection and asking her to visit the hospital. The medical officer would then ensure that the letter was posted. When the wife arrived, she was led to her husband in the sitting room.

After a report arrived confirming that a patient had VD, he was transferred to another hospital for treatment. Later, I learned the German Army was not so kind. (20)

I heard from some of the VD patients at my hospital that de Lattre de Tassigny, now a general, had been captured and was a prisoner-of-war in Germany. Then one day I saw in the local paper that he was visiting the French camp where I knew all the doctors. He had been released.

I took the phone and told one of the doctors that I would like to see the General because I knew him. They could tell him the Mademoiselle Maupain dansant à l'opera de Paris would like to see him, and if he didn't remember that, to tell him that he opened *eSalle de Dance* on my village. The doctor replied "Oh, bad luck Why didn't you tell us that you knew him because he has now gone to Tunis?"

Due to security, the paper wasn't allowed to say he was in England while he was here. I was quite sad. I would have liked to see what he looked like now. Unfortunately, I wouldn't have recognised him, as I didn't think I

remembered his face at all, that is my true story. Tragically, his only son was killed soon after the war fighting rebels in French Indo-China (Vietnam).

A few days later, the officer ward was empty. I was amazed that all the time I was there, I had never been afraid of catching anything, although we didn't have rubber gloves, masks, or any such thing. I had never heard of anybody on the staff catching an illness there. I was told now to report to the big surgical ward where a group photograph was to be taken. We were ordered to assemble in the courtyard. Everything was ready, no male staff were included, it was just the sisters and VADs. The front row with chairs was left empty until everyone was there except the VIPs. We just stood where we wanted to, but then we were directed by the photographer to go here, there and there. I was grabbed and told to stand there until we were all ready. Then came the VIPs. Colonel Dickson sat on a chair just in front of me. He was right in the centre of that long enormous photo including Matron, theatre sisters, and all the top brass of the hospital. All our names were printed at the bottom of the photograph. I wonder how it happened that I was behind the Colonel. Did he request it or what? I never asked Mrs Dickson, that would have been too impolite.

Although I was to go on day duty almost immediately, I was then put on night duty again, and that was over the Christmas period of 1943. While everyone was having a good time that day, I had to be in bed between ten in the morning and the evening. I took it on the chin.

I asked if the pantomime was good while I was asleep. The nurse replied (21) that there were not enough seats and she sat one of the patients on her lap. She said: "I didn't see much of the play, because I was holding him sitting on my

knees. I was counting his heartbeat. Some were missing and I didn't really see the pantomime."

There was a cupboard in her room full of knitted garments: scarves, bed socks, mittens...which could be given to some of the patients, but she was a hoarder and would never give any of her stuff to a patient who had cold feet at night or anything. She was very mean.

In 1943, a Free French doctor arrived at Connaught Hospital; he wasn't very good looking. Our hospital was known as the leading place for South Command. It was enormous, and us medicals occupied only a very small part of it. The doctor heard about me, the only other French member of staff there. The one thing I knew about him was that he came from some other hospital in England and was staying at the Connaught for only a short while.

One Saturday in their mess, the doctors of that department held a little get-together; each invited one person to come. The Free French doctor invited me as his guest. I went, and was introduced to a few doctors I had never met. They were playing games about the room, puzzles, and eventually we had coffee. We nurses sat together without cups of coffee, a bit apart from the others. The Free French doctor didn't tell me anything about himself, but he asked a lot of questions about me.

I told him I was an imitation nurse, the widow of an Englishman, and after the war I would return to France. Apart from that, I told him little more. He asked if I had a boyfriend. I told him I hadn't.

I asked him if by any chance he was putting up his candidature because if so, he was definitely not welcome. I wanted to return to France and did not want to have illegitimate children in England before that. He told me there were ways to avoid that and after unprotected sex you

insert cotton wool which has been soaked in cold water. This kills the sperm. I decided not to continue the conversation and he took me back to where the other VADs were sitting. We shook hands and wished each other good luck. I was rid of his unwelcome attention.

The Free French were given wine with their meals, which caused jealously amongst the British forces, but the boot was on the other foot when Free French soldiers took English girls out then complained their guests drank them under the table. This shocked them, because in France women drank less rather than more than men. I was never a heavy drinker, and when taken to a public house would pour my drink into a flower vase on the window sill when no one was looking. Poor flowers, I don't think they like alcohol!

In the street, a Free French soldier crossed the road and coming towards me said hello. I asked him if he knew me. He said of course he did. I asked him to refresh my memory. He asked if I remembered his two friends; sometimes we used to talk about France on the way to or from my ward. I remembered him then. We used to talk mainly about the horror the *Bosch* used to inflict on the French people.

Then he told me the story that on Saturday a sister was going to the ward, and they asked her if they could see the French nurse for a minute to say goodbye. She saw they were from the VD ward and told them in no uncertain terms she wasn't there, and please to go away. (22) Which they did. Of course, they didn't believe her. As the three of them were going somewhere else, they just wanted to say goodbye to me. Then they started a fire in the ward.

This did happen. I remembered it when I went to the ward a day later. Then I had a day off and I was told about the fire. Nobody knew who did it.

The soldiers had tried to start a fire in the corner of the ward so the smoke would bring all the staff there to put it out, and they could say goodbye to me. However, I had the day off.

After working very hard Christmas Eve in 1943, I made myself ready to go to midnight mass. I was going to the Free French camp for Christmas mass and dinner. As the food was good there, I was in luck. I put on my only civilian dress and coat, hoping to get out of the hospital without being seen. I felt quite cold in my thin dress. After mass, we went to the dining room where tables were laid beautifully. The was not much decoration, but it looked quite festive.

I was invited to dinner there with their doctors whom I used to meet when they came to our hospital with patients. When we were at the camp, as we walked to our table, a very slim, petite blonde girl in civilian clothes came towards us. She was introduced to me, then left. When I asked about her, I was told she was a French-speaking Polish lady who was there for a week for a health check, before she went on a sortie to be dropped by plane into occupied France. She had done this before. She was to report back to England by wireless about German movements. I would never have guess this as she looked so fragile.

I was invited to the 1943 New Year party at the Camberley Free French camp. All the serious medical cases from Camberley were sent to our Connaught Hospital, so I had met many Free French. Coming back, we lost our way. The driver was absolutely drunk and nobody was allowed to take his place at the wheel. I don't know how we arrived safely; there was nobody to ask the way and no road signs

as they had been removed for security purposes. I arrived back at the dormitory at four in the morning. I thanked God no one saw me come in.

Chapter Fourteen: Mrs Goodman

In 1944, I left Connaught Hospital; it reverted to civilian use, and all the military staff were all transferred out. (1)

I was accepted by Saint Thomas' Hospital in London to train as a full nurse. I stayed there in the nurses' home until the end of the war, when I was demobbed.

My first meal at Saint Thomas' was pilchards. Afterwards, the sister asked how I liked the food but when I told her what we had been served, she was furious. She said that fish was for patients; staff were entitled to chicken, which in those days was a luxury.

As a nurse, I received free tickets to London shows. I loved that, but not the hospital; it was full of whining, sick, old people, unlike the soldiers in the military hospital at Brookwood. As before however, the matron ruled with a rod of iron. A middle aged friend of mine, Mrs Fallowfield, told me one example of the matron's authority. When cleaning her husband's jacket, Mrs Fallowfield found a packet of condoms. She was astonished as she was past child-bearing age. She concluded her husband must have a younger mistress. She followed him and found out he was sleeping with a nurse from Saint Thomas'. She complained about this to the matron; within a fortnight, the nurse was transferred to a far away hospital, thus ending her relationship with Mr Fallowfield.

I met the man who was to become my second husband in 1944; he was an army captain, and but for a twist of fate we would never have met. After the Dunkirk evacuation of May/June 1940, his isolated unit retreated to the coast. My husband-to-be, then just a private, was asleep in a lorry when the order to abandon vehicles and make for the coast

was given. He would thus have become a prisoner-of-war if a sergeant hadn't gone along the convoy checking for stragglers. The officers were former Territorial Army part-timers and had fled, leaving every man for himself.

The Captain asked me to marry him. I refused, saying that if I did so I would lose my widow's pension. He countered by explaining that if he became my new husband and got killed in action, I would get a bigger pension, because widows of soldiers received more than those of civilians like my first husband! So I became engaged to the English captain. Mrs Milton met him and said "If you make her unhappy, I will kill you". He didn't like that, and never spoke to her again.

After we decided to marry, he told his parents in London about me. They were horrified that he was marrying a French widow; his father asked "Is she black as well?" (2) We were married on April 2, 1944 at All Saints Weston, Esher, the home of his former solicitor employer, and I became Marie Jeanne Goodman, the wife of Edward Albert Goodman. The wedding cake was provided by the wife of my new husband's batman who ran a factory shop in Yorkshire.

After we married, my new husband Ted (3) had to leave to rejoin his unit in preparation for service abroad, so I warned him to use condoms. There, he exploded, retorting that he was not that type of man. (When we resumed cohabitation after the war, I discovered that he was telling the truth - unlike most Frenchmen, he was not a womaniser). He took part in the Normandy invasion and eventually reached Nancy. He decided to visit my family, so his batman drove him in a jeep to my hometown only to be informed that my relatives were staying at Steinbourg (4) in Alsace.

The new Mrs Goodman with her soldier groom.

It was quite a long journey, so he and his batman stayed at an American base on the way. My new husband asked the commanding officer to safeguard the jeep overnight. The latter agreed readily and posted a sentry to prevent it being stolen by American soldiers, most of whom were drunk. The journey continued and the next day Ted told his batman to drive slowly because American troops were using the road. It was good advice; the jeep was overtaken by a speeding one. Then a loud explosion was heard. Going fast, it had detonated a landmine and all the occupants were killed.

On reaching Steinbourg, Ted traced the house where my family was staying. He had however forgotten that owing to the occupation I had been unable to let them know I had been widowed and remarried. So when he announced at the door that he was my husband, my mother and sister were amazed at how totally different he looked from my first husband Eric, whom they had met before the war. They rejected him as an imposter; luckily he spoke French and managed to tell them about my widowhood, proving his veracity. They then welcomed him and his batman for the night.

Owing to war-time shortages, they had no meat to cook, only locally produced vegetables. Luckily, my brother-in-law Jean Noet caught and killed a rabbit for dinner.

After the war ended, I was asked by my Commandant to take part in a local victory parade. I refused politely; it had taken me two years to become a nurse because I didn't want to march like a soldier and I wasn't going to do so now.

As soon as I could after the war, I returned to visit my relatives in Jœuf.

When France was liberated, the men in each village took the law into their own hands and punished women who had fraternised with the German occupation forces. Some even had children by German soldiers. These women were seized and taken to the village square where their hair was forcibly cut off. They were thus degraded with their mark of shame.

I arrived in France with a short hairstyle which was then fashionable in England, but my sister Maria warned me it made me look like a female collaborator whose hair had grown somewhat since the liberation. She asked me to speak in public with an English accent so people would not look at me with suspicion and embarrass her while she was with me.

In France, my family thought I had escaped the rigours of the war in Europe and instead was living peacefully with Eric in Africa. They were amazed that I had spent the time working in England as a nurse. (5)

Maria reminded me of the time before the war when she, I, and our sister Antoinette went to see the fortune teller Madame Gentil in Nancy. (6)

Maria told me about her experiences during the German occupation. The dreaded Gestapo had established an office in Nancy. Germans from there would come to eat in her husband's restaurant wearing civilian clothes. Some could speak a little French; each wore a big, jewelled signet ring on the little finger of his left hand. The jewel had the SS double lightning symbol, so that each Gestapo member could recognise another in spite of their civilian dress. It was said that each ring contained cyanide so that if the wearer was captured by the Resistance, he could commit suicide to avoid interrogation, as the SS was the elite unit.

When a member of the Gestapo entered the restaurant and was seen by a colleague, he would raise his left hand to show the ring and the other would sit at another table to avoid them being linked with one another in public. The waitresses spotted this.

The menu was in French and most of the German diners couldn't understand it. As one sat down he would therefore look around and see what the French people at the neighbouring tables were eating. When the waitress arrived, the German would point to the other table and ask for the same food.

One day, a Gestapo member pointed to a table where some French people were eating artichokes. When the waitress brought one, however, the German didn't know how to eat the inside of the leaves. He tried to eat the whole leaf, but didn't succeed, and after four leaves he left the rest, asked the waitress to remove the plate, and bring the next course. She kept a straight face, but when she brought the artichoke uneaten to the kitchen, everybody laughed.

One day, during the occupation, my sister Maria received an order to go to the German *Kommandantur* Office. On arrival, she saw Jean Noet standing terrified before a table behind which were Germans in uniform. He had been accused of having black market food and had admitted to it. That "crime" carried the death penalty. Luckily, Maria understood German from the time she had spent with her aunt in Germany and having our parents speak to each other in Alsatian-German. In addition, she was the beauty of the family and very articulate. She was thus able to understand what the Germans were saying to each other, and told them forcefully in French that her husband was so scared, he would admit to anything. (7)

The Germans didn't realise she could understand them speaking among themselves. She explained that she was much younger than her husband and that she controlled the buying of food for the restaurant, and none of it was obtained illegally.

I asked Maria why she hadn't spoken German. She said she didn't want to give them the satisfaction. They had looked at each other then released Maria and her husband with a warning. Outside in the street, Jean Noet cried and nearly collapsed, saying to Maria she had saved his life. He was, however, guilty.

My other sister Antoinette also lived in Nancy but experienced no trouble. I found out that I had lost my father and one of my brothers during my absence in England. Considering that a world war lasting six years had just ended, it could have been worse.

Remarkably, both my father and brother Robert, had been killed in the same year (1942). My father's death went unmentioned (except on his death certificate) because of all that was happening in the war.

He had retired before the war but was then conscripted by the German occupation authorities to go back to work in the iron foundry because all the young men in Jœuf had been taken to Germany as slave labour. Many were killed by the Allied bombing of German factories. He was killed accidentally while working at the factory, crossing the railway line for iron ore trucks; his jacket had caught in a rail truck which he hadn't seen coming. He was knocked over and survived for three weeks before dying of his injuries. (8) My widowed mother then went to live with Antoinette in Nancy.

I was grief-stricken; I adored my father, he was an honest, hard-working man without vices who raised seven children

in spite of earning only a factory wage. He was good-hearted and always took my two younger brothers and I out to the forest every Sunday. He remains in my thoughts seventy years later.

The war-time labour conscription also applied to my younger brother Robert. He was ordered to work in a factory in Germany. To avoid this, he joined the Maquis, an underground French Resistance army supplied with arms parachuted into France by the British. It was run on military lines and was in constant touch with the Free French forces in England commanded by General de Gaulle. It sabotaged railways and bridges.

The Maquis received their instructions from the BBC, which broadcast a message every day disguised as a greeting. It was an innocent sounding phrase such as "Mary had a little lamb" or "It will be lovely tomorrow". These words indicated to the Maquis that there would be an arms drop on that day.

On receiving such a message, the Maquis would go to where the drop was to come. To divert attention, the RAF would bomb nearby while another plane dropped the arms (or a spy) by parachute. Two Maquis - an officer and a junior - would go to look for the drop. When the pair found it, they signalled to others by torch or whistling where the drop was, so they could come and collect the arms dropped and dispose of the parachute.

The Maquis rule was that the others would return the signal with a bird call and then wait; the pair who had found the drop would immediately return to base. If however they didn't arrived quickly, another pair would be sent out. If the second pair didn't return, the mission was called off as obviously there was danger.

My mother told me that on one such mission, my brother and his captain asked permission from the commanding officer of their Maquis unit to go as a third pair, although this was prohibited. They justified the request by saying they knew the district well and anyway, all round the area where there was a drop, reliable local men known to the Maquis would be posted as guides. They were known to be patriotic, and would hide the two maquisards after picking up the drop, be it arms or even an agent.

The commanding officer had reluctantly agreed to this exception to the Maquis damage limitation rule, so when Robert and his captain went to where the drop was expected, they saw German soldiers there and fled, but were pursued and captured.

They were taken to the Gestapo headquarters in Paris for interrogation. They were detained in a room on the second floor of a large building. Being the younger one, my brother was taken to the next room and questioned; the Gestapo always questioned the young and more inexperienced suspect first. The Maquis Captain waiting with two German guards heard my brother screaming with pain in the interrogation room. The Captain realised what was in store for him and quickly opening the window, threw himself out. His legs were broken by the fall, and he lost consciousness.

He woke up chained to a bed in a small hospital room. The Maquis found out where he was, and, with the connivance of the French hospital staff, tried to cut him free from the bed. They failed and therefore secretly removed him and the bed from the hospital to a secret hiding place. The man recovered but was never allowed by the Maquis to go on another mission because he was known to the Gestapo.

After his interrogation, my brother Robert was sent to Buchenwald concentration camp in Germany. My mother learned of this through a Red Cross printed postcard she received asking her to send some special medicine for her son. He didn't survive, but my mother was awarded a pension after the war for his valour.

The Maquis Captain did survive and was decorated by General de Gaulle. My mother was also at the ceremony to receive a posthumous medal and a written citation from General de Gaulle on Robert's behalf.

It stated (translated) SCHWARTZ ROBERT F.F.C. late intelligence Agent in Occupied France; Unit for reception of parachutists: commended for courage and coolness.

Arrested and tortured but refused to talk; Deported to Germany. Awarded Croix de Guerre 1939 with Silver Star.
Paris 5th June 1945
General de Gaulle

My other three brothers survived the war; because of his hand injury, Eugène was disqualified from forced labour in Germany. (9) Louis was conscripted into the navy. He served on the capital ship *Jeanne d'Arc* and survived the war unharmed. After the destruction of the French fleet in 1940, he was demobbed and returned to work at the bank in Vichy, then in unoccupied France, so he too was not subjected to forced labour, unlike the manual workers in the occupied zone.

Maurice also worked in Vichy, so he too survived the war unscathed, although later he would blame the helmet he had to wear in the military for his baldness, as none of his three brothers were bald, he said, although everyone else in his unit was!

My sister-in-law complained to me that her brother had been killed by the British. During the war, he had been conscripted as forced labour from Occupied France and had to work in a German factory. It was bombed by the RAF and he was killed. I told her that was war.

Maria complained about the behaviour of General Patton's soldiers. She said they would get blind drunk then collapse in the street. Military police would then come with batons and drag them away. I told her that at the military hospital, we nurses had been warned to avoid walking with anyone with the badge of Patton's Third Army.

I also learned that Louis had had a problem with the Gestapo. He and his wife were living in Vichy with their fourteen year old son Alain. They wanted no more children. Then a neighbour denounced them as being Jews in disguise. Louis' wife was interrogated. She denied the allegation. The Gestapo took down Alain's trousers to see if he was circumcised. (He wasn't). Louis arrived and said he could get certification. He went immediately to the register office (conveniently sited in Vichy) and demanded a certificate showing his family was Catholic. The clerk was obstructive. Louis had a gun, which he carried as he had to take cash between branches of his bank. He produced it, and the clerk complied! Louis then rushed home and showed the certificate to the Gestapo, who were satisfied. His wife, however, was so traumatised that her menstrual periods were disrupted. As a result, the rhythm method of contraception that she practised no longer worked, and she produced another (unwanted) child, Nicole. (10) Needless to say, her parents doted on her, an unexpected addition to their family.

After he returned to England, Ted told me that he had worked in British military hospitals. He said that enemy

wounded were treated exactly the same way as the British, although they had to be kept apart from the Polish Armoured Division, who would attack them in their beds.

The German wounded were actually treated better as prisoners-of-war than their compatriots who had evaded capture. German military hospitals were so short of doctors that treatment was administered by medical students. Additionally, antibiotics hadn't yet been introduced to Germany, so septic limbs had to be amputated there.

Ted's friend, also a captain, married a nursing sister at the hospital. He said that on their wedding night she told him "I do not love you. I only married you to spite my former boyfriend, who dropped me".

Ted was appalled and told his friend if that had happened to him he would have walked out on her there and then. Nevertheless, the two remained married. They settled in the man's native Lancashire, where he worked in the paper industry. Occasionally he visited London on business, bringing us a large supply of lavatory paper (which was then rationed). He would stay overnight at our home in Kingston. He would always arrive late, having been out all evening, when I am sure he visited strip shows or worse. He was that kind of man!

Ted told me how he had served in Northern Ireland, which was on high alert because the rebel Irish Republican Army had declared war on the United Kingdom. (11)

He said the peace was preserved there by the B Specials - part-time armed Protestant police who kept the Catholic nationalists under control. One day, he was cycling in civilian clothes on a country lane when suddenly, armed B Specials surrounded him, pointing their guns. Terrified, he produced his papers showing he was a British Army officer.

Their attitude changed immediately, and they welcomed him to Northern Ireland.

Twenty-five years later, in 1970, when the B Special force was disbanded by the British Government, he predicted correctly that Northern Ireland would become ungovernable because they had local knowledge and knew where every IRA sympathiser lived. He was right.

Ted told me too how shocked he was at the religious discrimination in Northern Ireland. He said every advertisement of a job vacancy ended with the words "state religion". If the applicant indicated he or she was Catholic, that person would not even be granted an interview. In this way, Catholics were forced to emigrate to find work, thus maintaining a Protestant majority in the Province.

Having left school at thirteen, I was no good at writing letters, so misaddressed my love letters to Ted on the Continent. Later, he told me they arrived much later, having been misdelivered to every possible unit.

In 1945, Ted boasted he had saved many marriages. His unit was based in Paris, and many of its men had started sexual relationships with Frenchwomen. After these men were demobbed, love letters for them arrived at the camp. As commanding officer, Ted was supposed to forward correspondence but, before doing so, he checked the men's records, and if a particular record showed a man to be married, and if the letter was personal - eg handwritten on a pink envelope - he had it destroyed,

Thirty years later, he told me about another, similar instance. He was running his own, small law firm (12) and his secretary told him that one of the typists, a divorcée, was trying to seduce a married male clerk. Although she wasn't this man's secretary, she would spend much time in

his room "chatting him up". The man seemed to like it so, to protect him, Ted found an excuse to fire her.

Chapter Fifteen: Suburban Housewife

By 1945, Ted was a major; he was offered promotion to a higher rank but wanted to return to civilian life; on leaving the army, he resumed his employment as an articled clerk in the same City law firm as before the war.

His principal was a solicitor named Thompson, the son of a "humble policeman" who had a chip on his shoulder and acted in an "over the top" manner. He was arrogant, and rude to everyone, including my husband, who still being a clerk, was much in awe of him, but I was equally rude to Thompson whenever I met him. I teased him about the fact that he wore a corset, as did many overweight men in those days. Ted was horrified and said I had to treat him with respect because he was his boss. I retorted "He is not *my* boss!"

Ted said his training consisted of learning what not to do. For instance, the solicitor would pepper his dictation with derogatory comments about the person to whom he was writing. Then he would never bother to read typed letters before signing them. On one occasion, his secretary failed to separate his hostile comments from the dictation itself. The recipient was outraged by what Thompson had included in the letter; he demanded (and received) an abject apology!

Thompson could be ruthless when the occasion demanded. He had a chief clerk who failed to meet time limits for filing documents in court. This could be fatal for a law firm as it was professional negligence. To add to the danger, the clerk would lie to Thompson, telling him the papers had been filed.

He uncovered one such incident and gave the man a final warning. When it happened again, Thompson sacked him on the spot. (1) Ted had worked with this clerk and was shocked later when he saw him on a building site covered in dirt and doing heavy manual work. Having been dismissed from his job for misconduct and unable to provide a reference, that was the only work he could get. His career in the legal profession had ended.

On another occasion, Thompson was acting for a house buyer and hated the solicitor for the seller. On completion day, he arranged for the whole purchase price to be delivered to the seller's solicitor's office in coins! As it was legal tender, the exasperated seller's solicitors couldn't refuse, and had to spend the whole day counting! (In those days, however large the amount, the payee could not refuse to accept cash).

Thompson treated my husband badly. He would park his car illegally near his City office and force him to give a banknote to any policeman who arrived. Eventually, Ted refused to do this dirty work. (2)

Working for Thompson, my husband was poorly paid, so when he heard that a client was seeking lodgings for his son who was studying in England at boarding school, Ted offered to accommodate the boy during the school holidays for payment.

We met the boy for the first time with his luggage at Surbiton Station. His father, Mr Rowan who lived in South Africa, would send wonderful food parcels including big tins of ham. They were very welcome during those days of strict post-war rationing.

Mr Rowan would visit us on his annual summer trip to London to see his son. He was old, having married late in life; his background was fascinating. He was Anglo-Chinese

and spoke Mandarin fluently. Before the war, he had been a small time solicitor in Hong Kong. Then he had a lucky break that made him a millionaire. For prestige as an office, he rented a room in a luxury hotel. It was the cheapest in the building, and was formerly a maid's bedroom.

While drinking in the hotel bar one day, a businessman told him that his own solicitor had just died. Rowan offered to do the legal work instead. Shortly thereafter, the businessman died leaving Rowan to deal with his estate. It turned out to consist of large scale investments in China. He spent the next few years disposing of it in full time, well paid work.

Then disaster struck. In 1942, the Japanese took Hong Kong, and Rowan fled. The occupiers confiscated all British bank deposits, ordering the managers to open the strongboxes. One however had thrown away the keys, and it couldn't be opened. Unfortunately, it was Rowan's, but luckily he had transferred his money to London.

After the war, he returned to Hong Kong to reclaim what was left of his property; his house had been looted. Then he was invited for a meal by a fellow British citizen, only to be horrified to see it served on his unique set of china. He said nothing, presuming his host had bought it legitimately after the war.

Rowan then settled in South Africa and educated his children at English boarding schools. We became lifelong friends with him and his son. Like all my contemporaries, I have now outlived them.

My husband's employer secured nomination as a Liberal Parliamentary Candidate in 1950, on condition be paid his own expenses. He left Ted, who wasn't yet qualified, to man the office while he disappeared for several weeks to

campaign. He promised to phone regularly, but didn't. Ted was stressed out having to run a City office single-handed and inexperienced.

Thompson had a daughter who worked with him, and he had tried to get Ted to marry her, but he chose me instead! (3) His employer's son Derek joined the firm as well.

The latter had an amazing marital history. His father came home unexpectedly early one day and caught his son *in flagrante delicto* with his girlfriend in a bedroom. He ordered her out of the house. She was, however, from a very high class family; her father had received an honour. She shouted "Who do you think you are, son of a policeman!" (In those days the police had lower status).

Thompson prevented his son Derek from seeing her again, and he married someone else. He could not however forget the first girlfriend, and continued his affair with her. His wife couldn't produce children, so she went to see the mistress and asked her to be a surrogate mother, to which the other woman replied "I will have your child and your husband". She did both – Derek divorced his wife and married his mistress. Oh dear!

When Ted took up his law studies again, I was reminded of one of my beloved fables of La Fontaine: *The Oyster And The Pleaders*. (4)

Two monks were walking on the beach. One saw an oyster that had been washed ashore and told the other, who picked it up. An argument ensued as to who should eat it. The one who picked it up claimed right of possession while the other, who saw it first, claimed finder's rights. Then a judge appeared. He opened the oyster, ate the contents, then gave the two parts of the shell to each monk. The

moral of the story is that a bad bargain is better than a court case.

The story reminded me of a joke they used to tell in my sister Maria's restaurant. If an open oyster didn't move when lemon juice of vinegar was put on it, it was dead and inedible. A customer complained about such an oyster only to be told not to worry, the oysters served here are used to juice. (5)

On October 26, 1945, I gave birth to my first child, a boy. We named him Edward after his father - Edward Anthony Charles to be precise. My son was born in a private hospital at Eastbourne. (This was before the National Health Service). The doctor wanted him circumcised; I absolutely refused because I didn't want him to be regarded as Jewish, having the surname Goodman. I said "Let nature take its course". It did satisfactorily because he fathered two children.

We had a frightening experience when we had just moved to our new apartment in Kingston. In the night there was a loud crash outside the bedroom. My husband insisted I investigate it. As I did so, I heard him lock the bedroom door behind me. I discovered the noise had been caused by an overloaded coat rack collapsing. I remonstrated with him about his cowardice in leaving me alone to deal with the potential burglar, while he locked himself in safely. He replied there was no point in us both being at risk!

I had a similar experience when I was a girl. I got up in the night to go downstairs to urinate. On my way back in the dark, I felt a hard grip on my leg. I was so terrified that I couldn't utter a sound. Then I realised it was my brother hiding in the corner.

I used to buy my fish from a stall in Kingston Market. One day, I noticed quickly that it was smelling in my bag. I immediately went back to the fish stall and told the man. He exchanged it for another piece and gave me some advice. He said "Always ask me to choose your fish instead of telling me what type you want. That way I will pick what is fresh".
I followed his advice.

On July 11, 1948, I gave birth to my daughter at Surbiton, Surrey; we named her Colette Ann. She was two months premature and I could hardly produce any milk. The hospital nurses gave my tiny daughter surplus from other mothers. I objected, saying she might catch tuberculosis from that milk. The nurse laughed and explained this disease was carried by cow's milk but not mother's milk. Although the National Health Service had come into being six days before Colette was born, my husband received a bill from the hospital. He ignored it, and wasn't pressed for payment.

Later the same year, I and my new family moved into a second floor flat in Kingston-upon-Thames. (6) The property was a big old Victorian house divided into separate apartments. There was no central heating, but it was all we could afford.

Below us in the basement flat was another couple: a married insurance agent named Freddie (who had left his wife), and his tall mistress. (7) I didn't like her because of this, so I was disgusted when she phoned me to complain that our young daughter was running around naked in our communal back garden.

In anger I retorted "What about you, living with another woman's husband?"

She complained to my husband, who apologised to her, but I refused.

I didn't like my husband's friendship with Freddie. One evening, he went there in spite of my protests. When he came up at midnight, I refused to let him in. He called to my young son through the letter box. I ordered the boy not to open the door, so Ted went downstairs and slept there that night. That taught him a lesson!

Freddie's mistress also used to put out bread for the birds on the back lawn, which attracted rats. I asked her to stop, but she refused.

Then one day, my young son kept shouting happily "I have a penguin". My elderly mother was staying with us at the time to help me with my new baby daughter; she looked out of the window and told me it was a rat. I rushed out and took the large, dead black rat out of my son's hands and put it on the kitchen window sill of the basement flat.

I then took him inside to wash his hands and face because he had been kissing the dead rat.

Freddie complained about my leaving it on his window sill, but I said it was well deserved because it was his mistress who had attracted the rat! I exacted my revenge by complaining about him.

My young son had asked me "Hasn't Uncle Freddie got a big willy?"

I asked him how he knew, and he told me they had used the lavatory together when Freddie was visiting. The next time I saw Freddie, I shouted that it was disgusting for him to allow my young son to see his penis.

However, the boot was on the other foot after Freddie left. The next tenants in the ground floor flat were a couple who had a young daughter. We had only a small bathroom which filled with steam when anyone had a bath, so my

husband would walk out into the hall naked to dry himself. At that point, the young girl from the ground floor flat entered. Terrified, my husband fled back into the bathroom and locked the door. Later, when I appeared, he upbraided me for allowing the girl into our apartment unsupervised while he was having a bath. He was afraid the girl would complain to her mother, but nothing happened and I had a good laugh.

Marie's sister Maria with her husband and daughter, on the Riviera, circa 1949.

Ted used to commute to London by train from Surbiton Station. I warned him that doing so would knock ten years

off his life. He heeded my advice and got a job in a suburban office at Sutton, to which he travelled by car.

There was another solicitor, Mr Fraser, who lived down our road who commuted to London. Every evening while we were eating our supper we would see him walking from the station carrying his briefcase. We laughed at him calling him "Little Fraser" coming home late after travelling home by train. Little did I realise that my son would end up exactly like Fraser, ie a small time solicitor travelling to work by train, carrying his briefcase. It was poetic justice for ridiculing Mr Fraser!

I had to go to dinner dances every Saturday night with Ted to help him recruit new clients, so we arranged for his clerk to come and babysit our two children. He was a closet homosexual; I realised this because he was unmarried and effeminate.

Unfortunately for her, the girl in the flat above us didn't know this. She was a single woman living with her elderly parents and was looking for a husband. On our returning home one Saturday, the clerk told us that she had come to sit with him in case he was lonely. He was unable to reciprocate her interest. Later however, after quitting his job, he moved to Brighton and married a rich widow who wanted companionship but not sex. Even in those days, Brighton was known to be raffish and what is now called *gay*, so he went to the right place.

When we moved to Kingston, I decided to drive my husband's car, so went to the police station with my Nigerian driving licence to ask if it was valid in Britain. Luckily I went by bus, because the policeman asked if my car was outside. If it had been, he would have charged me with driving without a licence, because he said mine wasn't valid in the UK.

We had a wonderful old neighbour, a widow named Mrs Lister who had led an eventful life; she enthralled us with her reminiscences. She had been brought up in a rich family and went to an expensive, private girls school. When Queen Victoria died in 1901, all the pupils had been made to sew black edgings onto their knickers. The headmistress then admitted the daughter of a tradesman in spite of the protests of the parents who all came from the landed gentry. Nonetheless, she stuck to her guns, so all the other parents withdrew their daughters.

After her marriage, Mrs Lister had moved to Istanbul with her new husband. When the Ottoman Empire declared war on Britain in 1914, she was trapped there. German officers were billeted at her house and treated her with contempt. They said they didn't have to pay her but gave her money as an act of charity to an inferior.

At the end of the First World War, she remembered seeing the ceremonial entry of the Allied armies into Istanbul led by Commander Louis Franchet d'Espèrey, riding on a white horse.

We also became friends with the lady in the top flat. She introduced us to her son-in-law, a garage owner who then became a client of my husband. He had been captured by the Germans in Crete and held as a prisoner-of-war, (1941-4). He told us that one of his fellow prisoners was Lord Harewood who, in spite of his royal origin, was rude to everyone and didn't wash.

On his return to England after the war, the garage owner's baby had grown into a boy without his father present. Sadly, the two never bonded; the father had affection only for his second son, who was born after the war.

One evening, I and my husband were invited to a dinner by the garage owner and his wife. There was another guest and his wife with us. He had been a prisoner of the Japanese and forced to work on the notorious Burma Railway. He heard someone speaking Japanese at the next table, and shouted out "I will kill him".

He had to be physically restrained from doing so.

In 1954, I managed to see the Wimbledon tennis ladies final from the Royal Box; it was won by Maureen Connolly. (8) My friend Mrs Lines was a keen amateur tennis player and had entered the tournament. She was eliminated in the early rounds, but as a participant she was allowed four favourable seats at the final. She was going with her husband and their friends Mr and Mrs Bentall, the owners of the famous store in Kingston. Then at the last minute she was informed her guests were divorcing and couldn't come, so she gave their tickets to myself and my husband. My old friend Mrs Thompson, the wife of my husband's former employer (9) was in the ordinary seats, and was amazed to see me in the royal box.

Afterwards, we went to the dance, being seated at the same table as Mr and Mrs Bentall. The Men's Champion was the first to dance with the Women's Champion, then everyone else joined in. I was shocked to see the male tennis players were all wearing pale-coloured suits, an innovation then.

There was however one unfortunate incident. Being a sportswoman, Mrs Lines had no breasts to speak off; her chest was all muscle, so she wore a push-out bra. When she danced with a vigorous male tennis player, he squeezed her, unwittingly pushing on one side of her bra. When she returned to the table, she looked as though she had only one breast, whereas in actual fact she had none.

It was not until *after* my second marriage that I discovered what a low class family I had married into. My second husband may have been a respectable solicitor, but his background was rough (lorry drivers). My father-in-law, Charles Albert Goodman, who founded the family haulage firm, (10) was, however, an upright man.

In the 1930s, when drivers were desperate for jobs, men would come to him offering to work for less than the going rate. He responded that he only paid the full amount. He got his son to buy two secondhand lorries, and the company carried on trading.

He was faithful to his wife and she complained that, after fathering their five children, he became impotent - how different to his two elder sons, Charlie and Jim! Charles kept the firm going during the Second World War when all his vehicles were requisitioned. My second husband's eldest brother, Charlie Goodman, had an amazing sex life. In the 1930s (like most young men then) he started sleeping with the first local female he met. She was Maisie, a shop assistant, who was a few years older than him. She then played the oldest trick in the book - she told him she was pregnant. In those days this meant only one thing - marriage. (11) After the wedding it was, however, several years before she conceived - a son known as "Charlie Boy" to differentiate him from his father.

Meanwhile, while working on the lorries, Charlie Senior had met Barbara, a sixteen year old girl in Hertfordshire. They fell passionately in love and she became his mistress. Like all single women in those days, she wanted marriage. Charlie, however, was not prepared to divorce his wife because of their young son, so arranged for her to meet his wife's brother (a manager of a Lyons Tea House in London). The two married. Being Charlie, he carried on

sleeping with Barbara regardless. All went well for a few years until the 1950s. By then, Barbara had three young children with her husband. Charlie used to visit her while her husband was at work.

Then one of the children told the father. Mad with rage, he rushed to the Goodman haulage firm with a meat cleaver to kill Charlie. Luckily it struck the shoulder padding of Charlie's jacket and slid down the sleeve, merely cutting off his little finger. The lorry drivers then dragged the two apart. To avoid a scandal, Charlie didn't press charges.

Typically, he still carried on having sex with Barbara. She and Charlie then both divorced and set up house together in Banstead. Meanwhile, being Charlie, he was also having sex with the wives of the firm's lorry drivers while they were at work. He fathered three children in this way. They were passed off as being the offspring of the women's husbands. Charlie had a total of five children - one with his wife Maisie, one with Barbara and three with lorry drivers' wives. Poetic justice ensued, however. Only a few years after cohabiting with Barbara, she suffered severe diabetes and an untimely death. Charlie spent the rest of his life as a lonely, ageing man, unable to find another female (though he tried). He went to dancing classes met one gold-digger called Phoebe and give her a car. She two-timed him, so he sent a lorry driver from the firm to take the car back. How squalid!

Charlie's brother Jim also worked for the family firm. During the Blitz, he sent his wife and two young sons to safety in her hometown of Steeple Bumpstead, Hertfordshire where there was an American military base. One day, Jim arrived unannounced to where his wife was staying and found her in bed with an American sergeant.

He immediately took her and the boys back to London. She asked him to forgive her. He replied; "I will forgive, but not forget".

He repaid her in her own coin, taking a mistress named "Girty". Once I told his fortune with playing cards. I said that I saw a mysterious dark haired lady in his life. He squirmed with embarrassment, because it related to his mistress! In any event, his family found out and his sons would sing "Daddy, Daddy are you getting flirty with Girty?"

I never remembered names properly. I used a nickname as a mnemonic but then remembered only that. This led to problems. As a solicitor, my husband used to see clients at our Kingston home. One evening, a client named Mr Floyd rang the doorbell. When I opened the door, I recognised him but greeted him with the words "Hello, Mr Floogie". (12)

That was unfortunate. After that, my husband insisted on answering the door himself.

I also mispronounced the name of the new Lurex material to my sister-in-law in the 1960s. I told her about new dresses made of Durex. She laughed but her old mother, who was also present, asked what Durex was. My sister-in-law explained that they were birth control "things".

My dressmaking skills stood me in good stead later in life; I would make dresses for my family. One day, my daughter was asked by a woman about her beautiful dress. My daughter told her I had made it for her; the woman came round and asked me if I would make her a similar one. She offered to pay me, but I made my excuses. I didn't have the time.

I wasn't so lucky with my husband's relatives. For instance, I had to make a sailor outfit for my son as a page

boy at my sister-in-law's wedding. She insisted on a nautical theme.

My elderly mother came to stay with us to see my two young ones. In France, one kissed friends and acquaintances on the cheeks, but a kiss on the mouth was reserved for sexual intimates. Not so in England amongst relatives. She was horrified when my brother-in-law Charlie came and kissed me on the lips. She called me into the kitchen and demanded to know why I was having a relationship with him. I laughed and tried to explain how kissing was different in England.

I had my revenge when my father-in-law visited us and greeted my mother by kissing her on the lips. I said I wanted to see her in the kitchen.

My mother spoke no English. My husband's father would visit us to see his grandchildren and couldn't understand French, so I taught my young son French. He would sit between my mother and my father-in-law, translating, They both had a sense of humour, and with my son's help they had good conversations and became friends. Alas, my father-in-law died of a sudden heart attack not long afterwards.

My mother warned me not to make a fuss of the new baby girl (Colette) when she came home from the hospital as otherwise my son would become jealous. She told me a story about her friend's second child. The older boy was so jealous that he started to mess his trousers, to get the same nappy changing attention as his newborn sister!

My mother told me to purposely favouritise my son. I followed her advice and gave him sweets, saying that his poor little sister couldn't have any because she had no teeth. It worked – instead of resenting her, he felt sorry for

her. He soon told me off for slapping her when she threw something on the floor!

Next door, things were different. From the kitchen window of our second floor apartment, I saw our neighbour's pram. Her older son, who was the same age as mine, would go to it, look around to ensure nobody was about, then jealously hit his baby brother. The baby would scream with pain and the mother rush out to comfort him.

In 2017, when I was 102, I heard my grandson had a similar problem. His two year old toddler would sometimes hit the newborn baby sister. Human nature doesn't change.

My mother developed an interest in gardening. On her visit, I took her to the Chelsea Flower Show. She was overwhelmed and, in spite of her advanced age, she insisted on looking at each exhibit, which took the whole day. I grew tired and asked her to come home, but she refused.

Jeannette's son and daughter in 1953.

In those day, you received payment for returned bottles, so I collected any that could be resold and stored them outside the communal garage of our apartments. Then one day, I received a call from the lady in the apartment above ours. She explained that she was religious and was embarrassed when her friends saw all the empty alcohol

bottles outside. I promised to remove them so asked my young son to take them all to the local public houses as soon as possible. He and his friend loaded them all into his Berney's barrow (13) and set out to sell them. On his return, he told me that at the first pub, they knocked at the door while the publican was having his afternoon nap (In those days, pubs closed between 2.30pm and 5pm due to the licensing laws). A window on the upper floor opened, the red-faced publican appeared and told them to "F* off!" So they sold the bottles to another pub.**

The lady upstairs was married to a man who worked for the United Nations anti-narcotics agency in Iran. When he came home on leave, he told my husband how important was the succession of the throne for the stability of that country. In 1979, his words came true. The Shah was forced to abdicate, and his eldest son hadn't reached the age of majority, so all hell broke loose.

I was spared what would have been the shock of my life in 1949. I allowed my sister-in-law to take my four year old son shopping with her in Streatham. She went into a haberdashery to try on some hats. The door was open and my son slipped out while she was looking in the mirror. When she noticed he was gone, she went out into Streatham High Road, but he was nowhere to be seen.

So as not to panic me, she phoned her brother Charlie at his office (the family haulage firm). He contacted Streatham Police Station and to his relief found my son had been taken there after being found in the middle of the main road; Charlie collected him for me. The policemen said they wanted to keep him because he was so entertaining. He had told them stories about going to school wearing a multi-coloured uniform and asked why the visiting superintendent had more insignia on his uniform

than the other officers there. He also gave them his name and address as 10 Palace Road, Kingston, as I had trained him. They found it difficult to believe that he was so far from home.

Anyway, my son was reunited with me, and only then was I told about his escapade. I didn't allow my sister-in-law to take him out again. (14)

I also became friends with an Austrian woman who lived nearby and had a son who went to the same primary school as mine. When my mother came to stay, she would speak in German to this woman, my mother's first language being Alsatian, a German dialect. Like many people, this woman was short of money in the bleak, post-war period of rationing. She made some extra money by giving German lessons, advertising them in a shop window, but had to stop because she was receiving telephone calls from men seeking sexual services. In those days, "French lessons" was a euphemism for prostitution. (15)

The Austrian woman's son grew up dishonest and was always in trouble. My mother recognised this even though he was only eleven years old. She said he was "gallows fodder" and she was proved correct. The boy used to steal toys from my son, which his mother would return sheepishly when she discovered them.

His mother told me she couldn't get him to eat. Then she noticed a foul smell in her kitchen. She cleaned it thoroughly, but no avail, so called a plumber, who discovered rotting meat in the sink drain. To avoid eating it, her son had stuffed it into the plughole. As the boy grew older, he was always in trouble for stealing. Twice his mother came to our house in a panic to ask my husband's help as a solicitor. "The child is father of the man".

After he was convicted of theft, he was then able to obtain only labouring work. The last I heard of him, he had married then divorced. My old mother was right, he was a ne'er-do-well.

The Austrian woman was, unfortunately (unlike me), nationalistic. When *The Dam Busters* was released in 1955, she refused to let her son see it, telling him she didn't want him to see how her country was destroyed during the war. I was disgusted. Like me she had married a foreigner and settled in his country, so should have abandoned nationalism.

In 1950, my sister Maria came to stay bringing her daughter Marie-Claude with her. They shared a bedroom in our flat. One morning, Maria told me she had a terrifying experience there during the night. She heard the door creak open, but in the dim light saw no one enter. Then she felt something touching her. She was so terrified she was unable to utter a sound. Finally, she heard the voice of my young son calling for Marie-Claude. Overwhelmed with relief, she pulled him into her bed for the night. I recalled this incident forty years later (in the 1990s) when my daughter-in-law told me a similar story; she had fallen asleep on the downstairs settee of her home on a hot summer night, and the back door to the garden had been left open. She was woken in the middle of the night by something touching her face, but she could see nothing in the dim light. She was frozen with fear and left speechless. Then she heard purring and realised it was a cat that had come into the house. She put out her hand, and it jumped off her, running out into the garden.

She told me of another terrifying episode, this time while she and my son were staying with a friend in Amsterdam. (16) She awoke in the night to hear strong breathing beside

the bed, but nobody was there. Eventually, she realised it was the large dog that lived in the house; the animal had come into the room to investigate.

The fact that both my sister and daughter-in-law had been too terrified to utter a sound came back to me in 1996 when it was reported that an English girl had been raped and murdered in a hostel dormitory while on a school trip to France. (17) The culprit had escaped without waking any of the other sleeping girls. Police were baffled as to why the victim hadn't cried out, but I understood from the experience of my sister and daughter-in-law; it was that someone can be too terrified to utter a sound.

During the Second World War, coffee was unobtainable in France, so they used chicory and/or roasted acorns. On her 1950 visit, Maria was amazed by the milkman leaving full bottles on doorsteps. (18) She exclaimed that if it was done in France, the milk would be stolen. On this visit, I also introduced my sister to kippers. She loved them and took some back to her restaurant in Paris.

She and Jean Noet lived above the restaurant in an upstairs flat. He sliced the kippers thinly and served them to his customers as an English delicacy.

Once, retiring from work in the early hours, he saw a half-drowned abandoned kitten in the wet gutter. He picked it up, took it home, and adopted it. They bonded. Every night it would sit on top of the television for warmth. Then it would suddenly jump off and go to the door. A little while later, Jean Noet would enter the flat. The cat knew when he entered the downstairs door of the block. (19)

Fifty years later, I heard on the radio that cats have amongst the best hearing in the animal kingdom. It was then I understood how Jean Noet's cat could know as soon as he had entered the front door several floors below.

My work as a hospital nurse stood me in good stead in my later, post-war life because it taught me that doctors are all too human and thus make mistakes. Fifteen years on, my husband Ted complained of earache; he went to our family doctor (of whom I had a low opinion) and was prescribed a powder for me to pour into each ear every night in bed while he lay on his side. After I did this, I noticed blood on his pillow every morning, and warned him. He visited the doctor again only be to fobbed off with a different medication. The blood on his pillow increased, and he began having difficulty hearing. I put my foot down and insisted on going to the doctor with him; I knew he was in awe of medics, but I wasn't.

In the surgery, Ted asked to be referred to a consultant. The doctor insisted that was unnecessary, but I intervened and demanded it. After seeing the consultant, Ted told me he had been advised that if he continued putting powder in his ears, he would go deaf. I have saved his hearing and his job; a lawyer has to be able to listen!

My husband and I used to go to the Canary Islands for our winter holiday. Some Belgians spent the whole winter there. There were also a lot of pushy German tourists. On one occasion, a German woman shunted Ted out of the way at the buffet counter. He fell over then walked back to where I was sitting and said he would wait until there were fewer people before trying to serve himself. Instead, I asked him what he wanted and then I went up to the counter and took it, pushing Germans out of my way!

Some of the Germans were unaccompanied women of a certain age. They would pick up younger, single males on the beach, but dared not show any affection there. It was during the rule of General Franco and public kissing (even between husband and wife) was an imprisonable offence.

Ted and I had struck up a friendship with our local dentist (Bertie Harding) and his vivacious wife Enid; they had a daughter named Cleone. Bertie sported a moustache and was an old-fashioned gentleman. He doted on Cleone, but she became a wild child.

In the 1960s, she became a drug addict and gangster's moll. She was involved in a car chase with the police which made headlines. When they were arrested, the driver was pistol whipped. Cleone died from a drug overdose soon after; her mother couldn't handle it, and committed suicide.

Having lost both the women in his life, Bertie took his own life too, strapping on a gas inhaler. He was found the next morning by his nurse. Ted handled the probates of all three. I had lost two close friends. (20)

Twenty years after my time as a nurse, I suffered a painful slipped disk which was aggravated by all my lifting of patients during the war; we didn't have lifting devices then, like nowadays. I was admitted to Kingston Hospital and put on traction - lying on my back with a weighted pulley attached to my legs to stretch my spine back into its correct alignment.

It was extremely painful, and the hospital wanted to tranquilise me. However, my nursing career had taught me to avoid being put into a permanent stupor. So when two young nurses came to inject me, I refused. They called the matron, whom I also rebuffed, so she insisted I take sedative pills instead, standing over me while I put two into my mouth and swallowed them with water, or so she thought, but I was smarter than her. I put my tongue over the pills so when I drank the water they remained there. After the matron had left, I wondered how to dispose of the pills. It was difficult because I was tied to the traction

trolley. Then I had an inspiration; on my bedside table was a packet of tissues. I reached over, took it, and put the two sticky pills at the bottom of the packet under the unused tissues. I kept doing this with all the other pills I was forced to put in my mouth every two hours. When I got home, I showed my husband the bottom of the box. It was covered in pills which had stuck to the inside. I said that was the poison I would have consumed if I had not outwitted the hospital. I was disgusted to learn that when Donald Pears (the *Babbling Brook* singer) was admitted to Kingston Hospital, several of his female fans arrived.

In 1965, we holidayed in Kenya which had just become independent, and we were surprised to see that, unlike other African countries, there was no begging. My husband asked why, and was informed it was by order of President Jomo Kenyatta. Before independence, Kenyan children used to ask European tourists for money, which Kenyatta thought was degrading, so he stopped it.

Members of a reggae band were playing at the hotel. They were all black, but Ted recognised their Cockney accents and asked how they, as Africans, spoke like that. They laughed and said they were from South London, explaining that before independence only white people had been taught to play music in Kenya, but now the President had stated they must import black bands because no local ones existed. This London reggae band was recruited by the hotel.

Chapter Sixteen: Later Life (1)

My second husband had been educated at Cambridge University. After he retired, he used to go to their reunion

dinners. Spouses were not allowed to attend, so I ate at a nearby hotel with the other wives. They were all educated high flyers who had held important posts, each of whom recounted their achievements. Then one turned to me and asked what I did. I replied I was just an ordinary housewife.

I told Ted how humiliated I was, uneducated and surrounded by all those more intelligent women. He laughed and told me I was cleverer than them all because I never had to go out and earn a living. (2)

In England, I had never experienced the regular groping that had been common in France. there was only one occasion. I was in Argos studying the catalogue when a hand touched my bottom. I looked around, and a man apologised. He said he was with his wife and had mistaken me for her.

A similar incident occurred when I was with my husband at a wedding. I kicked him under the table to attract attention; he didn't react. I leaned across the table and asked him why he hadn't responded. He said he hadn't received it. To my horror, I realised I had kicked someone else.

The aforementioned touching incident reminded me of a previous one when I was having tea with a middle aged lady at Kingswood Golf Club after playing bridge there. A man joined us and immediately put his hand down to my friend's leg. I thought he was the most forward male I had ever met, and hoped he wouldn't start groping me. Then I felt something under my chair; it was his black dog, and I realised to my relief that the man had been stroking the dog and not my friend's leg.

Another of my friends had a bad experience with her big dog. It was lying in front of her living room fire, so she

leaned over it with a poker to turn over the burning wood. The dog thought she was attacking it, leapt up, and bit the side of her face.

As I grew into a grey-haired old woman, I caused similar embarrassment. On one occasion, Ted left a show at the Kingswood Village Hall ahead of me to get to the car; then there was congestion at the exit, it was being blocked by a slow old man in front of me. So I grabbed his bottom hard and exclaimed "Hurry up!" He turned around, and to my horror I realised he wasn't my husband. I apologised profusely, but he just laughed and responded "I am flattered".

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There is a French saying "*Souvent de fois quelque chose de malheur est bon*". (Oftentimes something bad is good). It happened to me. I regretted my bad luck in missing General de Lattre de Tassigny.

Later, I realised that good luck had come out of that bad luck. If I had met de Lattre de Tassigny in England, he would have renewed his interest in me and hired me as an *aide-de-camp*. I would have thereby become his mistress in France and acquired the status of a low class floozy. Instead, after the war I married an English lawyer and became a respectable woman.

The Goodman family in 1975: left to right her husband, daughter, Jeannette herself and her son.

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In 1982, I was amazed to read how Michael Fagan had gained entry to the Queen's bedroom. (3) I contrasted it to what I had experienced at the *Château d'Azur* in the South of France half a century before. The American multimillionaire family living there had far better security. A team of two security guards patrolled every night checking that each door was locked. Alternately, each hour one pressed a clock in each part of the building to show he had inspected it. (4)

Jeannette with her grandson in 1984; the other woman is Lucie, wife of her elder brother Louis.

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In my old age I became a good bridge player. It was a genteel hobby for gentlefolk, but one of my bridge friends had a violent experience. She was about to leave her drive in her Mini, when a man ordered her to stop. She didn't like the look of him, so refused to obey. As she drove towards him, he fired a gun at her. Luckily he missed.

Then the man ran off and so did his nearby colleagues, who were in the process of robbing a bank van that they had held up in the road. The gunshot had frightened them into thinking the police had arrived, so the crime failed. My friend told me about it and I asked if she had received a reward from the bank, but she refused to tell me. (5)

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As I grew older, I became less impulsive. Ted bought me a solid silver tea set for use during the break in my bridge afternoons. Once, when the other ladies had departed, I noticed a knife was missing. That spoiled the set of six, and I was livid. I wondered which woman had taken it. They were all well-to-do, so I didn't know which one to phone.

Luckily, I exercised restraint and decided to sleep on it. Next day, while cleaning the house, I found the knife down the side of a seat cushion. I thanked God I hadn't phoned anyone, as I might then have lost a bridge partner.

Ted died in 2004, then I started to go blind. This ended my passion for playing bridge; it did however enable me to join Blind Veterans UK, an organisation for people who had served in the forces and lost their sight. My war-time service had come in useful sixty years after it ended.

In the club, I met many fascinating characters, nearly all of them men, none of whom could see how old and ugly I was! So I found new friends in my old age and widowhood to replace my former bridge partners.

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Now I am so old, I was asked by my Blind Veterans UK welfare visitor what was the secret of my longevity. She suggested it might be my diet, but I told her it wasn't. I came to a different conclusion about the things that helped me survive into my hundredth year. Firstly, I never worry about a problem unless I think it is fatal which doesn't happen. Secondly, I listen to my body; if, for instance, I have a backache, I lie down. Thirdly, I obey my body clock; I sleep and eat each meal at the same time every day. Fourthly, I always keep busy. I still did house cleaning until

I was over a hundred years old, and gardening which I have always loved. (6)

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In 2010, I was amazed to learn that my niece Nicole (who had emigrated to Canada from France) had lunch there with the great-nephew of General de Lattre de Tassigny (7) who was the French Ambassador to Canada. So eighty years after I met the soldier, my niece did likewise with his nephew, François Delattre.

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I had been a reluctant military nurse, but it stood me in good stead. While serving I had met my second husband-to-be. Then, sixty years later I was an old, blind widow who was eligible to join Saint Dunstan's (UK Blind Veterans) which provided me with help and friends in my final years. It was the same age as me (having been founded in 1915, the year of my birth) to help British soldiers blinded by poison gas. As I had been a military nurse, I was able to join.

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On reaching the age of one hundred in March 2015, I reflected on how lucky I was to have survived so long. I had lived through both world wars, outlived both my husbands, and had produced two children, one of whom had predeceased me. (8) In my hundredth year, I still listened to French radio. The news reports fascinated me because

they showed how much the country has changed in my lifetime.

During my long life I have seen a revolution in smoking habits. When I was young, smoking while eating and drinking were accepted as the norm, and France was famous for its indulgence. Now, French radio is full of official announcements condemning the abuse of alcohol, smoking, and obesity. Smoking has been banned everywhere, and cigarette tax increased. When I was young, smoking was untaxed, and encouraged because only war widows were permitted to operate as tobacconists.

Fifty years ago when I went to formal dinners with my second husband, after the meal and speeches, the chairman would always say that smoking could begin. Everyone else started to do so, and I felt odd being the only person not to, so I started taking a cigarette holder to these dinners, and pretended to smoke! Now, thank God, smokers are in a minority.

Also, in my youth, France was run by men. Most jobs excluded females, such as public office and our local factory. Women were not permitted to vote, stand for elections, or even attend political meetings. They were not admitted to bars, and there were licenced brothels for the men. Now, many French Government ministers are female and they have managed to prohibit paying for sex in France. It used to be a favourite of upper class Englishmen who used to go for "dirty weekends" in Paris and visit its brothels because they provided a better class of prostitute than the lower class street ones in London where brothels were illegal.

Jeannette celebrating her 100th birthday with her grandson.

An amusing incident occurred in my hundredth year. As a solicitor, my son had been executor to a homosexual actor, who died in 2012 leaving a box of unused Christmas cards. My son gave them to me and helped me use them by addressing the envelopes and getting me to sign the interior. Before sending them, he said he had better check the cover pictures. Thank God he did. One of them depicted a large penis! He told me that I couldn't send that, as the recipient would think I had rediscovered an interest in sex in my old age!

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At the age of 102, I was amazed to learn that the new President of France (Macron) had a wife who was 25 years his senior. (9) When I was young, that would have been unacceptable. Men could marry much younger women, but not vice versa. In any event, a man was supposed to be at least ten years older than his bride and to have established himself in a career, so he could maintain her and a family. In those days there were few well paid jobs for women, as they were excluded from most of the professions. A man, therefore, had to be able to support his wife and children. How times changed, even in the course of one lifetime.

****

In 2018, I received an invitation to the funeral of the lady who worked at the solicitor's office where Ted worked, and whom he was expected to marry. I wasn't well enough to attend, and instead sent my condolences. I had outlived my rival! (10)

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In March 2020, I celebrated my 105th birthday. By then I was bedbound and needed visiting carers. Due to the worldwide coronavirus lockdown, my son was the only guest at my birthday party; a carer took a photograph. The following year the lockdown was still in place, so for my 106th birthday my son was again the only guest, although my grandson and great-grandchildren were able to visit the following week.

Jeannette's 102nd birthday, March 22, 2017.

Chapter Seventeen:
Epilogue And Afterword

Marie Jeanne Goodman died peacefully in her bed at Kingswood, Surrey on September 9, 2021 at the age of 106. There were strange omens. As her son was opening his garage door that morning, the handle broke off in his hand. As he was talking to the undertakers outside her house that afternoon, a Second World War B29 bomber flew past, as if in recognition of her war service. (1)

When one of her friends heard about it, he remembered as a boy seeing these "Flying Fortresses" overhead on bombing missions to Germany. He agreed that it was a fitting if unintentional tribute to her war experience as she must have also seen them.

Jeannette's funeral was held on a Saturday morning, October 2, in the Small Chapel, Surrey & Sussex Crematorium. It was sparsely attended, partly because of the ongoing Covid hysteria and partly because she had outlived all her contemporaries. Although her estranged daughter died childless, the rest of her full, extended family was present.

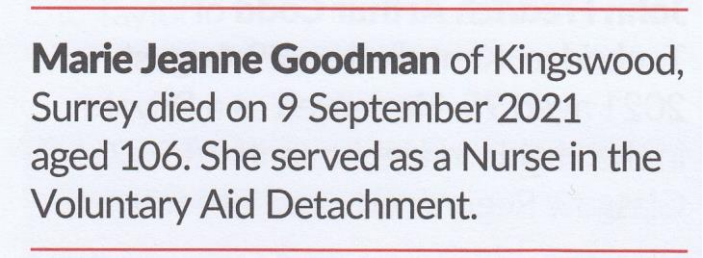
Her son was the main speaker, describing his mother as "a remarkable woman", as she surely was. Her final wish was to die in her own bed in her own home, as she did. The doctor recorded the cause of her death as old age. Her grandson recited an English version of one of her favourite La Fontaine fables - the one about the shoemaker; (2) he also read out a message from friends in Canada. Her granddaughter read a prayer, then related how her

grandmother had taught her French which had inspired her to study it at university and to become a teacher.

Richard Dawson spoke, he was a friend of Jeannette's and former client of her husband; she was an excellent cook, he said, and took pride in her baked Alaska.

Paul Whittle of the Banstead And District Club For The Blind also spoke. After the cremation, the party proceeded to the *Côte Brasserie* in Reigate for a wake to celebrate her life.

Below is Jeannette's death notice from the *In Memory* column of *Review The journal of Blind Veterans UK*, October 2021, page 50.



Marie Jeanne Goodman of Kingswood, Surrey died on 9 September 2021 aged 106. She served as a Nurse in the Voluntary Aid Detachment.

I had hoped to complete editing this book by 2022 and hand Jeannette her personal copy, but this was not to be. In 2004, she was diagnosed with macular degeneration; in November 2008, she was referred by a doctor for a deaf services equipment assessment. It would not be fair to say she was senile by 2020, but by the time her son had given me the notes to assemble there wasn't much left of her. After consulting with Edward, it was agreed we would publish it on the first anniversary of her death.

Notes And References

Notes To Chapter One

(1) Originally, Jeannette said Antoinette was born in 1900, but Herve Palaez Cassarieco unearthed the following documentation:

Her father Eugène (Eugen) Schwartz was born February 8, 1873; he was a Catholic, the son of Anton Schwartz and his wife Elisabeth Egger. Her mother Anna Marie Ballacker was born April 6, 1881; she was the daughter of Antoine (Anton) Ballacker and Maria Anna Ballacker. (The alternative spellings of their given names is the German).

Eugène and Anna were married September 15, 1902. Antoinette was definitely *not* illegitimate, so could not have been born before 1903.

Jeannette's maternal grandfather was Anton Ballacker; he died February 7, 1900, aged just 53, ie a full fifteen years before she was born.

According to a relative, Louis was born January 31, 1910. Jeannette's date of birth is supported by copious documentation; the dates of births of her siblings, especially Antoinette, have not been confirmed.

(2) As stated in the Editor's introduction, this book was dictated over a period of nearly a decade. Throughout the text, the reader will find references to "now, X years later..."

(3) Until the outbreak of the Second World War, the First World War was known as the Great War, and also as the war to end all wars.
(4) Antoinette would have been at most eleven when her ill-fated suitor called on their mother. This anecdote coupled with the year of birth Jeannette gave initially caused some problems with the text. However, as her son pointed out, in those days, poor people married the first single person of the opposite sex with whom they became familiar on reaching puberty. In England, the age of consent was 12 until 1875. For the historical background, in Europe and elsewhere, see for example *Age of Consent Laws* by Stephen Robertson at this link: https://chnm.gmu.edu/cyh/teaching-modules/230#:~:text=The%20French%20Napoleonic%20code%20provided,13%20in%20the%2019th%20century (which has been archived).
(5) It is clear that Jeannette had an all-consuming hatred of the de Wendel family, one that was sorely misplaced. The family tree is very well documented. Jean-Martin Wendel (1665-1737) was the founder of the family's industrial fortune. Henri de Wendel (1844-1906) had three sons: François (1874–1949), Humbert (1876–1954) and Maurice (1879–1961). Jeannette may have been referring to François with the cigarette anecdote; the Wendels became the aristocratic de Wendels decades before she was born.
(6) According to the 2006 pamphlet *Du Jœuf Gallo-romain au 3^{è} millénaire*, in 1852, Jœuf had 5 pumps as well as 54 houses, 9 barns, and a mere 231 inhabitants. In January 2018, its population was 6,559; it had peaked in 1966 at around fourteen thousand. The aforementioned pamphlet can be found at this (archived) link: http://cphj.free.fr/Histoire/HistoJoeuf.pdf

(7) A *lavoir* was a communal tub, a precursor of the modern launderette. A *battoir* (mentioned shortly) is a paddle, a beater.
(8) The motorcycle may have been owned by her father rather than her brother, who sounds a tad young at the time.
(9) Jeannette is actually alluding to the great pandemic known as the Spanish flu, which lasted from February 1918 to April 1920. It killed untold millions. Asian flu, so-called, did not appear until the 1950s.
(10) See Chapter Thirteen.
(11) Jeannette also said Saturday was bath day: "a tin tub was put in the warm kitchen. My mother bathed me in it, then I was sent to bed and my two brothers were bathed in the same water by my father. I was never allowed to see men naked, and didn't know the difference between the sexes".
(12) This sounds extremely doubtful as at that time she would have been not yet two and a half, and in view of the five year age gap between Jeannette and her next sibling, it is likely if this incident happened that it concerned a child from another family, Jeannette was told of it years later, and misremembered.
Jeannette also said every house in her village had only an outside lavatory - which was fairly standard at the time, including in the UK and for a long time after, except that in her case, the lavatory was connected to a cesspit. She says: "We were lucky because ours was attached to the house, so we didn't have to go outside to use it". I'm not sure what she meant by that.
(13) This is rather complicated, but Alsace-Lorraine was created in 1871 with the unification of Germany. Alsace was part of Alsace-Lorraine and was annexed to Germany,

or most of it was, although it was emotionally French, or as Laura Leitchfried wrote for the British Council magazine *Voices* in 2017: "not Germany, but not quite French either". The well-known breed of dog, the Alsatian (original name German shepherd) is named after Alsace. Alsace has its own language, or rather its own dialect; Alsatian sounds more like German than French. Alsatian is also spoken by some Amish in Indiana.

(14) See Chapter Fourteen.

(15) I was inclined to dismiss this as an urban legend, as some people have of such reports, but a few searches in newspaper databases turned up some actual cases, including this near miss:

In December 1909, Mrs Moreria of Hayward, California, who had left her baby asleep in her cot, found a large house cat lying across her face. The baby had congested lungs and blood pouring from her mouth, but "With the aid of a physician the infant was soon pronounced out of danger", (*THE San Francisco CALL*, December 17, 1909, page 11 in the *Chronicling America* database).

(16) The Jardin Botanique at Saverne was founded by botanist and chemist Émile Walter (1873-1953) in 1931, which obviously doesn't fit in with her chronology. However, there has been a botanical garden at Strasbourg since 1619 - part of the University; a new garden was opened in 1884.

It is possible Jeannette is referring to this garden. However, Strasbourg is around 190km from Jœuf; Saverne is around 150km. It is difficult to imagine her family travelling that distance in the 1920s. Elsewhere she writes "My father's best friend was keeper of the rose garden at Saverne which our family visited during the two summer months of the year when it was open."

Make of that what you will.
(17) Jeannette gives two versions of this story. The other (with my editing) reads as follows:

"My mother told the soldier billeted at our house about my father's lucky escape and wondered who had been the informant. He said he would try to find out. Later, he told my mother he had heard the officers name the man, one of his workmates. Needless to say, my father never spoke to this man again."
(18) Jeannette said too: When I reached the age of one hundred, my grandson also developed a stomach ulcer. He was a stressed-out junior doctor and received proper medication to deal with it, unlike my poor father. Five years later, my son, a stressed out solicitor who by that time was well past retirement age, also developed ulcers.
(19) Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, usually abbreviated to BSE, is believed to have first appeared in Britain in 1986. In 1988, there were 421 cases; in 1993 there were a hundred and twenty thousand. In 1989, Britain banned the consumption of cow brains and spinal cords. There was massive publicity in the UK, and many governments worldwide were forced to take action to curtail the disease,
[https://web.archive.org/web/20210202212852/https://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/issues/1040/mad-cow-disease/timeline-mad-cow-disease-outbreaks].
(20) This was written in 2015. A wireless is an archaic name for a radio. Although its origins go back to the late Nineteenth Century, the first radio news programme was not broadcast until August 31, 1920, when Jeannette was five years old. In 1926, a radio would cost around $60,

[https://www.thepeoplehistory.com/20selectrical.html], about $900 in 2021 prices.
(21) Jeannette is referring to a work by Jean de La Fontaine (1621-95), who was of course writing in French. Here is one English translation from this fable: "'Please take back your gold,'" he said. 'The worry of it is making me ill, and I have lost all of my friends. I would rather be a poor shoemaker, as I was before.'"
See also her reference to *The Oyster And The Pleaders* in Chapter Fifteen.
(22) Jeannette's chronology is slightly off. The assassination of l'Abbe Caravdossi was reported on the front page of *Le Bulletin Meusien*, November 24, 1928, 2nd Edition; Roberto Calvi went missing from his Rome apartment on June 10, 1982; his body was found hanging under Blackfriars Bridge in London, eight days later.
(23) Who else!

Notes To Chapter Two

(1) I doubt this incident was recalled from her personal experience, but a memoir isn't a court of law, and hearsay is permitted. I have seen reports of this sort of incident on occasion, including by the BBC, but on November 28, 2020, the world's leading authority on urban legends replied to an e-mail in the following terms:

Hello Alexander:

This sounds like a very short version of "The Stuck Couple" legend. I have versions in The Choking Doberman

and also in Too Good to be True. In my Encyclopedia of Urban Legends I have an article on this idea, sometimes called penis captivus including some references in the medical literature about how unlikely such a condition would be. One early and supposedly authentic report is really a proven hoax. These references ought to help you decide on how to write it up, a delicate matter if an informant insists that it is true.

Good luck,

—Jan H. Brunvand

(2) This paragraph and the previous one probably belong chronologically in Chapter 3, but they flow naturally here. According to the *Internet Movie Database*, the Dumas novel *La Dame aux Camélias* was first filmed in 1912, ie three years before Jeannette was born, so she could have seen it when she was very young.

(3) Jeannette doesn't give any details, but I thought one likely candidate was Sister Jeanne-Marie de Romillon (1753-94). She was born in France and died July 12, although her feast day is July 9, but she wasn't canonised until 1925, ie ten years after Jeannette was born.

(4) Père Fouettard is a companion of Saint Nicolas.

(5) According to Jeannette's son, this was around 1925 when she was ten years old.

(6) Meaning the French Resistance during World War Two.

(7) Jeannette gave that in English.

(8) Also rendered as *Boche* or *Bosche*, meaning a head of cabbage.

Notes To Chapter Three

(1) See also Chapter Two.
(2) Elsewhere, Jeannette gives a slightly different chronology: "After I returned jobless to Jœuf from my sister in Nancy, my mother told me that an educated lady nearby was giving weekly lessons on couture; they had started two weeks before..."
(3) Jeannette also said: "My hatred of cats was based on something far more important. There was a long-serving waitress at a bistro where my mother used to drink occasionally with her son-in-law Antoine. The waitress told my mother she had a terrible cough that would not go away. Mother advised her to see a doctor, but she did not. Later, we heard she had died, and the cause was found to be cat's hairs lodged in her throat." (Quoted from the previous typist).
(4) See also Chapter One.
(5) This begs the question, was Eugène the father of Margot's child?
(6) A whist-like card game played with a stripped down deck; a relatively young game, it was invented when Jeannette was around five years old.
(7) Jeannette doesn't give the date Antoinette and her husband moved to Nancy, but according to *Du Jœuf Gallo-romain au 3^{è} millénaire* (already cited), in 1935, four of its eight blast furnaces were shut down, so it was clearly before then. It can hardly have been much later because of her own chronology. Their café included "a small hotel", presumably meaning they let out some upstairs rooms.
(8) See Chapter Fourteen.

Notes To Chapter Four

(1) *Salle des fetes* means a village hall (literally a party room). Jeannette also said de Wendel paid for a dance hall to be built in the village and that Tassigny [see note (2)] was there to open it. The text appears to be correct.
(2) Jean de Lattre de Tassigny (1889-1952) was a highly decorated soldier in World War I, and a general in World War II. There is a street named after him in Jœuf. The dance hall appears to be the *Salle François-de-Curel* which was completed in 1929 when Jeannette would have been just fourteen.
(3) Jeannette doesn't say when Antoinette married, but presumably it was in the early 1920s.
(4) Jeannette said de Wendel named his second daughter Solange, adding there was a rule in the Catholic Church that only babies with the forename of a saint would be baptised, and there was no Saint Solange, but the priest obliged because de Wendel was so important and paid so much. The workers commented this showed that one could buy God. Her claim appears to be incorrect on both counts. I searched extensively but could find no Solange de Wendel or Solange Wendel, at least none who could have been the daughter she mentioned. But there was a Saint Solange; she was a French girl who was martyred around 880AD, [https://catholicsaints.info/saint-solange-of-bourges/].
(5) Of her own smoking habits, Jeannette said: "My sisters and I couldn't smoke Gauloise cigarettes like men because they were so strong they burned our throats. Instead, we smoked flat, thin, Russian-type cigarettes. We bought them cheaply from Luxembourg which we could visit from France without a passport (which we couldn't afford)."

(6) See also her comments about the fortune teller in Chapter Three.
(7) Jeannette also attributed the salt cellars comment to her brothers.

Notes To Chapter Six

(1) There was no "Tokalon" family. Tokalon, also spelt Tocalon, was founded by E. Virgil Neal (1868-1949), who was apparently known colloquially as Mr Tokalon. Documentation on the history of Tokalon and its founder can be found in *The Cosmetics Baron You've Never Heard Of: E. Virgil Neal and Tokalon*. The third edition of this book was published in 2014; its author, Mary Schaeffer Conroy, is a distinguished American academic who has done a magnificent job in sorting the wheat from the chaff in the life of this extraordinary man.
Ewing V. Neal was born at Georgetown, Missouri, and went by E. Virgil Neal. However, he first rose to fame as Dr Xenophon LaMotte Sage, and before manufacturing perfume he had a bizarre career *inter alia* as a hypnotist and a peddler of "Nuxated Iron". He was married three times; his second wife, Harriett Meta Meister, founded the company with him. Neal was said to have met his third wife Renée Pauline Bodier in 1924, when she was just fifteen, and married her in 1929. However, she was actually born April 6, 1897. She and Neal were married in then Czechoslovakia on July 28, 1924. Neal's divorce from Harriett was finalised the following month.

(2) Jeannette is spot on about Renée's paramour, although Neal was actually some thirty years older than his third wife.
(3) According to Professor Conroy, their son was born in Paris on October 13, 1924 - less than nine months after their marriage! Neal named the boy Xen, and rather than Eton he was sent to Chelmsford Hall Preparatory School in Eastbourne from 1936 to 1940, so he was too young to have been engaged in 1934. It is possible though that Jeannette is confusing the boy with an American relative of Neal who lived there for a while.

For the benefit of American readers, Chelmsford is nowhere near Eastbourne, and in England, the public schools are actually private schools; the most famous being Eton and Harrow.
(4) For the sake of clarity, Jeannette means the signs were bilingual, with the French "*À Vendre*" on the top of an advertising board outside the property and the English "For sale" at the bottom. Then as now, the Riviera was the playground of the rich, and English was spoken widely. The internationally famous Berlitz School was founded by Maximilian Berlitz in 1878 at Providence, Rhode Island. Maximilian's grandson Charles followed in his footsteps, but is better known as an author on paranormal nonsense, most notably his 1974 book *The Bermuda Triangle*.

Notes To Chapter Seven

(1) At some point in her tale, Jeannette said: During the Abyssinian War in 1936, we had a song in France that ridiculed Mussolini whom we regarded as an ugly, bald

man. It went: "*Signor Mussolini, c'est plus bel homme Italie*" ie "Mr Mussolini, the most handsome man in Italy".
(2) Jeannette gave this exchange in French, but it didn't translate well. Until 1946, brothels were legal in France although they had to be licensed.
(3) Jeannette also said: "I was restless and got bored with a job after six months so decided I would get my sister Maria to write me a letter saying my mother was ill and I needed to return home to look after her. I would show this letter to my employer and thus be allowed to leave with a sympathetic reference letter. In this way, I worked as a maid in Paris, then Metz, Strasbourg for a year, then finally in Nice. My mother was disgusted; she told me that before getting married she kept her job (as a maid for a notary) for three years."
(4) The doctor's name has been anonymised.
(5) This seems to be an unduly long period considering Jeannette's other exploits.
(6) In French, of course.
(7) If this chapter and much of the rest of the book seems disjointed, please accept my apologies. By the time I was given the task of putting the text together, Marie Jeanne Goodman was over a hundred years old, legally blind and partially deaf. Rather than put words in her mouth, I have assembled the narrative as best I can. At some point she worked in both Antoinette's café and Maria's; she used the words café and restaurant interchangeably. The restaurant had seven waitresses, or eight. Jeannette appears to have worked with Maria (for Jean Noet) in the period 1935/7.
(8) This appears to have been Louis.
(9) For most of these translations I have used Google Translate, which, curiously, appears to translate the same text differently at different times!

(10) See also Chapter Four.

Notes To Chapter Eight

(1) Literally "The Home for the French girl in England". I contacted the French Embassy about this hostel but received no response.
(2) The inhabitants of Womersley Hall at this time were the grandparents of Rupert Parsons, the owner of Womersley Foods. They were the Earl and Countess of Rosse. Rupert's maternal grandmother had previously been married to Ronald Armstrong-Jones, the father of Lord Snowdon who married the Queen's sister, Princess Margaret in 1960. Anne Parsons had a son named Antony - the aforementioned Lord Snowdon, and a daughter named Susan. Susan Anne Armstrong-Jones was born in 1927 and was one of the girls alluded to by Jeannette. On her marriage, she became Viscountess de Vesci; she died in 1986. The other girl was probably a cousin. Lord Snowdon was born in 1930, so would have been seven rather than five during Jeannette's short stay; he died in 2017. The railway station at Womersley was closed in 1948.
(3) Jeannette appears to have stayed for three weeks rather than two, as mentioned above.
(4) Jeannette said the Queen's English, whatever.

Notes To Chapter Nine

(1) This sounds difficult to believe, but as Jeannette's son pointed out, Africa was regarded as the White Man's Graveyard, and Englishmen posted there took long holidays. (I know of another Englishman - working as a vet in India in the 1920s - who took three months annual leave. He used it to visit Australasia). We were unable to uncover much information about his mother's first husband, and because of her great age, he didn't want to interrogate her.
(2) John Beverley Nichols (known as Beverley Nichols) published his first book *Down The Garden Path* in 1932. In later life, his main claim to fame was presenting television advertisements for cat food!
(3) Jeannette's first husband was fifteen years her senior. Eric Jesse George Munday appears on the 1901 census as a babe in arms, the son of Jesse James Munday and his wife Cecilia Munday née Erickson; they married at Kingston in 1899. On the 1911 census, he was joined by a brother and a sister. Eric Munday doesn't appear to have been married before as far as can be ascertained, at least not in England. According to passenger records, he departed from Liverpool for Nigeria on June 3, 1937. Re the previous note, Beverley Nichols replied to Eric on October 19, 1937, so presumably Eric wrote to him from Nigeria. The extant Nichols letter is written on headed notepaper, but the recipient's address isn't included. The Beverley Nichols papers are held by the University of Delaware, which I found surprising. I contacted the relevant curator and received a reply, but a follow up e-mail was ignored.
(4) Hotel in the broadest sense of the word, combined with the restaurant, (see Chapter Seven).

(5) As she pointed out in Chapter Two, Jeannette became a lifelong agnostic, but she remained culturally Catholic. She and Eric Munday were married in the (Catholic) Church of Our Lady of Ransom, George Road, Eastbourne. He was listed as a 38 year old colonial factor; she as an unemployed, 23 year old spinster.
(6) Over a million, if you can credit that, and for what?
(7) Eric Munday had arrived at Liverpool from Nigeria on November 27, 1938 aboard the *Robert S. Holt*; he departed from the same port aboard the *Jonathan Holt* on March 10, 1939.

He was employed by John Holt & Company (Liverpool) Limited. Founded by John Holt (1841-1915), up until the Second World War it distributed produce and owned its own fleet of ships. Later, it became a public company quoted on the Nigerian stock exchange. Today, it is a massive company that supplies mainly heavy duty equipment including fire fighting equipment, transformers, and boats. According to its website http://www.jhplc.com/profile.php (archived):

JOHN HOLT EXPORTS & PROCESSING:

This business division is a reputable exporter of Nigerian Non-Oil products such as Cassava, Charcoal, Shea Nut, Cashew Nut, Groundnut, Sesame Seed and many more.

(8) Jeannette appears to be mistaken; as she points out in the next chapter, she didn't arrive in Nigeria until late August 1939. The name Munday, Marie—J appears on the 1939 electoral register for Coldharbour Lane, Herne Hill Ward in South London. Jeannette's son believes this is her, and was an address once used by Eric Munday. At the time

of writing, Eastbourne to Liverpool by train is a journey of over six hours; the flight time to Lagos from the much nearer Heathrow Airport is around six and a half hours.

Notes To Chapter Ten

(1) This is complicated, but the starting date of the Second World War is generally considered to be September 3, 1939. Nazi Germany invaded Poland on September 1, and was given an ultimatum by the British Government, withdraw immediately or else. When Hitler refused, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain declared war. The original radio broadcast informing the British people of his decision is extant and can be found *inter alia* on YouTube. France came into the war as an ally.

Germany invaded France in 1940. This led to the creation of Vichy France under the First World War hero Marshal Pétain. His collaboration with the Nazis caused much bitterness during the war. After the war, Pétain was tried for treason and sentenced to death, but his sentence was commuted, and he died in 1951, aged 95.

The United States entered the Second World War after the December 7, 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

The war ended in Europe on May 8, 1945 - V-E day. In the Far East, the war ended on August 15, 1945 (Japanese time) - V-J Day. The formal surrender took place on September 2, 1945. The Japanese surrender followed the dropping of two atomic bomb: Hiroshima on August 6; Nagasaki on August 9.

(2) This plant-based oil was once used widely as an insect repellent. In September 2006, it was banned in Europe by

directive BPD/98/8/EC, although it could still be used as a perfume. Later, it was banned in Canada, then unbanned.
(3) An aye-aye is actually a species of lemur; Jeannette may have been referring to a boomslang.
(4) This sounds like it may have been Bishop Joseph Shanahan (1871-1943).
(5) Plantain are common in Britain now, but at this time they were all but unknown, apart from bananas, of course.
(6) An amusing aside here, at pages 395-6 of his 1897 book *British Central Africa*...Sir Harry H. Johnston wrote: "they [Negroes] perspire easily and freely, and the pores are certainly larger than in Europeans. The most offensive negro smell would appear to be connected with the glands under the arm-pits, which exude at times a secretion often confounded with sweat, but which would appear to me to be of a different character and more oily in composition...In the clothed negro it is sometimes offensive to an appalling degree, rendering it well nigh impossible to remain in a closed room with him. The odour is certainly stronger in men than in women."
Today, the mere suggestion of the existence of racial odours is routinely denounced as *racism*.
(7) Jeannette said this was not uncommon.
(8) That was the case in the West at this time too. In old films, a bank manager would typically be fat.
(9) Jeannette also attributed this to witch-doctors.
(10) According to the *Internet Movie Database*, the twenty minute film *Five Times Five* was released in the USA on July 19, 1939. The Dionne quintuplets, all girls, were born two months premature on May 28, 1934 at North Himsworth (now Callander), Ontario; they were the first quintuplets all of whom were known to have survived

infancy. The first died in 1954 aged just twenty. At the time of writing, two are still alive.
(11) This was actually *Ju-ju and Justice in Nigeria*, told by F. Hives, and written down by Gascoigne Lumley. It was published in 1930 with a paperback edition in 1940.
(12) Jeannette pointed out that there was no glass in the windows of Nigerian houses because it was so hot. She had no electricity, and no plumbing. Yet she lived like a queen! [An aside here, the issue of windows in Nigerian buildings is somewhat nuanced, see for example *Colonialism Induced Changes in the Aesthetics of Domestic Buildings in Yorubaland* by Abejide & others, which can be found at this (archived) link: https://www.iosrjournals.org/iosr-jhss/papers/Vol. 25 Issue2/Series-2/A2502020109.pdf].
(13) On another occasion they were invited to a football match, Jeannette said when they arrived, all the African crowd parted to allow them to walk through from the car to the touchline. The match was between Africans and Europeans. The Africans played barefoot but still beat the booted white traders.
(14) It beggars belief what second and now third wave feminists would think of this "rule".

Notes To Chapter Eleven

(1) Eric Munday was sailing to Nigeria aboard the *S.S. Jonathan Holt*; the fate of this ship is thoroughly documented. It departed from Liverpool on February 21, 1941 in Convoy OB 289 for Douala (Cameroon) via Takoradi and Accra in Ghana then Lagos. There were 45 crew and only 13 passengers; Munday was travelling with

his young assistant Charles Tripp. The ship was hit at 02.12 on February 24; it wasn't sailing directly to North Africa but north around Scotland and near the Faroe Islands.

The John Holt company owned a fleet of ships similarly named, and this caused some confusion researching the background. Two other ships named *John Holt* were also torpedoed during the Second World War: one in September 1941; the other in March 1944. The company's ships were requisitioned by the Government in both world wars.

(2) The sole survivor was a commercial agent named Arnett Edwards. According to Brendan Keelan in *ERIC REDMOND & THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE JONATHAN HOLT*, he died in the European Hospital at Lagos on December 18, 1942.

(3) Madame Gentil, see Chapter Three; also the old gypsy woman alluded to in Chapter Four. As for the mystic alluded to here, Eric Munday was fifteen years Jeannette's senior, so was hardly a young man.

(4) Eric Munday died intestate, His administration reads as follows (verbatim):

MUNDAY Eric Jesse George of 6 Blackwater-road **Eastbourne**
died on or since 24 February 1941 at sea Administration **Llandudno** 20 June to Marie Jeanne Munday widow. Effects £339 14s. 2d.

Although it is impossible to translate that precisely because of, for example, the falling cost of technology, this sum would be worth around seventeen and a half thousand pounds in 2021.

(5) For the benefit of younger readers, before the advent of digital photography, photographs were captured on celluloid. These were the negatives. They were then converted to positives, ie ordinary photographs. Although colour photography goes back to the late Nineteenth Century, when Jeannette was young and for a long time afterwards, black and white photographs were the norm.
(6) Obviously, Jeannette included this anecdote because she misremembered. The German spy concerned - who sounds like an idiot - was actually arrested in what is now Cambridgeshire. Josef Jakobs broke his ankle when parachuted on January 31, 1941 and indeed he did have a German sausage in his possession, as well as forged papers. He was executed at the Tower of London on August 15 the same year.
(7) Three Eastbourne churches were totally destroyed by bombing in the Second World War, along with 474 houses.
(8) William Joyce was a notorious Nazi sympathiser who made sarcastic broadcasts from Germany during the Second World War. Although he was hanged for treason in 1946, he was actually born in America and became a German citizen in 1940. Go figure!

Notes To Chapter Twelve

(1) Mabel Philipson has an interesting history. She was born Mabel Russell on January 2, 1886 (not 1887 as some sources including the one cited in this note claim). She became an actress, making her stage debut in 1907. Her first husband was a nephew of Cecil Rhodes; he was killed in a car crash. Her second husband was Hilton Philipson

who was elected National Liberal MP for Berwick-on-Tweed in 1922. The result was overturned due to a corruption scandal, and she stood in his place (as a Conservative) in the May 31, 1923 by-election becoming only the third female MP in Britain, and remaining in Parliament until 1929. [*Women, a Modern Political History* by Cheryl Law, published by I.B. Tauris, London, (2000), page 124].

(2) The War Office controlled the British Army; the Air Ministry controlled the Royal Air Force, and the Admiralty controlled the Royal Navy. All three were replaced with the Ministry Of Defence on April 1, 1964.

(3) The Scots Guards connection came from her son. Mabel Philipson had twin sons and a daughter, one of the boys dying soon after he was born. In her notes, Jeannette alluded to Mabel Philipson as her mentor and added her son "became an officer in the Scots Guards. He was taken prisoner and then appeared in a newsreel saying how well he and other British prisoners were being treated by the enemy. This caused outrage in England. His fiancée broke off their engagement, and when he was liberated at the end of the war, none of his fellow officers would talk to him. He went back into civilian life and inherited the family fortune".

She also said Mrs Philipson "told me a lady should always sit with her ankles crossed because it was low class for her to cross her legs or sit with them apart."

(4) Jeannette sat her first British Red Cross Society examination on December 5, 1941. Her name appears on this certificate as JANE MUNDAY. Jeannette is sometimes spelt thus.

Notes To Chapter Thirteen

(1) This is rather complicated but Brookwood Hospital was located at Knaphill, Surrey, starting as a lunatic asylum in 1867, and operating as a self-contained community. In World War Two, it doubled up as a regular hospital. It was taken over by the new National Health Service in 1948, and was closed in 1994. The Connaught Hospital which operated the emergency medical service was on the same site. Jeannette arrived at Knaphill on October 16, 1942 and was employed there until January 25, 1944.

The chronology of this chapter is suspect because although we have several important documents relating to Jeannette's war-time employment, none of these show her inter-hospital transfers.

(2) Named after Thomas Nadauld Brushfield (1828-1910) who was Superintendent at Brookwood Asylum from 1866-82. "The frogs" is a derogatory and now somewhat archaic term for the French.

(3) Or the White Man's Graveyard (as her son pointed out in a note to Chapter Nine).

(4) After a character in the Charles Dickens novel *Oliver Twist.*

(5) Nitrous oxide. Do *not* use this for recreational purposes.

(6) See Chapter Fifteen.

(7) Elsewhere, Jeannette said: "I also noticed that the patients were bored so asked them to help me clean the windows. They readily agreed.

The sister was very grateful because at last light shone into the ward."

(8) Jeanette gives two very slightly different versions of this incident.

(9) This appears to have been a contemporary joke.
(10) The Russian wife of the aforementioned commanding officer. He was Henry Bryan Frost Dixon (1891-1962); he retired from the army in 1947 with the honorary rank of brigadier. According to his obituary in the London *Times* of January 23, 1962, she was Alexandra Mihailovna, formerly Baroness Fittinghoff, the daughter of Mr A Staritsky of Petrograd. They married in 1922 and had no children. She died in 1972. (Transliteration of Russian names varies).
(11) But see Chapter Two when Jeannette, then a child, had her tonsils removed.
(12) This sounds like it could have been related to her foot problem in Nigeria (see Chapter Ten). At any rate, Jeannette doesn't appear to have made the connection.
(13) There are three species of snake native to Britain and of these only the adder (or viper) is dangerous. There was one death from an adder bite in England and Wales between 1950 and 1972; in the same period there were 61 deaths from bee or wasp stings, [https://web.archive.org/web/20210607204307/https://www.itv.com/news/calendar/update/2014-08-07/snake-bites-in-the-uk-the-facts/].
(14) There may be some confusion here with her chronology; in Chapter Twelve, when Jeannette mentioned the air raid incident and the young girl, she alluded to the siren as the cuckoo, (I have edited this out). According to the *Eastbourne Herald*, June 6, 1942, the cuckoo was first used at the beginning of that month.
(15) Saint Mary's Church was bombed October 10, 1940; Saint John's Church was bombed in the small hours of May 4, 1942; so if Jeannette's recollection is correct, this incident happened on the night of August 11, 1942, when Saint Anne's Church was bombed.

(16) Jeannette also said they moved back to Eastbourne, but her chronology is almost certainly wrong, so I have omitted that.
(17) Jeannette also had in her possession a first class ticket from Brookwood to Aberdeen, but it was issued October 18, 1943, and her son believes she didn't use it. Certainly she does not mention Aberdeen anywhere in her dictated notes.
(18) If the reader detects a certain amount of repetition here, that is unavoidable. Jeannette gives the impression she visited Edinburgh more than once, but that does not appear to be the case. As for *sacre* being the French word for saved, this appears to be a typo due to one of the typists her son engaged, (see *From The Editor*).
(19) VD stands for venereal disease, a generic and now somewhat archaic term for infections transmitted by sexual intercourse, though there can be other causes. Nowadays, the phrases sexually transmitted disease and sexually transmitted infection are used, or the acronyms STD and STI.
(20) See Chapter Fifteen.
(21) This appears to be an unidentified nurse.
(22) Jeannette said that after the war she was told the following anecdote by her mother: During the war, she lived near my elder sister in Nancy and was walking home from visiting her in the dark. Realising she was being followed, she turned around and saw a man, a young, drunken soldier. She told him she was old enough to be his grandmother and he shouldn't drink so much. He responded that he didn't normally drink, but on that day he had been to see the doctor who had diagnosed him with a venereal disease. The soldier knew this meant he was about to be transferred to the Russian front where he

would be killed, as few German soldiers survived there. This saved the army the trouble of having to cure such soldiers. My mother tried to console him.

Notes To Chapter Fourteen

(1) According to a reference signed by Colonel Dixon and dated March 8, 1944, Jeannette was employed by "the Connaught Military Hospital" from October 16, 1942 until January 25, 1944; she "resigned from the V.A.D's when the new regulations came into force on the 1st January 1944".
(2) She was, or had been in a manner of speaking, her maiden name Schwartz means black in German.
(3) Throughout her dictated notes, Jeannette referred to Eric Munday as "my first husband" and Edward as "my second husband". As will be seen in the next chapter, her son was named Edward after his father. In the United States he would have been known as Edward Goodman Junior or Edward Goodman II, but here he is just Edward Goodman, which can cause confusion. It was he who suggested his father be alluded to herein as Ted and he as Edward. To complicate matters further, his cousin Charles Edward Goodman (1932-2018) called himself Edward. To me, the son was first Mr Goodman, then Ted, then when talking of him to my colleague Mark Taha (who introduced me to him), simply Goodman. He is also known to family intimates as Teddy.
(4) The original transcript gave the name of a town that does not exist; Steinbourg is the nearest thing to the originally misspelt name; it is in France around 145 kilometres from Jœuf.

(5) But see above re her new husband's visit to Steinbourg.
(6) See Chapter Three and the reference to *homme de robe*.
(7) If this sentence doesn't quite make sense to you, it doesn't make sense to me either. Probably she meant if Jean Noet were "so accused".
(8) Jeannette also said: "My father was always depressive. Shortly before his death he left letters which lead to the conclusion that it was suicide. His death certificate records the truck accident, but he may have jumped in front of it."
(9) See Chapter Three.
(10) Because the Catholic Church forbade contraception, this (and celibacy) was the only way a fertile woman could avoid becoming pregnant. Needless to say, it was notoriously unreliable.
(11) The IRA - let's not call it an army - embarked on a bombing campaign on the Mainland in the 1970s, but it has a long history with many splits, most notably in 1969 when the Provisional IRA (the bombers) broke from the Official IRA. The IRA engaged in a terror campaign from the beginning of 1939 until after the start of the war; its origins can be traced to the Fenian Brotherhood, which was founded in the United States in 1858.
(12) Edward Goodman joined Ouvry & Co which became Ouvry Goodman. His son joined in 1974 after obtaining his law degree. Both men stayed with the firm until 1986 when they sold their interest. It continued to trade as Ouvry Goodman, and was later renamed Ouvry Goodman & Co Limited. According to the Companies House database, it was wound up on March 5, 2014 by petition of March 27, 2013, and dissolved June 7, 2014.

Notes To Chapter Fifteen

(1) Does that sound like ruthlessness to you?
(2) If you are wondering why the word City has been capitalised here, it is because it refers to the City Of London, the so-called Square Mile.
(3) According to Edward Goodman: "In those days it was still common for an apprentice to marry his principal's daughter. Social life was much more restricted than now".
(4) This is a more or less verbatim translation. See also Jeannette's reference to the shoemaker in Chapter One.
(5) See Chapter Seven.
(6) For American readers: Stateside, the ground floor is called the first floor, and the first floor up is called the second floor. In England, the first floor is the floor above the ground floor, and the second floor is the floor above that, ie three floors up! (The house in Kingston had four floors). Her husband was not demobbed until 1946 when he joined Jeannette in Eastbourne. When his son was born, he was serving in Germany, and celebrated the birth by drinking with his fellow officers. These were difficult times for people everywhere, there was no Internet and for many people little if any telephone contact, so things often went wrong. Happily for Jeannette, things turned out right in the end.
(7) At the time and for many years after, this was called living in sin.
(8) Known as Little Mo Connolly, the American was just twenty years old at the time and became the first woman to win all four grand slam titles in the same year. She died aged just thirty-four after being treated unsuccessfully for cancer.

(9) The wife of *that* Thompson!
(10) The extant Goodman's Garage in South West London.
(11) Alluded to humorously as a shotgun wedding, the title of a 1966 comedy record by American songwriter Roy Charles Hammond.
(12) After a 1938 hit song called *Flat Foot Floogie (With A Floy Floy)*.
(13) A wheelbarrow. Sort of.
(14) Jeannette gave three slightly different versions of this anecdote; I have run with the one I believe to be the most accurate.
(15) This refers to prostitutes working from home, not walking the street.
(16) According to Edward Goodman, this was in 1990, ie four decades later.
(17) This was a very high profile and quite horrible case. The Spanish drifter and serial sex offender Francisco Xavier Arce Montes was eventually convicted of the murder of the 13 year old Caroline Dickinson.
(18) The milkman, the baker, the coalman...all relics of a world that is no more.
(19) See Chapter Thirteen.
(20) This was a big story that made the national press including the London *Times* and the *Daily Mirror*. On February 3, 1965, the latter contained a sensational but undoubtedly accurate account; Cleone was pictured. Contemporaneous press reports give her Christian name as Chloe, but her birth was registered as Cleone V. Harding in the September quarter of 1943. In December 1964, she married Jimmy Castle, then she and a teenager named Celia Hazell hooked up with three dangerous armed criminals who were not shy about using their firepower. One of them was John Marson who was said to have been

engaged to Cleone before her recent marriage. He had escaped from Lewes Prison on November 4.
Bertie's first name was actually Levi; he married Edith (known as Enid) Roberts at Saint Asaph, Wales in 1940.

Notes To Chapter Sixteen

(1) This chapter is broken up into segments due to its being a collection of unconnected anecdotes and reminiscences, more so than the rest of the book.
(2) Having read this far, the reader will probably disagree; most people, including women, including girls, had hard lives for most of human history. And then there is the saying that a woman's work is never done.
(3) Fagan broke into the grounds of Buckingham Palace twice, and on the morning of July 9, he actually entered the Queen's bedroom. Obviously this caused outrage, not least because the IRA was very active at this time, and eleven days later murdered eleven soldiers with bombs planted in the Royal Parks. Fortunately for the Queen, Fagan is a Royalist rather than any sort of Republican.
(4) See Chapter Six.
(5) This incident appears to have happened in 1995.
(6) This was 2004.
(7) See Chapter Four for her meeting with the Colonel; Nicole is Nicole Schwartz, who is credited under *From The Editor*.
(8) When Ouvry Goodman changed hands, Edward Goodman Senior retired; he lived until the ripe old age of 90. Colette Hunt (she married in 1984) died in November 2008 aged only 60, from leukaemia. According to her

brother, she and their mother fell out for some reason, and the Goodman family were not even invited to her funeral.
(9) Not that it's important, but Macron was born December 21, 1977; his wife Brigitte was born April 13, 1953. Alex Salmond, who served as First Minister of Scotland married a woman 17 years his senior - who was also his boss - so Macron is in good company; such older women are now known as cougars.
(10) See Chapter Fifteen. One can hardly call this woman a rival because Jeannette married Edward Goodman before the two met. According to her son, Thompson's daughter was named Roma. According to the official database, only one Roma Thompson was born in England in the Twentieth Century before 1930, at Mutford, Suffolk in the September quarter of 1915, making her slightly younger than Jeannette. If her information is correct, her "rival" also lived an exceptionally long life.

Notes To Chapter Seventeen

(1) This may have been related to the commemoration of the 9/11 attacks, the twentieth anniversary of which was two days later, or possibly the Battle Of Britain Airshow at Doxford.
(2) See Chapter One. She could still recite these fables word for word when she was a hundred.

Editor's Index

MARIE GOODMAN: A Unique Life

Few people live to the age of 106; Marie Goodman did, and she lived a unique life as well as a long one. This is the story of a French girl of humble origins who lived in Nazi Germany and Nigeria, sat in the Royal Box at the Wimbledon Tennis Championships, served as a nurse during the Second World War, and married two Englishmen on the way.

Published by E. Goodman,
23 Budgeon Drive,
Redhill,
Surrey RH1 2QB.

ISBN 979-8-88757-359-5