

A Letter From J. W. Emmerson Overseas with the RCAF

April 3rd, 1945

Dear Editor:
Having read somewhere recently, that an editor is a person who works day and night sorting the "wheat from the chaff"—then sees to it that the chaff gets printed, I decided to send along my contribution of "chaff".

Three years have passed since I promised some of my friends in town that if ever I were removed far enough from the scene of my crime, I would dash off a little note to your paper and confess to being the person responsible for those "anonymous" articles which plagued the good citizens of Georgetown for several weeks. I believe my good friend W. S. Harker (W. for Bill, S for "Curly") despatched a letter by "pigeon post" some time ago exposing me. Whether the pigeon is still walking or that air mail went by slow boat I don't know but at any rate at long last I confess.

I hope no one was offended by my articles. I'm sure no offense was intended although it may have looked otherwise in my references to Georgetown High School. I assure you however that I have only the fondest memories of my all too brief stay at Georgetown High. I wonder how many times former students and teachers alike wherever they may be today have remembered the times spent there and seen in their mind's eye a vision of the old school standing alone and deserted by the roadside in mid-summer. I wonder if Lieut. Lambert would associate any memories with the verse of John Greenleaf Whittier's "Within the master's desk is seen
Deep-scarred by raps official;
The warping floor, the battered seats
The jack-knife's carved initial."

However, to get back to my good friend "Bill" Harker, who is more or less responsible for this long delayed chapter. A year has passed since I first met Bill at an Airforce embarkation centre. He was a pleasant sort of chap with a cheerful smile and a pleasing personality and inasmuch as we both spoke English we struck up a conversation.

"By the way, what part of the country are you from?" asked Bill.
"Why, I'm from Ontario," I replied.
"Oh," said Bill, a look of sympathy coming over his face, "That's too bad. However, don't worry about it too much old man. I guess we all can't be fortunate enough to come from Alberta."

"Al-what-a?" I asked, raising an incredulous eyebrow. "Where is this place Alberta? What town is it near?"
"Why it's out west of course brother, out west!" replied Bill, beaming with pride. "Why I could tell you stories—"
"Wait a minute now, Curly, I interrupted: "Do you mean to tell me that there is more of Canada past Fort William?"

"I do!" he replied emphatically, "and further more we are quite modern out West in Alberta."
"Hm," I countered. "Modern eh? Well that may be true, but any province that has 'She'll Be Comin' Round the Mountain' for their national anthem—well! now take Ontario for instance. Why we have trains down there that run through every city, town, village and hamlet—even Georgetown. Of course the train through our town doesn't actually stop there—It just slows down and the nimble passengers jump off. The less agile like myself have to stay on to Acton and walk back. Or take our Toronto street cars for instance—now you'll have to admit that they are very good."

"Yes," agreed Bill, "I'll grant you that your Toronto street-cars are good all right but then they should be for the horses that pull them come from the west. But enough of this useless banter. Tell me—how did a person with your low grade intelligence get in the Airforce in the first place?"

"Well Curly my boy, that's a long story," I replied, "but since you've asked me I'll tell you the story."
"In the year of 1940 I left the University of Toronto to seek my fortune in the world. I had been well liked by professors and students alike while there and all were sorry to see me leave. They said it would be hard to find another janitor quite like me. For a few months I went into temporary retirement. That is I retired until the next job came along. While waiting I returned to my home-town Georgetown and accepted a position mowing lawns in the residential section. I always wore my Sunday suit to work so passers-by would think I lived there."

At length I found employment in a local paper mill. After examining my credentials the heads of the firm decided that inasmuch as I was a little weak in Latin they would give me a start shovelling coal—with the provision that in due time I could work my way up to a white-collar job—shovelling clay. We were happy at our work and each morning found us racing to work—to see who would get the smallest shovel. My career was short-lived however for one day the superintendent sent word that my services were no longer required since he had found a trained ass who would do the work much cheaper. I heard later that the ass finally gave himself up to the slaughter, but I don't know whether it was only a rumour.

where my fortunes fared somewhat better and I was welcomed into the fold along with such "Gentlemen of the Press" as Gord Spence, Ed King Ray Harley, Bern Armstrong, Era Simpson, Chubby Stapleton and many others. After working here for eighteen months I decided to buy myself a pair of shoes and go down to the big city one week-end.

The following Saturday afternoon I went down to Toronto to see "Mrs. Miniver." (Mr. Miniver was on day shift that week.) In order to avoid any delay at the box office I had come early to avoid the rush. However there was still quite a crowd in line and while standing there I felt one of my garters give way. Modestly I retired in search of a place to readjust myself. Down the street I saw quite a number of young fellows entering a large building so I taking it to be the YMCA, I stepped inside. As I straightened up from signing the "visitors' book" a voice said "O.K. chum, you're in the Airforce now. Just step through that door for your eye test."

"But wait my friend," I said hastily, "there's been a mistake."
"Yes," he said, looking at more closely, "I can see that now but we're taking what we can get these days. Get moving!"
Having arrived in the eye-testing department, I was greeted by a friendly medical officer.
"Very well my man," he said, "if you will just read those letters up there from left to right."
"Hm," I muttered looking more closely in the indicated direction. "If I were a wee shade closer, Doc, I could see them."
"Well this really shouldn't be done," he replied, "but I'll let you move a little closer."
Again I peered at the letters—again I moved forward until finally was only five feet from the chart.
The doctor who had restrained himself magnificently all the while finally gasped in desperation, "Brother, if you can't read that now then you need an education—not glasses! However we can let you through as a pilot."

And so several days later, having deposited my hair in the "check-room" I settled down to life as a new recruit. Time passed and soon our training began. Each morning we were awakened by the sweet lilting tones of the orderly sergeant's voice as he tip-toed softly down the aisle whispering—
"Awake, awake—
Night's candles are burnt out and
Jocund day
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain
tops
The morn in russet mantle clad,
Walks o'er the dew of yon high
eastward hill."

And so our day began. All day long we were exposed to great quantities of Airforce lore. The instructors were always helpful. After explaining each difficult theory they asked hopefully, "Any questions?" Each evening found me trying to learn enough about the subjects to ask a sensible question. At eleven P. M. the lights were put out and after that our time was our own. And so it went on.

At last I finished my first flying course and said:
"Emmerson, do you like flying?"
"Oh yes sir!" I exclaimed, "I've always wanted to fly in the worst way."
"So you want to fly in the worst way do you?" he continued, "Very well then you can go on Ansons."

How well I recall my first cross-country trip in an Anson with one of my chums, Ron Hall. Maps in hand and parachute harnesses on we strode out to our aircraft trying to appear as though we were calm and confident in our task. At our approach the mechanics hastily shovelled some parts back into the engine, hammered on the cover and stood aside with a look of fondest hope in their eyes. Ron and I climbed on board, started up and with never a backward glance trundled off. With both motors going at once we roared into the air and set course. Our journey continued quite favourably for some time until the fair face of Ontario below grew decidedly unfamiliar. Of course we were not lost I hasten to add—just temporarily misplaced. Around and around we flew in ever increasing circles of uncertainty trying to convince ourselves that Wingham was Clinton. Finally by guess and by Divine Guidance we arrived back at base and landed on third bounce.

Well to make a long story short we eventually graduated and decided to accept the firm's offer of a European "tour" with all expenses paid. And that my dear Bill is how I happen to be here to-day.

Bill and I shared the same compartment on the boat—along with sixty-five other fellows. It was about eight A. M. when we finally moved away from the wharf. Many of us had gathered at the stern of the ship and as we slid out of the harbour and gathered speed the sea in our wake was churned into a green zig-zag path topped with foam. Gradually definite objects on land blended into the haze of the shoreline. The sea gulls one by one gave up the chase and wheeling and crying dropped behind. By the shore of Canada were but a thin outline on the horizon and as we watched they gradually faded—faded—

and were gone.
Our ship was a hardy craft indeed. About the second day out a slight breeze sprang up and we were able to stop rowing and hoist the sails. After babbling about on the blue for several days we at last reached our destination. Most of us were glad to set foot on terra firma again and as far as I was concerned the "firma" the "terra" the "bera".

A year has passed since then, leaving memories of tiny trains—rolling green fields—London sirens—fields of poppies—silvery formations of aircraft high in the sky—stone fences vapour trails left by aircraft too high to be seen—and many other sights too numerous to mention.

Summer passed and fall with its cool misty mornings was upon us. At the time we were stationed only a few miles from Stratford-on-Avon and on several occasions we went "boating on the Avon." Perhaps I should pause here to tell the unhappy tale of how one of our friends became known by men as "Vachon of the Avon." One afternoon, we climbed on board our craft and set forth on the stream despite the disadful looks from swans gliding by who seemed to resent our invasion. We were heartily poling our way upstream in this barge-like imitation of a boat which seemed to travel sideways easier than in the customary manner, when we saw a motor launch having passed, our hero "Happy" one side we saw the hero of our little drama, one "Happy Harry Vachon" draw into the shore in his little canoe in order to avoid the wash. The launch having passed, our hero "Happy Harry" once more set forth from the shore. With firm bold strokes he made his way to midstream. I watched in admiration and wondered on what wild Canadian rivers he had learned to handle a canoe so skillfully when suddenly to the amazement of all concerned (including Vachon) the canoe slowly rolled over and Vachon slid beneath the waves. What a calamity! "Vachon in the Avon." As I watched it reminded me of "Horatius at the Bridge."

"No sound of joy or sorrow was heard from either bank."
"But friend and for in dumb surprise stood gazing where the sank."
It was also about this time of the year that I was out—flying with the boys one night over the Irish Sea. It was a clear night with the moon and

stars shining brightly. Far below the odd solitary cloud like a dim gray ghost in the moonlight drifted slowly across the glimmering sea. It was then I saw them shining out of the darkness ahead—the lights of the city of Dublin the first lights I had seen in all darkened Europe. I thought perhaps my navigator and wireless operator working in the confines of the interior would like to see them too—so trying out my best Irish accent for the occasion I called to them and said, "Shure'n be Japers' m'lads and it's just off the coast of Ireland we are! Would you be carin' to come out and see the lights o'Dublin?"

Both members in question, however, refused to come out as they were too busy at the time—probably crossing a moon spot with a radio bearing to get a fourth class fix—so the rest of us had to sit and watch the lights fade from view by ourselves.

Several weeks later while on leave I had the good fortune to mot my two brothers Bob and Wheldon (better known as Steamboat). Naturally we had quite a chat, exchanging experiences and recalling incidents at home. As we talked Steamboat and I recalled the "Saga of the Blue Goose". For the benefit of those present Steamboat and I wove fact and fancy together to tell the story. As you probably recall, the "Blue Goose" was a bus pressed into service as a war time emergency to transport local citizens to and from Malton. Whether the "Goose" had been made on purpose or not is still a matter for argument. Her body, a large blue box like affair was perched precariously on her tired old chassis which seemed to sag under the weight. "Ah! Who can forget the day of the "Goose's maiden voyage! 'Twas a bright and shining morn and the "Blue Goose" sat contentedly at the top of Guelph St. hill in order to take advantage of gravity in its initial speed-off. A goodly crowd had gathered which included several passing cyclists who had mistaken the Blue Goose for a "mobile" hot dog stand. The scene was set; the workers climbed on board; the driver turned the crank and the motor coughed into life. The Blue Goose was under way! A cheer started up from the onlookers and handkerchiefs were raised to wave farewell—but wait! The cheers have died in their throats and upraised arms are halted in their tribute. The "Goose" having coughed and shudder-

ed forward several feet now stood silent and still. Again the motor barked into life—again a cheer arose—again handkerchiefs were raised to wave. Goose shuddered to a stop with ominous groans and clankings from its innermost regions. After several false starts the Blue Goose at length got under way. The bystanders, now hoarse from so many fruitless cheers, stood silently with handkerchiefs in hand, somewhat frayed from flapping in frustration and watched the Goose gather speed, lurch down the highway and disappear in a cloud of blue smoke and fumes over the hill.

As the Goose bounced along factory bound, all four cylinders clanking away merrily, the occupants clutched their seats and lunch-pails in desperation. One of the boys kept urging the driver to greater speed by calling "Can you go any faster driver? Can you go any faster?"

"Oh yes, I can go faster all right!" came the reply as the driver hunched over the wheel and manoeuvred the Goose along at the breath-taking pace of twenty miles per hour. "Oh yes, I can go faster alright, but I've got to stay with my bus!" And thus did the Blue Goose, Queen of the highway, a veritable gem of mechanical precision, sally forth each day.

What the eventual fate of the Blue Goose was I don't know. The last time I saw her she was standing by an old deserted service station apparently abandoned by mankind and left to rust away in the wind and rain. Goose had helped to build, and as I sped down the runway and roared into the air to me at least it almost seemed as though the lowly "Blue Goose" which had served so faithfully in helping to make this flight possible, had by some magic transformation sprouted wings and sailed majestically aloft.

THE CANADIAN WAY OF LIFE . . .



Roast Beef on Sundays . . .

THE SUNDAY ROAST—week-ends in the country—the old family jalyop—these things mean a pleasant way of life. These are some of the things every man overseas has been fighting for. They won't be his, unless all of us make sure, when our fighting man comes back, his dollar will be worth a dollar.

To protect his dollar, we must realize NOW the dangers of careless, unnecessary buying. We must buy *only* what we need—*never* buy two where one will do! We must not evade rationing or price control, or deal in black markets. If we break the rules, our country—the country he fought for—will start on that uncontrollable

rocketing of prices known as inflation!

Prices will rise. As prices go up, wages try to tag along... and never quite catch up. The value of money goes down. Soon your dollar will buy—perhaps only 30c worth of goods! And there is no limit to its drop—look at Greece today! The nation is plunged in poverty and depression.

So let's all make sure our soldier's dollar—when he gets back—will buy a dollar's worth of goods. We can't give back to him his lost years or his lost youth. But, if we keep up the fight against inflation, he can look forward to pleasant, satisfying living... the Canadian way of life.

Published by THE BREWING INDUSTRY (ONTARIO) to reveal the dangers of inflation.

Make this Pledge Today!

I pledge myself to do my part in fighting inflation:

By observing rationing and avoiding black markets in any shape or form.

By respecting price controls and other anti-inflation measures, and refraining from careless and unnecessary buying. I will not buy two where one will do, nor will I buy a "new" where an "old" will do.

By buying Victory Bonds and War Savings Stamps, supporting taxation, and abiding by all such measures which will lower the cost of living and help keep prices at a normal level.



before had been the scene of such bitter fighting. The sky was clear but for a few scattered clouds which resembled gigantic balls of cotton in the sunlight. We were too high to observe any activity below and all seemed so calm and serene—the peaceful farms and tiny villages—the silvery rivers and scattered towns. As we drifted along high over France, I thought of the boys who had fought there and made it possible for us to be flying here in comparative safety. It was then I remembered the words Bill had told me so long ago: "If I could once on free soil stand, and all the world free—then to that moment I might say: 'Linger awhile so fair thou art.'"
P.O. J. W. Emmerson,
CA Overseas.

Active Service Notes

WREN Ethel Kemshead has been transferred from "Cornwallis" to Halifax, N.S.

AW2 Jean Mackenzie has been transferred from St. Thomas to Trenton.

Another Georgetown boy has joined the ranks of RCAF personnel serving in India, in the person of LAC John Hunter, who has been in the far East for the past three months. John is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Ken Hunter, Main Street North.

Sympathy is extended to Fr. V. J. Morgan, pastor of Holy Cross Church whose nephew, Sgt. Patrick B. Morgan 24, was killed in Germany on April 14th. Sgt. Morgan was one of five brothers serving in the armed forces, and was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Morgan of Hamilton. Four brothers carry on the fine record of this family: L/Sgt. Kevin, R. N.; Sgts. Michael, RONVR; Joseph B., Merchant Marine; O/S Thomas G., RONVR. A brother-in-law O/S John Denny also serves in the RONVR.

Prior to enlisting, Sgt. Morgan was employed at Ontario Forgings, Hamilton. He had been overseas about ten months.

We were sorry to hear that M/Sgt. Major John Alexander was injured in a motorcycle accident in Germany on May 26. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. John Alexander received the news Thursday that he had broken his right leg in two places, and is convalescing in No. 10 General Hospital at England.