

# **REMINISCENCES OF WAR**

## **Escape from the Nazis**

**Sara Lolla Wilson**

Could it really be as much as forty years ago since those dark years when I came across the North Sea to marry John and settle in England? It must be so for here we were in the Lake District celebrating our Ruby Wedding Anniversary where all those many years back we had gone for our weekend-long wartime honeymoon, John on a 48-hour special leave from the Army. The magnificent scenery of mountains and lakes were just as I remembered it. The trees were still bathing in their glorious autumn colours even as late as early November. And as we walked through the woods amongst the rustling leaves the events that led to our union came vividly to mind once more: my escape to England in late 1940 after Norway's occupation by Germany which caused Norway to become involved in the Great Powers' Second World War.

September 3<sup>rd</sup> 1939 fell on a Sunday: I had just collected Grandmother who, since Grandfather's death, always came to dinner and spent the day with us on Sundays. This late summer day was blessed with warmth and sunshine, but the political clouds were gathering around us. The announcement had just been made over the radio from England that the German invasion of Poland had caused a state of war to exist between Great Britain and Germany. "I am sorry for you," said Granny, "this will mean a long separation from John." She must have had a premonition of things to come.

I had, only some few weeks earlier, returned from abroad. Fluency in foreign languages has always been essential to people of smaller nations, so after completing my schooling at eighteen, I had spent first a period in England to improve my English, returned home, and then gone to France to learn about the people there and their language. Although I had met John in England, it was not until Easter 1939 while in Paris that we became engaged. With my course completed we planned that I should come to England in July and we would make tentative plans for our wedding to be held in Norway later. However, events were to change all that.

John, as a junior Territorial Army officer, went straight from annual Army camp in August 1939 into war; who then would have envisaged that he was not to cast his uniform until March 1946!

Upon returning to my native Bergen in Norway and back in the family fold Mother said, "We must plan for a spring or early summer wedding." But a few weeks later, England was at war.

The period that followed was a strange one; in England, I believe, it was described as “the phoney war”. Norway clung desperately to her neutrality. John and I were still able to correspond although letters were being censored. “It cannot last long,” everyone said, but summer turned to autumn and autumn to winter, a most severe winter at that, and much enjoyed by the winter sports enthusiasts. We listened avidly on the radio for the progress of the war on the Continent, the Germans consolidating their hold on the countries already occupied.

The question on everyone’s lips was, what could little Norway do if she were subjected to attack, with a total population of a mere 3½ million and having such a long coastline and difficult terrain to defend against either of the superpowers. The only possible means of exercising any form of resistance, it was thought, was for the Nordic Countries to form a military pact. A meeting was held by all the Scandinavian heads of governments in Stockholm, Sweden being the most populous of the four countries, the richest and having the best trained army. I remember reading about the agreement that if any one of the Scandinavian countries were to be attacked by a foreign force, the others would immediately rally to its assistance with military support.

There was an eerie feeling about the winter of 1940; the valiant Norwegian merchant ships continued to weather the seas amongst the warring nations’ battleships and endeavoured to bring home necessary food and supplies of all kinds. The risk they carried of being erroneously torpedoed or attacked from the air inevitably increased the cost of their cargoes, and in a short spell of time all goods in the shops became most expensive, but the Merchant Navy had seen to it that everything was still in abundance.

Dinner was taken in the late afternoon. This main meal in our family of six, father, mother and four children, was always the rallying point of the day. Father sat at the head of the table as though he was holding court and there was always a lively debate on all kinds of topics. Being highly intellectual, there wasn’t a subject, barring music, on which Father did not possess a profound knowledge, on literature, history, geography, mathematics and the sciences, languages, battles of the past, battles of the more modern times... he was seldom, if ever, wrong. As a late teenager I used to try and catch him out with some of my most recently acquired school knowledge, but I never managed to do so! Perhaps the foundation of his deep-rooted knowledge stemmed originally from his father, a country parson and learned Latin and Greek scholar who had tutored his four children in their early years until they went away to receive higher education. Father had gone to Oslo to read for exams which would admit him to Oslo Military Academy for he had made up his mind to become an Army officer. At the end of the four years he had achieved his goal and become a Second Lieutenant. From then on, on a very meagre income, he

not only supported himself but also financed his own further studies at Trondheim University to become a Civil Engineer. Why was an army training not enough, one might ask. Perhaps here I should explain that pre-war, a country like Norway, extensive and with a small population to support it, was able to maintain only a minute Regular Army of officers. There was compulsory conscription for all able-bodied young men and these were being trained by appropriately educated Army officers. I remember in my early childhood Father going to camp each summer and Mother and I visiting on odd Sundays. An Army officer, under this system, could reach the rank of Major, but from Colonel upwards he had to become a career or full-time Army man. In the case of war, of course, all Army personnel would be called upon. Father, over the years, rose to the rank of Major and took quite an active part in the military activities attaching to the 9<sup>th</sup> Regiment, that of the defence of the Western part of Norway.

However, as mentioned, just out of Military Academy, he embarked upon his second major education in Trondheim which was to lead him to his main occupation, that of Civil Engineer. During the summer vacations from his studies, to supplement his very limited Second Lieutenant's pay, he undertook survey work for the Norwegian Cartographic Society, mainly of the mountains, lakes, fjords and inlets along the Western coast and at the same time acquired a very thorough knowledge of this intricate part of the land.

The reason for writing this fully about Father's background is the bearing it was to have on our family events later in the war.

Back to our daily get-together around the dinner table. I suppose being the eldest most questions were directed at me, something I found most challenging. From an early age I was frequently put in charge of the younger ones and, unknown to me at the time during those formative years, this may have helped develop in me a strong sense of responsibility and initiative.

The subject of the war and political discussion went high during that winter of Norway's neutrality. "The Altmark Affair" made a deep impression on me. I failed to understand the Norwegian Government's anger and the hostile attitude of the press towards Britain, for had not the German ship 'Altmark' with many British prisoners on board penetrated deep into one of our western fjords to seek refuge? Who could blame the British Navy, I felt, for raiding the ship and rescuing her own people?

Public opinion, more than ever, after this incident, was urging the Norwegian Government to mine the fjord inlets, some suggested the entire coastline. But the Government, time and again, maintained that such action would appear to the outside world as a breach of our neutrality. Thus we remained a sparsely populated

country, with a tiny army having no battle experience - Norway had remained neutral in World War I - with a very extensive unprotected coastline, utterly unprepared for the onslaught that was to come, some months later.

All this time I was able to correspond with John and I gathered, although in uniform and mobilised, he was continuing to make applications in the right quarters to be granted leave to go to neutral Norway to marry me and to bring me back to England. But as the months passed by, hope for this to happen seemed to fade.

Just as in Germany, Norway too had its National Socialist Party led by a former Army officer by the name of Quisling. He had attracted quite a following during the previous few years, particularly among the young, and patterned himself on Hitler by the uniform that was worn and the form of salute that was given, much as at Moseley's political gatherings in England.

Bergen, because of its geographical situation, has always been an excellent port for its seafaring people, the hinterland of high mountains for centuries having made it inaccessible to the rest of the country. As recently as in my lifetime the first road across the mountains was opened and that only shortly before the outbreak of World War II. Snugly sheltered at the bottom of a fjord which bears its name, Bergen is surrounded by seven mountains some of which afford excellent walks with spectacular views over both harbour and the town itself.

From the outbreak of war only cargo vessels from neutral countries were allowed into port and these, in line with international maritime regulations of that time, had had their decks painted showing their national flag thus making them easily distinguishable from the air.

On one of our Sunday walks late in March we could not fail noticing a larger number of ships than usual anchored in the harbour all carrying neutral markings. In fact it had become an interesting guessing game between us young ones to see how many we were able to recognise; on this particular occasion these were of Estonian, Lithuanian and Latvian origin. An almost ghostly stillness reigned upon the water that Sunday morning. Why such a sudden influx of cargo from the Baltic States, we asked ourselves. But we had no suspicion of what lay ahead.

Easter fell in early April and there was the usual exodus to the mountains further inland from the larger towns and cities of all able-bodied for their annual skiing holiday period. It was all too easy afterwards to recognise how we ourselves had paved the way for the invasionary forces aided by the traitor Quisling and his followers.

It all happened at about 5 o'clock in the morning of April 9th. There could not have been many inhabitants of Bergen that morning who were not awakened by the

thunderous roar of aircraft swooping over Lövstakken mountain, dipping low over the town itself and then flying off out to sea. In waves they came and from my bedroom window I could not have had a better view of the spectacle. Still drowsy with sleep we did not at once realise what was happening. That they were enemy planes was certain for Norway possessed nothing that could measure up to such might. Were they British or German, we wondered. But as the planes descended the Swastika on the underside of their wings clearly established their identity. To say that we were stunned at first is an understatement. We were soon to see for ourselves how carefully planned had been the Wehrmacht's attack, and how impotent were we as a nation to meet such an onslaught, due to the Government's intransigent stance to uphold our neutrality and not even making an attempt at blocking our coastal waters.

Father was the first one, I think, in our family to realise fully the seriousness of the situation. "I must report at once," he said, "to Bergenhus" - the old fort which housed the HQ of his Regiment. But from the other end of the phone came an answer in German; already they were in possession.

During that memorable morning we were to discover how thorough had been the invasion. Every single strategic point had been taken over by German forces; telephone, telegraph, the railway station, the harbour authorities, our broadcasting station, etcetera, etcetera. This was confirmed by our own eyes upon entering the centre of town later that morning.

Where had they all come from? We saw no German troop-carrying ships, and Bergen in those days had no aerodrome on which to land. After a while it became all too clear. The holds of the 'neutral' ships already in port, evidently captured earlier by the Germans, had been packed with troops; some time during the night, under the cover of darkness, they would have come ashore and taken up their positions.

When switching on the radio the Germans, through their Quisling interpreters, announced the astonishing feat of the night's achievement, namely that they had come as our 'protectors', had occupied both Norway and Denmark; in Norway they were in possession of the seven largest towns around the coast from Oslo to Trondheim; they had met with no resistance.

Thus, with a single stroke, we were cut off from the outside world. Only listening to German or Nazi news was permissible. Norsk Kringkasting, the equivalent to the BBC, as we knew it, no longer existed.

What had happened in Oslo, we wondered, to the King and our Government? It soon became common knowledge that King Haakon had not been prepared to surrender. With no resistance force to be reckoned with, he had escaped with his Government out of Oslo and was making for the Northern Region as yet unoccupied by the enemy. We had now become allies of England. A British naval vessel had picked up King and Government and taken them to safety in England where shortly they were to set up

the legal Norwegian Administration for the duration of the War. A puppet government, under Quisling, soon established itself in Oslo under German rule.

Thus began Norway's five-year period of Nazi-German occupation. The general feeling in the country at first, despite our role of vanquished, was one of detached admiration for the skill with which the plot had been carried out. But once the admiration had died down and the people began to feel the real impact of having become subjugated, their attitude soon changed.

Oddly enough, Sweden had been left intact. Where, we asked ourselves, was the aid they had pledged under the recent treaty? Not only did they not come to our assistance, but the Swedes indeed facilitated the transportation through their country of German reinforcements thus hitting us in the back. Much later, at the end of hostilities, the Swedes tried to cover their conscience by helping with food and all kinds of aid to the plundered and semi-starved Norwegians.

Notices and road signs in German began to appear alongside our own and the green German uniform was everywhere in evidence. Specially minted German coins of a poor alloy were declared legal tender and began to intermingle with our own coinage. The Germans, for many years starved of nourishing food and luxury goods - their sacrifice towards their war machine - set about ransacking our plentifully stocked shops. Particularly amazing to watch was the rapidity with which valuable items disappeared from our silver and jewellery shops.

The billeting of such a large contingent of troops clearly caused a headache to our masters. Those of our friends whose houses were situated alongside main roads had their homes commandeered for officer occupation whilst half of Bergen's school buildings were turned into barracks for their soldiers.

"I am unable to get out of Bergen without your assistance", Father said to me. "I have learned that, as yet, the German penetration is not very deep. We shall have to organise resistance to the enemy with whatever arms are available and we are rallying at Voss which has a small arsenal." Voss, situated in the mountains, was where military manoeuvres were carried out in normal times. Proud of my recently acquired driving licence I thus drove Father to a point along the railway line that the Germans had not yet reached and where trains were available and ready to take patriots to Voss. "Be sure to put the car in the garage as soon as you get back", said Father, "or else the Germans will requisition it!"

Norway's legal Government in London did not delay commencing broadcasting in Norwegian from the BBC. Despite the German ban on radio listening to 'enemy' broadcasts, everyone did so for we were hungry for news, not only about the extent of our surrender, but also about what was happening elsewhere in Europe. We learned that, within a month or two, Holland, Belgium and even France had been overrun by the enemy. Hitler was 'drunk' with military success and his forces had reached the Channel coast of France. Their advances seemed meteoric, but there they had had to stop to consolidate. Only Great Britain remained of Western Europe and the water between her and France had given her the necessary breathing space.

One noticeable event shortly after the occupation, at least temporarily, lifted us out of our isolation. How odd that we should welcome being bombed by our Allies! It was a daring attack: Early one morning a squadron of RAF bombers flew in swiftly, accurately dropping their load and destroying each one of the Bergen oil storage tanks on the island of Ask at the mouth of the fjord. The Germans were raging at having been deprived of such a valuable fuel supply. The effect on us, the civilian population, was a pall of black and greasy smoke which gradually spread across the whole town turning daylight almost into night-time and taking several days to disperse.

All the time we were hopefully awaiting our new Allies, and one night on hearing continuous explosions, we thought our rescuers had arrived. However, it turned out to have been yet another RAF raid; this time they had wrecked a recently arrived German explosives ship anchored at the quayside. The damage was devastating: ship and quay had gone and the blast had blown up nearby buildings and warehouses.

We heard less of the brave RAF thereafter; doubtless they were busily engaged elsewhere. The war was becoming all-embracing. How long would it last before Great Britain too was overtaken, was the question in everyone's mind. As the enemy's communication lines became ever more extensive, there were signs of the Germans overstretching themselves. Many of the crack troops disappeared from Norway and were replaced by older men and at the same time the Gestapo moved in.

Mother with the three younger children had taken herself off to our small farm on the Hardanger Fjord south of Bergen, where we normally spent our summer vacation.

Life was settling down to a new pattern, and no one any longer expected a quick end to the war. Completely cut off from John I now fully realised that it might be years - if we both survived - before we would meet again. This conclusion fostered in my mind my first tentative and abortive approach to escaping. How could it be done? On



the pretext of need for visiting relations in Oslo, I travelled by train across the mountains having heard it rumoured that people frequently disappeared across the long common border with Sweden. But Oslo, with Quisling in power, was teaming with the Gestapo, and for one with a green Bergen Area identity card, recently issued by the Germans to keep track on the population, I had very little chance of being included in such escape parties. Regretfully, therefore, I had no other choice but to return to Bergen and await my chance there.

One day in July Mother called me from the village telephone asking me to join her and the three younger ones for a weekend on the farm. I was the only one who had remained behind in our Bergen house since I had a job to go to; this also enabled me to visit Granny who had preferred to stay in her central Bergen flat. Certain fjord steamer services were again functioning. I was met at the quay by Mother and we walked to the farm where a great surprise awaited me: Father was back, physically well but thoroughly dejected. He had a tale to tell of his exploits over the previous three months.

Disjointed reports had reached us earlier of the small Norwegian contingent's utter defeat at Voss and Father's story confirmed this. What chance had they with no air defence and only a limited supply of arms? The powerfully Luftwaffe had swooped in from Ulvik in North Hardanger and had pelted the Norwegians with machinegun fire. Voss itself was virtually razed to the ground. Those of the army who still survived, under the cover of the thickly wooded countryside, found their way out of the inferno.

I suppose for a soldier at heart, if against all odds you have to accept defeat, the best thing to do is to re-group and to set up resistance elsewhere. And that was precisely what Father and his fellow soldiers did. There was always the hope that, if they held out long enough, England our country's new Ally might come to their rescue. Father was no youth at the time, a man of fifty years of age, but slim and with a constitution that must have been the envy of many a man ten years his junior.

On skis they set off, across the desolate high mountain region that separate the west from the east, until they reached Valdres in the east, the country of valleys, rivers and lakes. Here they organised fresh resistance to the German invaders; the battle of Vinjesvingen is a story well known to most Norwegians today. Again it was a question of how long they could hold out against an overwhelming force with superior and plentiful arms supply. A British Expeditionary Force had landed south of Trondheim and was reported to be moving southwards. However, news of the sorry chapter of its failure and final withdrawal reaching the resisting Norwegians must have caused them to disperse rather than be taken prisoners.

Hungry and extremely exhausted, Father once more set off across the mountains, by that time no easy task, for the snow was thawing and the rivers were in full spate. He finally descended to the western fjords where he sought refuge at the farm.

The short Scandinavian summer was drawing to a close. By August it was clear to all that this was going to be no 'lightening' war and therefore some sort of normality had to be re-established. The children's education, interrupted by the invasion, would have to be resumed. Schools were due to restart and those who had evacuated themselves during the spring and summer began drifting back to town; Father thought this would be as safe as any time to return to Bergen unnoticed.

We found that the occupying forces had commenced a busy construction programme. New roads were being built and others extended to facilitate communications for the Wehrmacht. Rocks were being blasted to form deep cavities under cover with direct access from the sea for the repair of U-boats and other naval vessels. In short, Bergen was fast becoming a most important naval base.

September had arrived and poised for fresh onslaught the powerful German Luftwaffe had begun attacking England from the air. Britain was struggling for her own survival. We in occupied territory continued to tune in to 'enemy' broadcasts. We listened with admiration to reports of the Battle of Britain and its valiant young Air Force fighters, some barely out of school.

Norway with its extensive coastline and difficult terrain proved a costly occupation for the 'Herrenvolk', our German masters. But they were quick to recognise what a real godsend to their deprived civilians back home was the plentiful fish ready to be caught in Norway's western waters. Permits for fuel oil, unobtainable by most, were issued for all fishing vessels. Rail wagons bearing the markings 'Frische Fische aus Norwegen' soon became a regular sight, and Sweden made no protest concerning transit of such cargo to the Baltic ports!

With summer gone and the enemy fast consolidating their grip on occupied Europe, the Norwegians reluctantly settled down to a life under occupation.

My mind was again activated into planning escape to join John in England before it became too late. Rumours in Bergen had it that small groups had been successful in getting away in fishing boats across the North Sea. But as soon as the Germans became aware of this, posters appeared on public hoardings declaring death to anybody caught in the act of escaping, and to illustrate that they meant business, they had proceeded to execute by shooting one such group of prominent Bergen citizens who had appeared on exposed islands in their normal clothing so

conspicuously contrasting with that of the island inhabitants that they had been spotted.

Autumn descended very rapidly in the extreme northern hemisphere and blackouts were soon in evidence. The tramcars, which in 1940 were still the town's main transport, became very dimly lit. You never knew when travelling whether the person next to you was friend or foe. Father urged upon us to be careful of what we said for German Gestapo or Quisling traitors were listening everywhere; caution was the motto of the day.

But how to get away? From Bergen it was a two-hour journey to the outer islands, the homes of the fishermen. The Germans, in the intervening months, had carried out what the Norwegian Government so adamantly had refused to do the previous winter, namely laying mine-belts in all fjords. Only certain channels were safe and these had to be carefully negotiated by the fjord steamer captains in accordance with German charts. Thus a timetabled steamer service to the island population was once more being operated and German 'watch dogs' stationed at each and every local Post/Telegraph Office generally to be found in the local store.

Letting the family know that I wished to go away to the country for a weekend break, I set off alone on my exploratory expedition. I was making for Fedje which, it had been rumoured, was an excellent escape point, some distance north-west of Bergen. Unfortunately, I soon found out, I had caught a short distance steamer and had to get off at a tiny quay from where I walked to the nearest farmhouse asking if they would kindly put me up until the next vessel arrived. The couple seemed rather surly - or were they merely guarded? Later I realised they themselves were probably desperately frightened that I might have been sent to 'spy' on them. I carefully guided the conversation towards Fedje, the place I had been making for. The sudden keenness of the husband to get rid of me could not have shown more clearly, for he at once volunteered the information that the larger steamer bound for Fedje was due to pass by, some distance out the fjord at about 7pm and he would help me get on board.

So it was that, a few hours later, I was lowered into the farmer's small boat. With long and experience strokes he rowed me to an area in open sea where we lay awaiting the ship. As it came into sight he had his special signal for hailing the vessel, seemingly common practice for island people to connect with other islands, and to my amazement the ship slowed down; a rope ladder was lowered alongside it and I climbed aboard carrying my rucksack waving a grateful goodbye to my benefactor and away we sped towards my destination.

Upon my arrival at Fedje it was quite dark. I had no alternative but to seek lodging for the night. No proper hotel existed at such an isolated place; there was, however,

a small “pensjon”, a type of boarding house, offering bed and breakfast, and here I secured a room. In fact it turned out to be quite a lively meeting place for the local inhabitants and travellers alike. Later, while enjoying a cup of coffee in the only lounge, a young man came up and seated himself next to me. I recalled Father’s warning about careless utterances. In fact, at that stage I hadn’t planned in my own mind how to gain the information I required without drawing too much attention to my real intention. I let the conversation revolve around things in general. Sven told me about his family and I about mine. I found out that a few summers earlier he had been one of my Father’s recruits at Army camp. In fact I sat quietly smiling at Sven’s account of the strict but fair discipline of his commanding officer before revealing that I was his daughter! My confidence in him grew gradually; perhaps both rather feeling our way, the subject was broached of what we were doing on this tiny station. In the end it came down to having to trust one another; I knew it was a risk. By coincidence we were at Fedje with the same purpose in mind. Once having ‘let our hair down’ our whispered conversation began to flow more rapidly. Sven had been on the island for a few days ‘fixing up things’. He already was in contact with certain fishermen willing to take the risk - for a price of course - but there was still much careful planning to be made. I could hardly believe my own luck. We arranged a rendez-vous back in Bergen later when he would phone me.

The autumn gales started early that year. Late September the papers carried news about mines that had torn themselves loose and by the strong winds had been swept ashore where they had exploded. It was about that time that I received the awaited phone call from Sven. We met in a local rather obscure cafe where he gave me the latest news that a fishing boat was ready to set off for the Shetlands the following week. But, alas, there were too many youngsters already anxious to get away; largely, I suppose, in response to radio broadcasts from Britain for young men to join the newly formed Norwegian Forces in Scotland. Although a great disappointment, it therefore came as no surprise to me that they would not be prepared to include in the party me, a young female merely wishing to escape to join her British fiancé. But I was in low spirits knowing that Sven, my only contact, was sailing within days. He did, however, promise to carry a letter from me addressed to John, and in the event of reaching England safely, would post it. In it I told John of my abortive attempt to escape and that I saw little further hope of getting away.

With my contact gone, gloom once more beset me. How many years before war was over? Would John and I still be alive, or would either of us unavoidably have become attached to someone else? At that moment I could see no way out.

I had more or less given up all hope when one October day Father took me aside and said, “I have knowledge of your planned escape to England”. I looked up at him in utter amazement. How could he possibly have found out? After that we had our

little private talk. He agreed that the war was going to be a protracted one. He also revealed that he headed the organisation that helped people escape. He did not directly handle the practical arrangements, possibly because of being such a well-known Bergen personality, but had a network of people under him. He let me in on future operations. Plans for another sailing were under way already, for the end of October, in a better equipped and slightly larger boat. He said he had talked the matter over with Mother - it cannot have been easy for them to let me go - and they had both felt it was unfair to hold me back. If I were still as keen as ever, he would see to it that I would be included in the next expedition.

I was unable at first to take it all in and spent two long weeks harbouring 'my secret'. Each time I saw a German in the street or on the tram I thought that surely it must be written all over my face what I was about. Through Father I received information as to whom I was to contact in order to obtain detailed sailing instructions.

Finally all was arranged. The 50-foot craft would hold twenty two in all, two of whom were crew, the rest 'escapees'. We were warned about clothing: trousers, black oil coats and sou'westers, so commonly used by our fishermen, were recommended. Further, to avoid detection, plans had been carefully laid for the twenty of us to be split up into groups of three or four and for each such group to travel to a pre-arranged point along the outer coast from which the fishing vessel would pick us up. I was to join the two most senior members who, I learned later, were the leaders of our party.

Before the event, while busy preparing, certain precautionary steps had to be taken. To safeguard the family at home, in case of any German enquiries concerning my whereabouts, on Father's advice I wrote a letter addressed to Mother - it was better so in view of his involvement - begging them not to worry for I had decided to leave the country to marry John in England.

Many years later, in fact not until after the hostilities, did I learn that several months had gone by before the Germans realised I was missing. They had not accepted my letter as full explanation and were anxious to trace the organisation behind the ever-increasing escapes across the North Sea. Poor Mother was summoned to the Bergen Gestapo for questioning. She firmly stuck to her guns: she had no knowledge of any plans of mine, and "Why should not a daughter of mine," she said, "attempt to leave occupied Norway to marry the Englishman to whom she had been engaged since before outbreak of war?"

The morning of my departure stands before me most vividly. I was in the kitchen watching the maid busy frying the large number of lamb chops that were to sustain me on the voyage. Unexpectedly my little sister entered. "Why are you not at work

this morning”, she said to me with all the inquisitiveness of a 12-year-old, and, “Why is the maid preparing dinner so early?” The German occupation of school buildings had meant reduction in tuition for the children and my sister attended from noon to four o'clock only. I could see Mother getting worried about Grethe bombarding us with questions. All but the food was in my rucksack upstairs. Mother took me aside. “We must get her out of the house”, she said, “if only for a short while until you and I are gone.” She then turned to Grethe, “I need some groceries,” she said, “be a good girl and go down to the shops for some sugar and margarine”. By the time she returned we were gone.

Mother and I had reached the quay. I had already strolled up the gangway and was safely aboard. No one who has not experienced Bergen harbour life on a Friday market day can fully realise the bustle and frantic activity that goes on. Relatives come to see off their island kinsfolk after their weekly provisioning and the chatter is indescribable. There was therefore nothing unusual in Mother seeing me off. Whilst talking across the ship's railing about things in general - we already had said our proper- good-bye before leaving home - something came to me in a flash: I had forgotten my seasickness pills! For me, a bad sailor even in moderate sea, this was a most fatal omission. But Mother said, “I'll slip across the market to Ørnen Apothek and get you some.” I watched her tall erect figure; she was still a goodlooking youngish woman and every bit a consul's daughter, hurriedly disappearing in the distance. That was to be the last I saw of her for the next 4½ years for, by the time she returned, the steamer had departed and we were on our way out of the fjord.

Dressed in my weekend sports outfit, equally suitable for either hiking or fishing, and covered by an open black oilskin coat and a sou'wester for a grey sky was threatening rain from above, I began looking around the ship. It was packed with passengers but amongst them also were to be seen quite a number of Germans in their green uniform.

My orders had been to look out for two gentlemen of early middle age who, with myself, were to form our particular group. I had their descriptions and no doubt they too had been told to trace someone answering to my appearance. We had our cue and, once in open sea, there was no difficulty in recognising one another. Soon we were in conversation; I was quickly put in the picture about what was due to happen from then onwards.

As a safety measure we disembarked at one of the steamer's regular ports of call where we waited for a while. In due course a motor launch appeared and the person on board whisked us away to his home at Blomvaag. This was going to be our ‘hiding place’ until the fishing vessel called for us, scheduled for that very night.

However, this was not to be, for three days later we were still in Norway. Granted, we had no complaints regarding our personal comforts; no-one could have shown us greater hospitality than did the proprietor at Blomvaag, which incidentally was a disused whaling station, and his wife. These two, it might be interesting to note, did an outstanding job during the war helping hundreds to escape via them until in the end the enemy were closing in and they too had to seek refuge in England.

We occupied ourselves during the daytime rowing out amongst the islands with the station owner pulling lobster pots and sinking new ones. And what a plentiful catch each day! From where I sat in the stern I watched them through the crystal clear water, those large hideous crawly things with their numerous claws. Up at the farmhouse the wife, skilled at handling such creatures, had a large boiling pan ready on the stove into which the lobsters were submerged, this being the most painless manner in which to kill them. I watched them change colour from black to the bright red with which we are all so familiar.

Each night as darkness fell, silently we sat listening intently to any sound of approaching vessels and their customary echo amongst the rocky islands. But none came. For the first time doubts began to pervade me. Was our plot, despite all careful planning, to be discovered and were we to be transported to Ulven Camp outside Bergen, to face the firing squad?

Clearly they were unnerving days and our alarm grew with time. Whatever could have gone wrong, we kept asking ourselves. Because we were the last lot to be picked up, we wondered if they had sailed without us. Though this did not make sense; no skipper would take such risks without being paid. Each one of us had contributed his share of the cost and Kjaerland, our leader, held the money. Or, had someone been careless and the rest of the party caught, we wondered.

By the morning of the third day Kjaerland decided to chance a phone call to one of his Bergen contacts. In his disguised message from the local telephone at the grocer's store nearby, despite it being closely guarded by German troops, he enquired when the potatoes were due to arrive, there being none at that barren island. They would not be long in coming, was the answer.

That same night, sitting silently around the supper table, we were all tensed up. Only the faint ticking of the clock on the wall could be heard as we watched its hands moving towards eight. And then, pricking his ears, Kjaerland looked up and said, "I believe I hear a faint sound of a boat approaching". He was right; louder and closer it came. "Please let it be ours", went my private prayer. Undoubtedly it was an engine noise. So loud seemed the echo from rock to rock that I was convinced the Germans, only a few hundred yards up the hill behind us, were bound to hear it. Finally we sensed the slowing down of the engine. Very little time elapsed before a tall strong young man appeared in the doorway. "We finally got here", he said.

“There is no time to waste for the moon will soon rise and may give us away. Hurry!”

Having kept ourselves in readiness for days, we did not delay. We bid a hurried thanks and goodbye to our hosts, the wife wrapping the remaining lobsters in paper handed them to me. “For the boys”, she said. “They are bound to be hungry.”

We ran down the path that led to the private jetty, so well hidden in the small creek; and there was the long awaited fishing boat, not very large from what I was able to discern in the obscurity. Almost as soon as we were aboard the engine restarted and we were off to the fishing ground, hopefully before the moon rose. The legitimate fishing vessels had set off earlier and we wanted to avoid being searchlit by German patrol boat. The idea was to first reach the fishing field, spend some time there, then gradually move away out towards the west and finally reach the Shetland Isles.

On board and huddled together, twenty of us, in the bow normally intended as the resting quarters for the small fishing crew, Kjaerland took command. ‘Stjernen’ or ‘The Star’, the 50ft fishing smack, was now our home. One other girl made up our total and she was a twin sister of one of the boys and inseparable from her brother. The young man’s intention was to join up in England. We were warned of the perils that lay ahead: the craft was too small and shallow to touch any minefield, but drifting mines, after the recent gales, presented a menace. The men, therefore, were put on a two-hour rota on deck throughout the night to watch out; we two girls were exempt!

Anybody carrying compromising documents were to hand them over to Kjaerland who, I already knew, carried a first-hand report to the British and Norwegian Authorities of the recent rally held in Bergen Concert Hall by Quisling and his followers. I had handed over to him some revealing photographs given me earlier by a friend showing the accuracy of British bombing in Bergen. All documents were parcelled together and, with a heavy weight, ready to be sunk at a moment’s notice, should we be detected by the Germans.

It took me some time to accustom myself to the strong glare of the oil lamp that hung from the ceiling over the centre table, especially after the darkness outside. But at last I was able to take stock of my companions, all young and in their late teens or early twenties. “What took you so long?” I asked. The answer was that our little creek had been so well concealed that the skipper had had the greatest of difficulty in locating it. I handed over to the ravenous boys the cooked lobsters also the chops from my own rucksack; my own inside had left me with no appetite.

Every two hours the hatch above opened and down the steep ladder came two of the men looking frozen, and up went two others to perform their share of the night’s



vigil. The tiny room was stiflingly hot and the smell of people, food and paraffin nauseating.

The hours passed; I could feel the swell of the sea heaving the vessel forward. I think it must have been this motion and the conglomerate odour which caused my system to break down. I remember being laid down in one of the two alcoves, on a straw mattress - and then began the retching! Someone handed me a bucket, in frequent use during the night. A kind soul held it for me whenever it was needed. In my semi-conscious state, once or twice my mind cleared when I thought I had seen that sympathetic face before. And so I had, for he later reminded me that he had partnered me at a dance the previous winter!

The -vessel rolled on and so did the nightly hours. Empty and exhausted I must have slept for a time; I came to, seeing the room almost empty. The hatch was opened and I was able to distinguish daylight up above, a cheerful voice calling down that it was much fresher up on deck. I tried to scramble to my feet but my legs gave way under me. How could I be such a fool, young and strong as I was? Finally someone hauled me up the ladder and I found myself on deck breathing in the fresh salt air of the sea. A fine fisherman I would have made had we been caught in the night!

We were being carried steadily westward; such a comfort in the continual rhythm of the engine and the sight of the skipper and his mate on the bridge. But how vast was the ocean and how minute were we. The sea kept rising and falling. We were like tiny dwarfs in a nutshell being heaved by the mighty force of the sea, from the top of the waves down into the troughs where everything around us resembled gigantic mountains; next we were being flung to the top once more and scanned the vast expanse of the grey and uninviting North Sea.

After a while the cold was beginning to make itself felt and so did 'nature'! No trace on deck of the other female. I had no idea how to deal with the situation amongst so many men and in the middle of the North Sea! As if in answer to a maiden's prayer up came a young man asking if I felt better. Damn all modesty, now is the chance to reveal my predicament, I thought. "Don't worry", he said, "we can soon see to that. I'll help you. Just give me your hand." He pulled me to my feet which by now felt more steady, but I had no idea how it was going to happen. "We have a small latrine behind the wheelhouse for common use. Hold on to me and I'll guide you to it." Thus began a most precarious negotiation. The space between the wheelhouse and the outside of the vessel was hardly a foot wide and a six-inch high railing was all that lay between me and the all-devouring sea: a real balancing act on a most unsteady surface. I felt the strong masculine hands grip mine and slowly we edged our way along the narrow path. We finally reached the small quarter that held the latrine. I was feeling unsafe. Bless my guardian angel, he actually helped me unbutton and pull down my trousers! And, supporting me, he had me safely deposited on the improvised loo! Strangely enough, this comic situation caused me no embarrassment at the time, thought the picture of myself seated on a latrine,

whilst performing one of nature's most necessary functions on the wide open North Sea, my shoulders firmly held by a young man, has brought many a smile to my lips in later years.

After this episode I felt distinctly better and had begun taking notice of my fellow travellers and joining in their conversation. I too began to scan the sea and watch the far horizon and the sky for possible danger. I was invited on to the bridge, the elevated glazed-in wheelhouse, which gave the best view of all. We were sailing due west on 66° latitude leading to the Shetlands. The skipper was pleased with his little craft; we are making good headway, he told us. With each hour passing our spirits rose; before us lay Britain and our way to freedom. "With a bit of luck," said skipper optimistically, "we may reach Lerwick before dark"; though no one gave up their vigilant gaze across the rolling sea.

Then at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon someone called out, "Look, a small dark spot in the sky." We all stared in the direction. The spot grew larger and a noise was being heard. There was no longer any doubt that an aircraft was approaching. An almost palpable tension grew amongst us, a mixture of fear and excitement. Whoever it was must have spotted us; steadily closer it came, still fairly high in the sky. We knew what markings to look for. It began to descend upon us and when at last we recognised the red, white and blue rings of the RAF, so great was our delight that we let go our shouts of relief and joy.

The aircraft continued to descend and then circled our little boat. We hoisted on to the mast our Norwegian flag to identify ourselves and burst into our National Anthem. By that time the plane was so low that we could actually see its crew waving to us, and we waved back elatedly. What luck! It must have been a reconnaissance plane because it flew off but returned time and again, as though to guide us in the right direction towards land.

We still had a considerable distance to go. The skipper was pushing his little motor to its full capacity; we sailed on but the light was beginning to fade. We were fully aware that the whole of Britain's coastline, including her islands, were being shut down to all shipping each night at 10 o'clock. It was fast becoming a race against time for, should we not reach her waters by that hour, we would have to face another night at sea at a time when Britain's ports were being bombed mercilessly by German night bombing aircraft.

Continuing our voyage we at last spotted land by which time it was getting dangerously close to ten o'clock. Finally the entrance to Lerwick harbour came into sight. We must have been expected for out of the darkness a pilot boat appeared. All I remember was a multitude of red and green lights as we zigzagged our way in through the British mine-belts and at last docked at one of Lerwick's quays. We had made it to freedom!

I awoke the following morning in a comfortable bed between clean sheets, in marked contrast to the straw mattress! I must have slept soundly for only very slowly did consciousness return. Where was I? In the bed next to me slept Gudrun, the female twin. Gradually the events of the previous night came to mind. I could see the gathering soldiers, short men with ruddy complexions. Were the unceasing winds that blew across the island responsible for their colour, I later wondered. Dressed in khaki uniform, guns slung across their shoulders, they peered curiously at the apparition which now lay along the quayside. We had been prevented from stepping ashore and then had requested to see the Norwegian Consul in Lerwick who had turned up in spite of the late hour. Where in Norway had we come from; how many of us were there? A gallant attitude towards the 'weaker sex' still prevailed in those days. Horrified at finding two females among our party, he immediately separated us out from the rest and we were being driven off to The Queens, the island's main hotel, whilst the men were being marched off to camp!

Tired though I had been, I remembered our instructions of the night before: remain in your rooms until Army personnel arrive. Meanwhile I revelled in such luxury as a bath ridding myself of the sour smell of stale vomit that still clung to my body.

Despite being thrown together so closely, Gudrun and I never became intimate friends. She and her brother were as one, keeping themselves to themselves, never showing much interest in the rest of us. This became further evident when~ at Christmas-time that year, Kjaerland organised a reunion for us all, but never a word was heard from Gudrun and her twin brother.

We had got ourselves dressed and were awaiting the Army representatives. I admit to feeling somewhat lost without our expedition leader. Before long, two females in uniform entered. We were asked to strip and then commenced a thorough body search, next our rucksacks and their contents. We were no longer escapees but had become refugees. Many spies were about in the U.K. at that time and I fully realised there was a need for such precautions. After some brief questioning we were told to have breakfast in the dining room. Two Army guards would be placed outside the hotel and would be at our disposal; only under their escort were we free to move about the island.

As we entered the dining room I recognised how famished I was. I had eaten nothing for almost two days and the North Sea had claimed what had been within me! Gudrun and I devoured every bit of food the waitress put before us. Looking up, our hunger satisfied, I found that each table was occupied by RAF officers. I could sense we had created a stir; talking amongst themselves they were throwing glances in our direction. It was not difficult to detect they were anxious to have their curiosity satisfied. First a couple of them came up to our table and before long we were

completely surrounded and being bombarded with questions about our arrival and about conditions on the other side.

Uppermost in my mind was how to communicate with John. I could only hope he was still in England and not doing service overseas. Father, very sensibly, had provided me with a certain amount of English cash; I had never queried how, in a German-occupied country, he had managed to acquire the £ sterling.

Escorted by our two 'Tommys', we set out to purchase notepaper and stamps and as I posted the letter, I pondered what would be John's reaction upon receiving it.

Our next task was to find the whereabouts of our fellow countrymen, and under escort we arrived at the camp. I admit to feeling a twinge of conscience at having received such preferential treatment after learning that they had spent the night in an army hut on a hard wooden floor with only a blanket for cover!

Kjaerland had been active already. The boat with the skipper and his mate lay in the harbour. For them time was the all-important; they did not wish to be 'missed' in Norway for too long since the plan was for them to return with radio transmitters and much other material needed by the Underground organisation back home. Kjaerland and Rasmussen, therefore, had been granted permission to fly to London at once to acquire such equipment and Rasmussen was to return to Norway and hand it over.

I later learned of the sad fate that had befallen Rasmussen on his return home when he found his wife consorting with Germans. He had been betrayed by her, was handed over to the Gestapo and subsequently executed. 'Stjernen' and its crew of two, however, made many successful crossings carrying parties of escapees until, finally, even for them the situation got too sticky and they had to abandon their hazardous trips.

Our stay at Lerwick was to last five days during which time we were able to see quite a lot of the island, bleak and rather windswept. But the inhabitants were friendly and used to give us a wave as we marched back from our daily outings through the narrow streets of the town.

We had become restless waiting but at last we were on our way to the mainland having boarded the weekly steamer that carried both passengers and cargo between Lerwick and Aberdeen. This was no small boat and our little lot became quite lost in the crowd of British civilians and Service personnel. It was to be a voyage lasting 11 hours in open sea. The ship, so we were told, had been fitted with anti-magnetic

device against mines, and against attack from the air with anti-aircraft guns mounted on deck and manned by Army A.A. Artillery.

We reached Aberdeen at dusk and people began to disembark. However, we were being held back and informed that we would have to remain on board until the following morning. That night, whilst lying in Aberdeen harbour, we got a taste of Britain's experience during the past few months of night bombing. Shortly after dark German bombers launched a fierce attack on Aberdeen. Their targets were the ships anchored in port. The bombs kept dropping all around us. Our ship shuddered violently as the A.A. guns on deck went into action and the noise became almost ear-splitting. Were all our previous efforts to come to nothing? Was this going to be our last hour? We were a sitting target for the powerful planes that swooped over us in unceasing waves dropping their deathly charges. The roar of the aeroplanes, the sound of the firing guns on deck and the explosions all around us kept continuing throughout the night. But as soon as dawn came, almost as if at a given signal, from down below we could hear the sound of disappearing aircraft. All went quiet and our nightmare was over.

By noon the following day we were at the Forsythe Hotel in Aberdeen awaiting intelligence personnel. Early that morning several jeeps had turned up at the quay and we had been driven off to the hotel. It was inevitable, at this stage of the war, when refugees arrived in England from numerous countries overrun by Hitler's might, that we had to be carefully sifted. Here began the many hours of searching questioning, one by one, of the details of, and reason for, our escape with full particulars of those of our families left behind. After clearance we were to be passed on to London.

Late that night, under Police escort, we boarded the Aberdeen/London train, timed so as to arrive in the Capital soon after the 'All Clear' had been sounded. Meanwhile there was no sleeping accommodation for us and we sat up all night only dropping off from time to time to snatch a little sleep for the previous night had afforded us none.

I marvelled at all communications between the various authorities concerning us, the remaining eighteen Norwegians. On reaching London a special double-decker bus awaited us outside Kings Cross Station ready to take us on the long ride, right through the bomb-scarred centre of the Capital, to the southern suburb of Norwood.

We were being taken to an evacuated former children's home which had been put at the disposal of the War Office as a transit centre for refugees. We found ourselves among a multitude of nationalities and I felt utterly confused surrounded by a hubble of incomprehensible chatter. We were young and healthy, but most of the refugees around us appeared old and broken as though they had suffered a great deal. Some

of the Home's staff had remained behind. Bossy ladies in starched aprons soon took us in hand, ushering us down to the basement where we were led into a large room full of steam. "Take off your clothes", ordered a sergeant-major voice. Terrified I did as I was bid. "Now get into that tub." I regarded with incredulity the small bath on stilted legs well off the ground and then considered my own long body. "I can't possibly get into that thing", I said to the tyrant. But there was to be no protesting. Reluctantly I climbed into it, my knees reaching my chin. She must have thought we were in need of 'de-lousing'; with a hard brush and carbolic soap she proceeded to scrub down my body from top to toe until my skin was pink and almost raw.

The War Office had its own representatives at the Centre and, after our cleansing, we were lined up for yet another session of interrogation. It was beginning to resemble Court proceedings to see that our evidence was identical with that already given elsewhere. They must have accepted us as bona fide refugees because we were released at last from our bondage.

The following morning we were chatting about our experiences in the Club at the top of Norway House in Trafalgar Square and enjoying its panoramic view over the Capital. The young men in our party had gone off to enrol in the Norwegian Army and Kjaerland had invited me to lunch with himself and friends. He seemed pleased that all had gone so well. Rasmussen had already returned to Lerwick with his completed 'shopping list' and, hopefully was back in Norway. I was also informed, with great relief, for I knew how anxious my parents had been, that our pre-arranged coded message of our safe arrival had been incorporated in the BBC Norwegian News Bulletin.

Throughout most of the war I kept in close touch with Kjaerland until he left for the U.S.A. He had a business in the City as well as one in Norway, and it had been by pure accident that he had found himself in Norway at the time of the invasion.

No-one could have been more helpful. From Norway House I was able to phone John's home at Oakham in Rutland, and a few hours later my Norwegian host and friends all came to see me off at St. Pancras Station and we promised each other that we would meet again at Christmas that same year.

That very evening, in John's home at Oakham, we were to be re-united at last. I had arrived by train from London and John was due from Liverpool. Well do I recall my feeling of expectancy upon hearing John's footsteps in the hall. How would be his reaction towards me after our forced separation?

He entered and we fell into each other's arms. We had so much to tell and ask one another. After receiving, two months earlier, my despondent letter from Norway, John had not anticipated any reunion until the end of the war. But then had come

my second letter which I myself had posted from Lerwick and which had created quite a sensation in the family. On that early November day it seemed almost inconceivable that here we were together again in England and that a mere ten days earlier I had been saying my final goodbye to Mother at the Bergen quay!

From that moment on, John's mother took complete charge. Our future wedding plans were already being discussed. An air of urgency prevailed all through the war and no less so for us at that moment. I heard my future Mother-in-Law saying, "You must get married as soon as can be arranged for who knows how long John will remain in England."

Seldom has a wedding been planned on such short notice. An application for a 'Special Licence' was sent off to the Bishop of Peterborough, the actual wedding day set for only seven days hence. In my mind I still see John's mother enjoying the hustle and bustle that this entailed.

During the week of preparation I returned with John to Liverpool to get a few things together. The scant belongings in my rucksack was all that I possessed, and trying to assemble even the most modest of trousseau with the few clothing coupons proved no easy task. John, in his job as Gunnery Instructor at an Anti-Aircraft School at the time, fortunately was doing only a 10 - 4 duty and this gave us quite a lot of time together talking over our future plans.

From one of his fellow officers he had purchased a little Morris Eight car which was to take us on our brief honeymoon, and in this we motored across to Oakham on the evening prior to our wedding.

I awoke at seven o'clock on Saturday November 9th. This was to be our Wedding Day - or was it? A knock on the door and there was Dorothy, the maid, with the then customary English early morning cup of tea. "Has the mail come yet?" I asked, for therein lay the final decision.

John and I had arrived back at Oakham the previous night to a house crowded with relatives, come to attend the wedding. Nevertheless, there had been an air of uneasiness; the Special Licence had not arrived! Many guests had been invited and by that time the whole of little Oakham were acquainted with the event which was due to take place. "If necessary we shall have to pin a notice on the Church door explaining the situation", said John's mother.

I was still sipping my tea in bed when I heard excited voices from downstairs. The post had arrived and with it the all-important document. All was well!

I cannot help reflecting upon how much life has changed over the years. At the time of our wedding, seeing one's bride on the Wedding Day prior to the ceremony was

still regarded as bringing bad luck. John, therefore, had had to be 'boarded out'. I was to be attended by just one bridesmaid, a five-year-old niece of John's, so pretty in her long dress carrying a posy.

It was 1.45pm, and the Service was due to start at 2 o'clock. John's father and I were waiting in the lounge. The house was very quiet for everyone had departed for Church. He was to give me away, a role he had never expected to perform having no daughters. He handed me a glass and we drank champagne watching the clock move ever so slowly and listening for the sound of the Wedding car to arrive.

The church doors opened and as the organ burst into music I was being led up the aisle on the arm of my Father-in-law to be. All I could see was John waiting at the end of the long walk and yet the church had been packed to capacity. That morning I had worked very hard trying to learn the wedding text so different from Norway's, and could only hope I would make my responses at the right moments. I was still in a dream. Was it really happening?

But, when after the blessing we stepped forward and I heard the Vicar in his brief sermon mentioning my name and touching upon my escape, there was no doubt; our union was being blessed and sealed.

We were on our honeymoon and alone at last, away from the noisy guests and my managing Mother-in-law. The Lake District hotel in which we were staying lay nestling at the water's edge. How quiet it all was and how magnificent was the scenery. Here there were no sirens of war. As we walked amongst the colourful trees, the rustling leaves beneath our feet, we knew it couldn't last long and most likely our separation was not far away.

Back in Liverpool as husband and wife we had been lucky in securing accommodation relatively close to the Gunnery School. Being an Instructor turned out to be an ideal post for a newly married man since all teaching ceased at four in the afternoon. Thus we were lucky to have more time together than most during these first weeks of our married life.

The German bombing of Liverpool at that time was most aggressive. Bombs were exploding all around us and many houses in our road simply vanished overnight. Each evening after dark the sirens sounded and we watched our landlady set off for the shelter, with her kettle! But we were not to be persuaded and remained in the house. One such night, when we were in bed, they came very close. We could hear the drone of the enemy aircrafts overhead, then the explosion; the house opposite us had received a direct hit. Hearing our bedroom window shatter, we quickly drew a blanket over our heads - only just in time - for a moment later we were being



showered with fragments of broken glass. This, in fact, became the general pattern of our newly married life.

One day, a few weeks after our arrival in Liverpool, a stranger turned up at our address introducing himself as a journalist from 'The Sun' newspaper. My escape from Norway had reached his ears and he was anxious for a story which I was not prepared to let him have. This was my first experience of how persistent a breed the journalists are. Refusing to leave the house without his 'scoop', he kept following me on the tram into town. Even though then I had no knowledge of any repercussions of my escape, I had to spell out to him that I could not risk exposing my nearest to danger by revealing in the British press how people were escaping from enemy occupied Norway. Finally he departed after a futile journey.

Christmas was approaching and I had accepted an invitation to go to Kjaerland's home in Kent for the promised reunion. This was something not to be missed. In addition to our escape, other well-known Bergen people had turned up, people who had escaped in various ways. One such person was Hulda Gran, our Bergen Radio female newsreader. She had been picked up by a British destroyer and had been brought to England where she was working in a similar capacity. A close friend of Kjaerland's, the two of them master-minded one of the gayest and most carefree parties that I can remember. After the Christmas turkey we shared out stories, we sang our Norwegian Christmas hymns and songs, possibly more forcefully than we would normally have done, to give vent to our relief at being free and together, and those of us who had crossed the sea in 'Stjernen' at this gathering formed closer friendships than we had been able to make on board.

Early in the new year rumour-s had it that John was to be moved from Liverpool. I had been in correspondence with Kjaerland because I felt I needed to do something towards the war effort. He had told me how much the Norwegian Army Authorities in Scotland required clerical assistance and before long I set off for Dumfries to give a helping hand.

While staying in a small hotel there, I was told one evening that I had a gentleman visitor! Who did I know in that isolated corner of Great Britain? And there in the reception, to my astonishment, stood Svein in his new Norwegian Army uniform. How good it was seeing again my old contact and being able to thank him in person for acting as postman for me. We shared our experiences. Svein's boat had run into a most violent gale and there had been some doubt as to whether any of them would ever see land again. But battered though their little boat had been by the stormy weather, after four days in heavy seas, they had finally succeeded in reaching Lerwick.

We'd reached March 1942 and John was home for the last time on embarkation leave. My period at Dumfries had not lasted long. The likelihood of John being posted overseas had been hanging over us like a menacing threat and Dumfries was too far for him to travel on his scant leaves. Our sixteen months of marriage had proved to be a nomad's life, spent constantly on the move living in trunks. I had become most attached to our two-seater Morris, our only 'permanent' home, and I had had to be content with only a small share in my husband whenever Army conditions permitted.

In Birmingham we had experienced heavy bombing. In addition to the explosive bombs we had faced the new danger of incendiary bombs. In large 'bundles' they came from above, then split up as they descended and settled on many civilian rooftops. It became no easy task to guard people's homes from being set on fire.

The war was not going at all well for England and with more and more men being transported overseas I realised that John's turn could not be far removed. I therefore made up my mind that I would have to make a life of my own for the duration.

It so happened that the legal Norwegian Government having set up their administration in London were seeking Norwegian/English speaking personnel and with my secretarial training I had no difficulty in securing a job with them.

One uplifting event, during that sombre period of the war, was the visit to our establishment of King Haakon. He had always been reputed to be a democratic Monarch, keen to mix with his people and interested in seeing them at work. So when the rumour began to circulate that on a certain day he would be shown round our section, we all lined up, rather nervously, in readiness to receive him. But we needn't have been for he was the most natural of monarchs not wishing his people to be standing on ceremony for him. He freely circulated amongst us and I can still see him clearly approaching me, this tall regal figure, and then proceeding to engage me in conversation.

Early in 1942 I had had to give up my job, at least temporarily, since I was expecting our first child. Thus circumstantially removed from my colleagues and having none of my own relations around me, my period 'in waiting' became a very lonely one. During the winter John had achieved only very short Army leaves, but in those brief spells had helped make our home, a small flat in Wimbledon, as comfortable as possible in preparation for the 'great event'.

Our last few days together had been heart breaking and the final wrench came when walking with John to the station seeing him off that cold March day in 1942. Only seven weeks remained of my pregnancy; I was filled with a fear of the unknown, made worse by the certain knowledge that my husband would not be at my bedside but would be thousands of miles away when the time came and there was no one to turn to. Our last farewell at the station filled me with a dreadful emptiness; it was as though we were being torn apart.

And yet, I reflected to comfort myself, the same must be happening to thousands of other young war-time brides and mothers-to-be.

By the summer of 1942 I had settled down to motherhood. After a long and painful labour lasting 36 hours our baby son had been born. I rather suspect my young and firm muscles had been responsible for the time it took to produce him. No such modern aid existed in those days as pre-natal physical and breathing exercises to help alleviate the pains and reduce labour. When nurse handed him to me, after the exhausting hours, he certainly bore marks of having been through a long and treacherous journey his face not only red but greatly swollen. I had no-one with whom to share the joy of creation and no one came to visit me during my stay in the nursing home. But a kind aged domestic help had prepared the flat for our home-coming and what a blessing she was.

My body soon recovered from the ordeal and my figure quickly returned to normal. My days were occupied fully with baby nursing, washing, pram-pushing and hours spent in queues for the ever smaller rations of food. Despite these physical activities my young baby did not compensate for my missing husband. With no one to talk to I experienced how lonely can be a young wife's life at home with only an infant for company and I missed the companionship of my old colleagues.

I was fortunate in finding a day-time nursery for very small children close at hand and so, after a time, in common with numerous young wartime mothers, I placed him in the nursery and returned to work for the Norwegian government. I did not know at that time that it was to last for three years.

Once more I was among my own nationals. John had been sent in a large convoy to the Far Eastern theatre of war from where he obtained no leave and did not return to me until well after the Japanese surrender.

Many familiar faces from home, men and women who were escaping, kept turning up in our administration and always we were hungry for news of our near ones. Well do I recall the day when the large notice was placed on the wall in our Department giving a list of Norwegian prisoners of war sent to camp in Germany and my horror at finding my own father's name amongst them. Closer details from

Forsvarsdepartementet, Ministry of Defence, revealed that they were former Army personnel who had been causing the occupying forces trouble. However, we took comfort in the fact that now they would come under the protection of the International Red Cross organisation. I was given Father's camp address and prisoner number and from then on was able to write and send him parcels, many of which, I later discovered, never reached him, I suspect confiscated by the prison warders. I often wondered how they were treating him and how he, now a man well into his fifties, would stand up to prison conditions, something I was not to know until the war was over.

John served in India, then moved on to the Burma border and became attached to the Chindits under General Wingate's command. Later, after Wingate's death, he was transferred to an Indian Division and fought the Japs through Burma under General Slim. In fact his Division was the first to enter Mandalay having captured it. Only after the war did I learn under what conditions of deprivation he had been fighting.

Three long years passed by, and in May 1945 a jubilant Britain was celebrating VE Day, I call to mind London people going wild with joy walking arm in arm the whole width of Piccadilly from Hyde Park to Piccadilly Circus singing the victory songs. Restaurants which, during the war years, had had so little to offer all of a sudden produced excellent food and wine - it was as though they had saved it all for this special day. Restaurants stayed open till the early hours and I too joined in the celebrations with my compatriots. For us it meant that Norway too was free.

The Norwegian Administration did not waste time in making preparation for their return home in order to re-establish the legal Government in Oslo. With John in Burma where fighting continued, the Japanese still holding most of their conquered territory, I grasped the opportunity of returning to Norway with the Administration and working for a period over there; to me that meant a chance of seeing again my parents and family. I knew that our little boy, just 3 years old, was safe in the nursery.

Thus, at the end of May, a mere three weeks after war in Europe had ended, I was making my voyage back home. No longer aboard a primitive fishing vessel, this time we travelled in style on the ex-luxury liner 'Andes'. This ship, converted during the war to a troop carrier and recently having returned to port, had been chartered by the Norwegian Authorities. King Haakon was to return somewhat later after adequate preparation had been made in Oslo for his reception. But the ship had on board the majority of the Norwegian Government, its staff and their dependants, as well as a large contingent of foreign correspondents.

This was to become a most memorable voyage. I had never understood why all wartime summers had been so fine, and this one was no exception. We cruised for four days at slow speed from Liverpool northwards, rounding the tip of Scotland south of the Orkneys, and then setting our course across the North Sea for the Norwegian coast. The sea throughout was like a millpond, each day the sun shone from a cloudless sky and at night the moon rose and threw reflections across the calm waters. It was impossible to sleep for our hearts were filled with both excitement and anxiety. After years of meagre English rations, on board we were treated to real food, properly prepared and cooked, and served to us at tables! During the day time the many artists amongst the exiles returning home provided us with entertainment.

We had spotted the coast and had commenced our slow sailing up the Oslo fjord, at first wide, then gradually narrowing until land was visible on both sides. Here, little rowing boats filled with people took to the water and with their flags and bunting hailed us in wild excitement. What a demonstration of joy and what a welcome home! Leaning over the ships railings as far as we dared we waved back enthusiastically. Hereafter the fjord widened out again, but from the ship's side we were able to admire Norway's unique scenery in the month of May shrouded in a film of the palest soft green. How good it was to see our homeland again.

We passed several islands, and there at the end of the fjord lay Oslo, the Capital. Slowly we docked near Akershus, the old fortress. Masses of people had turned up at the quay, and a band began to play Norway's National Anthem. The gangway was raised and the various Government Ministers and senior officials began walking ashore. Then in groups they were being driven away. Many of the passengers, I assumed mostly natives of Oslo, were being met by friends and relatives and from above I watched their joyous reunions, a scene I shall always remember. I remained on board until there were only a few of us left. No one knew I was coming; my people in Bergen were a day's journey away and time had been too short to notify anyone.

I had every reason to be grateful for inclusion in this first voyage back home. For me there had been many impediments prior to leaving London, not least the fact that I did not possess a passport. My old Norwegian one was no longer valid and by marrying an Englishman I had become a British subject. The ship was due to sail on May 27th and already the passenger list was being drawn up. Was I going to make it? It could only be achieved step by step.

Everyone came to my assistance. My boss in London was more than willing to produce a valid reason for transferring my work to Oslo in the transitional period. I can still see myself trailing round in those hot May days - I was determined to get on that ship. Armed with the Ministry letter I was kindly received at the Norwegian

Embassy. It is a question of contacts, I said to myself. Or are men too susceptible to young members of the opposite sex, I have often wondered since!

A few days later, in my handbag a freshly taken photo and the all-important Embassy letter of introduction, I arrived at the British Passport Office at Queen Anne's Gate to find an almost endless queue of people waiting, some all day long, for the names to be called; they were mostly refugees now wishing to return to their native lands. I had been advised to ignore any queue and make straight for a certain door! I knocked and was admitted.

Everything worked like a charm. Questions and formalities soon over, my new passport in hand, I dashed back to the Norwegian Authorities and within a few days I was off.

I had been allocated a room in a 'pensjon' or small private hotel which, only a few weeks earlier had been occupied by uniformed German females. Every street, every shop and every building bore evidence of years of occupation and deprivation; Oslo had become a most dilapidated city. The shops, although open, had virtually nothing to sell. Wandering aimlessly along the pavements were Russian soldiers, prisoners recently released and presumably captured by the Germans in their fight against Russia in the very North of Norway. Food was extremely hard to come by. In my pensjon I received breakfast consisting of tasteless dry bread (said to have been made with sawdust!) and black 'ersatz' coffee.

Quisling's puppet government had surrendered and were now in prison awaiting trial. The legal government were moving back in, gradually re-establishing their administration. It was almost a relief to be working inside those cool government buildings, out of the burning sun which shone each day relentlessly creating a sizzling temperature resembling that of a Mediterranean summer. But at lunchtime we had to get out for our main meal of the day. By now the Swedes had moved in. Large contingents of their Red Cross had set up open air soup kitchens at various points in the Capital. Here we queued each day to receive a very nourishing soup ladled out to us in primitive tins.

My first move, however, upon arriving in Oslo had been to get in touch with Bergen. Telephoning so soon after hostilities was complicated; many lines had been sabotaged previously and not yet repaired, and those in operation heavily overloaded.

From my lodgings in the evening I booked my call and several hours went by before I was being put through. "Mother, it's me, your daughter from England." At first silence, and then from the other end, she must have collected herself, followed a flood of questions. We were allotted only a few minutes. In that brief spell she told

me of Father's prison release. He was well, would soon be back in Oslo, and Mother and sister Grethe had applied for permit to travel across the mountains by train to meet him.

This was how, one day the following week, I was standing at Østbane-stasjonen platform eagerly awaiting the train that was to bring Mother and Grethe to Oslo. It pulled in at last, that heavy-engined steam train, puffing hard at having performed such a long and arduous journey, arduous because indeed it climbs from sea level to a height of 1000 metres, well over 3000 feet, before descending the more gradually-sloping valleys on the eastern side of the range. In pre-war times this had meant a 12-hour-long journey, but the train I was awaiting was late and must have taken very much longer.

The engine finally came to a standstill letting out its last puff; the carriage doors began to open and out poured a crowd so large that I wondered how the carriages had had the capacity to hold them all.

How to distinguish Mother and Grethe in that crowd? I think Mother saw me first for she came towards me. We hugged each other in silence and shed a few tears: it had been close on five years since that memorable farewell on the Bergen quay. Next I turned to Grethe, no longer a 12-year-old schoolgirl; before me stood an attractive-looking 17-year-old young woman. We seemed almost strangers at first. Taking a look at Mother, there was not much trace of the youthful person I had left behind. Her appearance bore signs of years of mental suffering; her light brown hair having turned grey, her face showed lines and her eyes having lost their young spark; to me she now seemed an ageing woman. But she had come through her ordeal with her spirit unbroken and that was something to be grateful for.

Our first meeting over, Mother and Grethe having been offered accommodation by an uncle in Oslo while awaiting Father's return, I resumed my daily work. I was looking forward to the family celebration that had been planned for the Return-of-Prisoner Day.

I had known, of course, ever since my escape, of Father's involvement in helping people get away. But what I was quite unaware of until the end of the war were his many other activities. I should have guessed that a man of his character and calibre and above all his background in education and career, provided an ideal leader of the Western Underground Movement. Sadly, he was killed in an accident in the early fifties and I never learned the details of his sabotage activities against the occupational forces. Under the cloak of doing construction work for the Germans - after all he was a respected civil engineer and his family had to live - he went about his other job of undermining and plotting against them with the knowledge thus possessed.

Some time, therefore, elapsed before he came under suspicion and the Gestapo began to trail him. When finally they considered they had sufficient evidence, he was arrested. It is not difficult to form an image of Mother's anguish the day they came for him and sent him off to the dreaded Gestapo Prison at Möllogt.19 in Oslo. Here he was being brought before senior Gestapo officers and faced one interrogation after another; they were wanting a confession from him; they had no clear evidence. It became a duel of wits: one careless utterance or even a facial expression might have been enough to betray and condemn him. He said that towards the end he could sense the rope tightening around him for one interrogator came very close to the actual fact, but sheer luck would have it that this very man was murdered, as were so many by loyal Norwegians, just before Father's final questioning began.

The Germans, however, did permit unconvicted prisoners to be visited by their nearest from time to time and Mother described her long journeys to Oslo bringing him food and items of comfort. They were heart-rending visits. It was during this period that my sister Grethe contracted polio, a disease not as widely known as today, which became an additional burden for Mother to carry alone. After isolation and clearance of infection, a two-year intensive therapy began. Fortunately for my sister, today only a tiny trace of its effect remains. But it was a most testing period for poor Mother; no wonder the war had left its marks upon her.

Father's rescue from the Gestapo came when, to save themselves constant policing of the trouble-making former Norwegian Army, the enemy decided to round up all officers and sent them off to Prison Camp in Germany. Father amongst them completed the remainder of the war in a Prisoner of War Camp on the German/Polish border.

The month was June and each day the sun emerged warming our hearts; it was as though a veil had been lifted after years of sorrow and distress. And one such roastingly hot day, having sought a brief release from work, I was standing in the crowd on the quay watching the slow-approaching ship bringing back home the ex-prisoners. Mother and Grethe had been granted prominent positions. I watched the officers in their no longer smart uniforms disembark one by one, and can recall shouting wildly to Father from where I was standing; people around me must have thought me crazy for of course he could neither hear nor see me, and the pushing and shoving crowd made it impossible for me to get any closer. I had to be content with just having had a sight of him.

During the day there had been an official march through the streets of Oslo by the released prisoners. At my Uncle's home that very evening, in the presence of most of our Oslo relatives, we were reunited. This was indeed a family celebration long to be remembered when each of us recounted our wartime experiences; there was so much to tell and so much to catch up upon. My parents' suffering, some of which



was described earlier, was being revealed to me for the first time at this dinner party. It seemed as though we could go on talking forever. Ultimately Father related how the Russians after Armistice had entered their Camp and how the International Red Cross had obtained their final release. We all rejoiced in his homecoming and the happy outcome which might so easily have been a sombre one.

In Norway every decade in a person's life from the age of fifty onwards is a cause for exceptional celebrating; and from the age of seventy it becomes a five-yearly event! My parents had returned to Bergen, but before parting, I had promised I would try taking a fortnight's summer leave in order to attend old Granny's 85<sup>th</sup> Birthday.

Meanwhile, back in my Oslo lodgings one evening after work later that same month Mother called me from Bergen. There had been a telegram for me from abroad. I asked her to open it and read it over the telephone. After the recent rejoicing this did indeed come as a real shock. The telegram was from the War Office informing me that John had been seriously wounded in Burma. Further news was to follow. How bad were his injuries, I kept asking myself? I felt so utterly helpless and yet it seemed there was nothing I could do from this remote corner of Northern Europe but await the next bulletin.

The uncertainty of John's condition was making me restless. I had had no further news and Granny's birthday was approaching rapidly. Having been granted leave I was about to book my rail ticket when colleagues warned me of the long delays. "But why not try the Norwegian Air Force?" said one of them, "I know they fly to Bergen every day." I was not very hopeful but nonetheless would have a go. Once more, luck was on my side for on entering the Air Force Office I was met by a young man - how smart he looked in his grey/blue uniform - who recognised me at once. He was an old Bergen pal. "Of course", he said, "no difficulty in reserving a seat for you on our aircraft to Bergen via Stavanger."

Delighted, I contacted Mother telling her I would be splashing down upon Bergen water, not far from where I had set off on my escape. Bergen in those days had no aerodrome; only by seaplanes could the town be reached.

Thus, a few days later, in dazzling sunshine, I was to see dear old Bergen again unfolding itself in its exceptional scenic beauty; and there on the little jetty in the harbour stood Mother and her closest friend, my God-mother, to welcome me home as the launch sped across the water from where the Sunderland had touched down.

Oslo had been Father's homecoming; Bergen was mine. When I met Granny again she had tears in her eyes. How small she had become, but despite her 85 years, amazingly she had survived the occupation.

Her day became a real feast when all the family on Mother's side were assembled, in Oslo they had been Father's relations.

My stay in Bergen provided me with the opportunity for meeting again old friends and exchanging news, and it was wonderful seeing so many familiar faces once more.

But one day a re-addressed letter from Burma arrived. This was from the Army Padre describing how many had been killed and many wounded, the night the Japanese shell burst above their heads sending hundreds of pieces of broken metal through the air. John had been hit in three places, two in his leg, but the most serious one had penetrated to his lung and had caused him to collapse. By air ambulance he had been flown back to India where he was now in hospital. The letter ended with prayers for his recovery.

Inside me there was now this urge to return, the feeling that perhaps John was worse and would be sent back to England. How dreadful if that were to happen and I would not be there to meet him. What pressure could I bear upon the Authorities to secure a passage quickly back to England?

A few days later I was in a military plane sitting opposite General Thorne, the then British Commander in Chief, travelling with his staff from Trondheim via Bergen to Oslo. I had achieved what I had set out to do. The War Office telegram had done the trick although generally it was unacceptable for civilians to travel with the High Command. Already Oslo was in sight and shortly we were to land.

My next and final flight back to England was in a Dakota, former troop-carrying aircraft. No luxury here, just an empty shell with metal benches along each side and passengers facing each other. I was acting as courier having spent a few days in Oslo collecting material from my Ministry for the still remaining, but much reduced, Administration in London.

The four-hour flight was rough and it was with great relief to all when Croydon Aerodrome was sighted. With all my belongings, and there were many this time, I managed to persuade a taxi-man to take me the long drive to my Wimbledon home.

Back home life was rather an anti-climax. John was not to be returned to England as I had thought, perhaps naively. Several letters from him in hospital in India awaited me upon arrival. He was recovering slowly and was hoping to return to his Regiment in Burma in due course.

Already it was August and although peace in Europe had been achieved, fighting continued out East. Despite considerable military progress in Burma, with the

Japanese still in occupation of most of the Far East, everyone feared a prolonged war in that theatre.

But who would have thought in those early August days that scientific technology in the form of the Atom Bomb could terminate a war almost by a single stroke? With the Japanese surrender by the middle of August, victory in the East had also been achieved.

For years England and America had been pouring out troops to the Far East. It was no wonder, therefore, that the repatriation of this enormous force became a mammoth undertaking. It was only natural that I should think that John, so recently seriously wounded, would be amongst the first to be allocated space. But I had overlooked our prisoners of war, so abominably and atrociously treated by the Japs. These men, still suffering gravely, had to be granted first priority. It took time to divert the many ships needed for the return of our soldiers and I fully realised that patience was required.

Our little boy was still in his day-nursery and I had returned to my former place of work, but life in the now skeleton administration was never the same. I had been told it was soon to be wound up and the remainder transferred to our Embassy. I had been offered a job there but was hoping desperately that John would be back in England before the move.

The months dragged by. It was not unlike being pregnant again in that I knew something was going to happen quite soon but no one could tell for certain the exact date or time. A letter had come from John to say he would be sailing from Rangoon in a Dutch vessel named 'Jan de Witt'.

At home, day after day, the radio kept announcing the names of newly-arrived troop ships and finally one day, needless to say, I jumped with joy at hearing that 'Jan de Witt' was in Southampton harbour. Surely now it could be only a matter of hours before John would telephone. I waited and waited; one and a half days passed before the phone call came and John was at the other end at last, not from Southampton, but from a small place up north somewhere, called Whittington.

With the Southampton dockers on strike, before his troops could be dispersed, all necessary formalities had to be sorted out from a central camp, hence the journey up north. John, by now a Lt. Colonel and the Regiment's Commander, was the last person to grant himself leave.

Looking back, the war stands before me as a period of endless departures and arrivals, some happy, others sad; some exciting, others agonising.

This was yet such an occasion and hopefully the last one. Little Lawrence and I were standing at the barrier in Paddington Station. We had come up from Wimbledon by car. With petrol once more available, our Morris had come out of cold storage.

We were watching the men in khaki alighting from the train, and there at last was John, tall and tanned wearing a wide jungle hat, mosquito net resting on its brim. It was as though he had stepped right out of the jungle! He came towards me, and finally we embraced. It had been three and a half long years of separation! Little Lawrence remained silent by my side, probably stunned by the sight, though I had done my best to prepare him for a father he had never seen. But nothing seemed to impress him for as soon as we had loaded up and I started to drive home, he proceeded to fall fast asleep on his father's lap!

The relationship between father and son remained uneasy; somebody foreign, somebody new had come to intrude upon our home. It was not until later, after we had moved to a new home, that Lawrence came to properly recognise John as his father.

All fighting had ceased, but daily life was still very much as it had been in war-time Britain as far as our comforts were concerned. We had little fuel, food was still scarce and clothing strictly rationed. Granted, black-outs and wartime sirens were now of the past, but Britain still bore the scars of the not too recent enemy bombings. Large craters remained where houses had once stood and windows blown in were still boarded up. It was a depressing period, but John and I were among the lucky ones for we had each other, whilst many we remembered were dead, never to return.

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Not everybody gets a chance of a second honeymoon; we did; we felt we deserved one. This was to be spent in Cornwall where in early November the climate was still mild. We had arranged for Lawrence to be looked after in our absence. Already we had been married five years. I recall our being met at the station by the hotel's chauffeur-driven car and being shown into a large, comfortable room. The hotel was most charming, set in beautiful grounds leading down to the Helford River. What a peaceful and heavenly week. We felt deeply happy at being together again and by ourselves once more, no longer any war looming over us. We must have imparted our feelings to the other residents; they soon began nodding and talking, throwing glances in our direction, until in the end one of them plucked up courage and approaching our table said, "Excuse me, but are you two by any chance a honeymoon couple?" "Sort of", was my reply, but added, "We have been married five years

already and have a 3-year-old son”, upon which I distinctly felt that my remark had instantly shattered their romantic image of us!

For his 6½ years’ war service and long period overseas John was granted an extensive demobilisation leave which was to last until March 1946. Generally such leaves were intended for service men to re-adapt themselves to civilian life, but already he had been in touch with his former company. Resuming work would mean a move from our war-time home in Wimbledon, north to Northamptonshire.

But first I was to fulfil a promise to my parents: to bring John and Lawrence to Norway as soon as could be arranged and we set off for Bergen early in the new year.

If the previous summer had been excessively hot, the winter was proving to be extremely cold. But although the temperature outside was frosty, no welcome could have been warmer. Relatives and friends rallied round us to make the acquaintance of my newly complete family. During this stay, by pure chance, John too was to get his opportunity of meeting Norwegian Royalty. He was invited to accompany Father to the local Army Association’s great annual event where Crown Prince Olav was to be their guest of honour. And that night, when introduced, the Crown Prince showed an intense interest in John’s recent experiences in the Far East.

It was with interest that I noted what eight months of regained independence had done to the morale and mentality of the Norwegians. It manifested itself in a new spirit of unity; their suffering had somehow given them a fresh self-confidence; they stood poised together to build a new future for themselves.

Amongst my own, I recognised in Mother a remarkable recovery, and I do not think I ever saw my parents more content than at that particular time in life.

Life today is much changed. Ours has brought success and also a certain amount of sadness, but nothing will ever rob us of the common memories we still hold sacred.