

Chapter 29

Home - September 1943

I arrived at Chatham Station in the dark with no idea of where the bungalow was. Luckily, a taxi appeared and I got home at last. The first surprise was to find out that my son John had, a few months before, been seriously ill with pneumonia. It was so serious in fact that, at one point, it had been touch and go. Fortunately he recovered but Betty must have had a terrible time nursing him. No mention of this was made in any of the letters to me, which was another example of Betty's inner strength. There was a further surprise, the Morris 12, which I had last seen, broken down, at Fairwood Common, was in the "Corona" garage propped up on blocks. Betty had apparently got hold of Bert Parrish who had a temporary repair carried out, got it to Chatham and put it on blocks. I had long given it up as lost, as so many cars were, due to the constant movement of personnel. I had the engine completely overhauled in Chatham. The third surprise was a personal one. When Betty heard that I had reached Morecambe, she went out and bought some birth control tablets. Today this wouldn't surprise anyone but it must have taken some courage in those days, and, bearing her religious background, was worthy of admiration. Thus, my homecoming and reunion were happy times.

"Corona" was a nice bungalow opposite the Shorts factory which was making Stirling bombers. A few days later I heard that my new posting was SM7 at Air Ministry. This dealt with the training of people in squadrons taking over new aircraft types. It also guided squadron personnel involved in procedures and organisation. I reported directly to a Squadron Leader whose first words to me were "Who is this fellow Jarboe who has been telephoning us to find out where you are?". Apparently Jarboe had been posted back to the USAF and was asking for me. The Squadron Leader knew that I was nominated for a commission, so I told him that was the first priority. I spent about two months at SM7, mostly dealing with Spitfires at Tangmere where I managed to find a furnished house to rent. Thus, I was able to live out with Betty and John. I also spent a couple of weeks instructing at another Station (I've forgotten where). Really I was just filling in

time.

Just before Christmas, I was sent to Cosford to take a two to three week Commissioning course. All badges of rank were removed and we wore white hat bands. None of this was difficult for me and I duly passed out, more than a year overdue. Whilst at Cosford, I palled up with an ex Instrument Maker who was in fact, a bank clerk. He did very well as he was on full pay from the bank. He was commissioned in the Administration Branch. Time to be measured up for my new uniform and home once more on holiday, dressed as an AC2, no white hat band and with an Identity Card which said that I was a Flight Sergeant; talk about Fred Karno!



***A rare photo in
Officer's Uniform***

Whilst at Cosford, I was telephoned by Jarboe. I was not clear what he was offering other than a transfer to the USAF, but I turned it down. Life, I guessed would be a drinking spree. Perhaps I was wrong but I shall never know. Jarboe was something of a loose cannon but interesting and, in many ways, a decent enough chap, however I felt that I would be better off as my own man. During the holiday my new uniform arrived after a fitting and also my posting to Upper Heyford. This was a disappointment as I had hoped for somewhere in Fighter Command.