

ROYAL NAVAL COLLEGE, GREENWICH

For openers, I believe I can unequivocally make the claim that, for all of us who were fortunate enough to be sent there, the nine months spent at Greenwich remain in our memories as the most uniquely unrivalled experience of our naval career.

For me personally, it was akin to returning to a well known home since I had spent 2 years in London, from 1946 to 1948 after escaping from Communist occupied Poland, and was now reunited with my father who had spent the war years in England in the Free Polish Navy in exile, and was at that time its Chief of Staff.

My education commenced in a Catholic school, the ascetically austere Salesian College in Battersea, where I was immersed in a bewilderingly alien ambiance characterised by a disciplinarian culture sternly administered by the Fathers in a language I could not understand.

I soon became very familiar with the city due to my father's eagerness to fund my passion for discovery which consisted of spending my weekends traipsing around on buses.

For my father, my eccentric yet highly motivated curiosity proved particularly convenient as this afforded him a welcome respite from parenting duties as my mother was still stuck in Poland and would not enact her remarkable escape till the summer of '47, and father was at that time intensely occupied with the task of directing the progressive disbandment of the now superfluous military personnel.

Our appetite for Greenwich was richly stoked well before our arrival. As Midshipmen, we were frequently regaled by our predecessors with tales of ingenious mischief and undetected crimes committed in an atmosphere of elegant permissiveness. Like a banquet which follows a wedding, we accepted its prospect as a natural corollary to our recent promotion to Sub Lieutenant.

How indelibly ingrained is that moment for all of us when, following epochs of servile drudgery as cadets and midshipmen, we were finally elevated to that seemingly unattainable rank. Only the pinning on of wings rivals the excitement of the moment when we first paraded those coveted gold rings on our sleeves.

Prior to boarding the ship for England, however, we were accorded leave; surely a deliberately staged interlude by our wise superiors to permit us to bask in that self congratulatory phase, which they knew from experience to be so transitory, in order that we could brandish our freshly acquired symbol of achievement for the adulation of families and friends.

For Larry Washbrook and me, that meant a trip to Vancouver. To accomplish this, we engaged the services of the Air Movements Unit, incontestably the most useful component of the RCAF, which transported us to Trenton in a DC3. It was there in the billiard room that Larry's newly sewn on stripes began to show signs of insubordination.

The sad fact emerged that, whatever her other talents may have been, Larry's girl friend was not a gifted seamstress. She had managed to attach the bottom part of the stripes with some success, but the top part with the tricky executive curls was clearly beyond her, which now detached and flapped forlornly like drying butterflies' wings.

Strange looks from the crabfats convinced Larry that something should be done, so he continued the game in his greatcoat. [Crabfats is a derogatory term for Air Force personnel]

We were fortunate to find seats to Edmonton the following day, with an overnight connection to Vancouver. Standby travel with the RCAF, however, was always uncertain, so for the return journey we invested in a back up ticket with TCA. There were no seats available with Transport Command during the last week of leave, and we became increasingly resigned to having to cough up the money when we got word that there may be space on a C119 Box Car scheduled to leave for Trenton the same day. Accordingly, our parents first drove us to the AMU at Sea Island. Luck was a lady that night, as just before having to drive across to the TCA terminal our names were called, and with colossal relief we strapped into the webbed parachute seating along the sides of the cavernous fuselage.

Just how lucky we were would not become apparent till the following day.

We huddled bravely in the unheated barn like space which acted like an echo chamber in magnifying the startlingly unnerving concussions which were produced, we were told, by chunks of ice being flung off the props against the fuselage. Though frozen and deaf, we disembarked happy to have saved the air fare.

We heard the news the next morning. TCA flight 810, the North Star on which we held reservations the previous day, took off behind us and crashed on Mount Slesse in the Cascade Range killing all 62 on board. [December 9th, 1956]

After an adventurous crossing of the Atlantic as first class guests of Cunard's Empress of Britain, followed by Xmas in Belfast which you will all remember from my 2007 letter, we reported to Greenwich on the 6th of January, 1957.

The impressive domed and colonnaded buildings designed by Christopher Wren as a naval hospital and re designated as a naval college in 1873 would be our home for the next nine months.

The Hall Porter greeted us in the skilfully rehearsed manner appropriate to a bemused but respectful butler. We returned the gesture fumbling for some credible facsimile of a rendition of the yet untested role of Officers and Gentlemen. We were joined, we discovered, by a medley of Subbies from most of the Commonwealth countries, balanced at the Neanderthal end by a contingent of Royal Marines freshly released from action in the Suez.

Greenwich was a meticulously crafted finishing school which served as a prelude to the technical Sub Lieutenants' courses to follow.

The mission assigned to the RN College was primarily to impart a civilising veneer absent from the training received by the RN and some of the other navies, whose mode of entry did not resemble our Military Colleges or University ROTP.

The next morning we mustered in the auditorium for the welcoming address. The CO, Captain Roper, exuded the air of a typical RN hankie in the sleeve and poker up the butt stuffed shirt, but the rest of the staff, both Navy and civilian, appeared entirely approachable.

Our routine consisted of mornings being assigned to the academic portion of the curriculum, and afternoons to elective subjects.

The former included lectures on naval history, physics, maths, English composition, etc. while the electives available to us had no limits. We were encouraged to choose any subject we wished, and if this meant engaging Bertrand Russell to teach symbolic logic or commissioning George Balanchine for a course in classical ballet, so be it. We were all assigned personal tutors, and just to illustrate the calibre of resident instructors, mine happened to be Professor Alan

Bullock, the scholar of German history and already the acclaimed author of “Hitler, a Study in Tyranny”.

There were no watches to stand, no curfew to abide by, no duties to perform; our linen was laundered, uniforms pressed and shoes shined by our own batman who awakened us each morning with a cup of brew, and we banqueted daily in one of the finest dining galleries in the Western World, the James Thornhill decorated Painted Hall.

We could take swimming lessons, tennis instruction, or play golf at premier courses for ridiculously low rates. Our pay was supplemented by foreign allowance, further augmented by generous per diem during the college’s periodic holiday closures.

We received 8 forty ouncers of our choice duty free per month, and The Yacht, a renowned ancient pub, obliged just outside the gate.

Moreover, it was not necessary to pass the exams. This inspired the Royal Marines to apply a unique solution to a physics test; stumped by the lack of questions relating to carnage and demolition, they submitted an essay describing the tactics to be employed when besieging the defences of a small town.

This assignment somehow caught fire on the bewildered and now considerably alarmed instructor’s desk.

The Marines proved equal to the challenge; a fire brigade was organised with exemplary efficiency; two squads brandishing fire hoses doubled in step into the classroom and on the order: FIRE! - engaged their objective in a saturating cross stream.

Their zeal cleared the occupants of the classroom, removed the chandelier and scattered the burning papers all over the room requiring them to be disposed of out of the window, their smoking descent strafed by the twin hoses all the way down to the sidewalk resulting in the accidental soaking of two startled passersby subsequently identified as the Admiral President of the College accompanied by the Minister of Public Works.

[If you Doubting Thomases disbelieve any of this, it comes from an unimpeachable eye witness in the person of classmate Hugh MacNeil. So there!]

I lied.

There was in fact one exam we were expected to pass, on the subject of Naval History, which was deemed as the minimum requirement for justifying the nine month stay.

We were also encouraged to contribute an essay on the topic of our choosing. For his offering, Larry volunteered a surprising choice by submitting a treatise on the History of American Theatre. Apart from attending a performance of “The Pajama Game” at the Coliseum, his passion for this subject had heretofore remained unrevealed. Imagine our surprise when his tutor not only rewarded his perceptive penetration of this topic with a solid “A”, but proudly disseminated it to other instructors.

It was while it was doing its rounds that one of the recipients discerned some familiarities with a book he happened to have read. As a result, Larry’s tutor felt obliged to advance a discussion on the distinctions separating the concepts of Research, - copying from numerous sources – and Plagiarism, - copying from a single authority.

Larry was lauded for the scrupulous accuracy of the quotation, though he was marked down for the inadequately attributed accreditation .

Perusing the available electives, Charlie Poirier and I decided to expand our musical horizons, he by taking up the Spanish guitar, while the Chopin in me earnestly desired to satisfy an unrequited ambition to learn to play the piano. Sadly, the schism created by the guitar teacher’s insistence on the need to cut the nails of one hand while cultivating those of the other affronted Charlie’s sense of symmetry sufficiently to cause an irreconcilable split.

I, on the other hand, reported to the piano room primed finally to reify my dream, and eagerly awaited my professor who happened to be the college organist.

For some reason he failed to arrive; a venial setback, I decided, and showed up punctually for the next lesson. Again he neglected to show up, which prompted me to launch some enquiries. These revealed that the gentleman in question was in the habit of holding court at The Yacht every afternoon; I was not encouraged to rely on his participation, and a budding Paderewski was thus muted forever.

The effect of too much time on the hands coupled with a surfeit of disposable tender steered us irrevocably in the direction of mayhem, for which we had always displayed a natural aptitude.

In this regard, we were only acting as members of a relay team, carrying the baton passed to us by our predecessors who themselves had set a formidable standard.

We learned that Canadians from one of the earlier classes succeeded in leading an elephant onto the hallowed parade ground at Whale Island, entirely disrupting the passing out parade, while another group, dressed in City of London coveralls and armed with tools, flags and tape, established a work site on Piccadilly; after engaging the cooperation of the unsuspecting Constabulary to direct the traffic around them, they pulverised a section of macadam, then seemingly pausing for a tea break, vanished from sight.

Tough acts to follow indeed; we never did reach such lofty levels of lunacy, but some of our capers are still enjoyable to recall.

We began gingerly with gateway misdemeanours designed to test the boundaries of tolerance.

Unwilling to wreak acts of destruction ourselves, we found it amusing to mobilise others to the task.

We were quick to note that Royal Marines required a minimum of provocation to start a full blown riot.

It was common for the instructors and college staff to gather in the billiard room, which housed the College bar, for a civilised tot before dinner.

The inciting moment, with remarkable punctuality, arrived 45 minutes after the opening when the Marines were just starting their fourth pint. This was the cue for Charlie to enter unobtrusively from a side door and roll a Canadian football into the centre of the throng.

An instant of tantalised silence accompanied the last errant throes of the ball, followed by a screaming scrum intolerant of all obstruction. The Marines instinctively understood that possession constituted the sole objective of the exercise, and all surfaces including billiard tables, the bar or fallen bystanders were in play.

The dinner announcement called the skirmish to a halt, the bar staff swept up the debris, reassembled the room, and Admiral Fisher's damaged scowl once more dominated the austerity of the space.

During our tenure, our trio were by no means the only ones dedicated to the gestation of sport and shenanigans.

There were numerous ingeniously perpetrated escapades in which we missed participating.

One of these involved a group of Subbies which invaded the Army training facility at Sandhurst by driving in with a car filled with straw studded with firecrackers.

With the steering wheel tied to a pre set angle, they set the straw on fire and released the vehicle to careen in flaming circles around the parade ground, then used the ensuing chaos to smuggle an abducted Subaltern out of the gate to Greenwich.

He was subsequently delivered back to Sandhurst resplendent in the uniform of an RN Sub Lieutenant.

Another infamous caper concerned the celebrated schooner Cutty Sark which majestically ruled a dry dock just inside the west gate.

Returning to the College late one night, we were confounded by the sight of this ship's rigging which, from topsail to bowsprit, disported a fluttering adornment of festoons of toilet paper.

It was impossible not to marvel at the sheer audacity of the act which foretold only one of two possible consequences: an OBE or a court martial.

We knew a decision had been reached when our batmen awakened us with a message from the CO to muster forthwith on the parade square. We hardly had time to admire the true extent of the ornamentation revealed by the morning light when we were brought to attention.

Captain Roper was in blistering form.

We learned from him that Her Majesty was scheduled to inspect the Cutty Sark that very afternoon, and the Queen's Secretary could be expected to find fault with

this method of dressing ship, presumably on the grounds that it failed to comply with orthodoxies enshrined in QRRN Communications manuals.

Therefore, the persons responsible, two steps forward, MARCH!

Four unsteady RN subbies mustered out of the ranks and were escorted on the double in the direction of the ship. We later learned that the task of removing the offending decor became unexpectedly complicated for three of the participants due to their relative sobriety; in this condition, deprived of the previous night's devolution to a more primal tree climbing state, they could only find courage enough to clear the least challenging hangings; their leader, recently commissioned after years of instructing in tall ships, singlehandedly removed the rest.

For our trio, the compellingly addictive attractions of delinquency dictated that we evolve beyond low level pranks to more serious misdemeanours.

Successful criminals are typically characterised by a mastery of some particular skill, and though we were not formally aware of this fact, we instinctively adopted this pattern. For us, this specialisation consisted of stealthy or surreptitious entry. Proficiency in this art is indispensable as a pre condition for a variety of aspirations and as useful as a skeleton key.

For reasons similar to those which justify why people climb mountains, our targets became girls' boarding schools.

One night, Charlie and I succeeded in gaining entry into what we presumed to be unoccupied premises near Greenwich, and after leaving romantic billet doux's inscribed in lipstick on the washroom mirrors, we suddenly realised that our presence had been discovered.

There ensued a highly satisfying escape from well motivated pursuers through a labyrinth of dark and unfamiliar corridors culminating in a heroic vault over a towering fence into Greenwich Park to evade a guard dog.

On a subsequent school raid, we allowed ourselves to be joined by a group of inadequately trained RN wannabees, which proved to be a disaster when one of these accidentally blundered into the adjoining building causing the startled occupants of a bedroom to call the police.

This might have resulted in much unpleasantness except for the pedigreed common sense of the British Bobbies who, upon ascertaining our identity as subbies from Greenwich, judged our frolic excusable and dismissed us on the promise of good behaviour.

To keep our side of the bargain, we were obliged to move our enterprises away from the College.

Essential to this undertaking was a getaway car, which Charlie and I procured in the form of a-thirties-something Vauxhall for the sum of 20 pounds. The vehicle possessed a disconcerting habit of burning more oil than petrol, and though recalcitrant on the starter, it never failed to rev up after a vigorous push.

Though there was no shortage of volunteers eager to accompany us on our nightly endeavours, the above experience taught us to keep our group small. We recognised, however, that due to our giveaway accents, much could be gained from enlisting an acquiescent Brit. After screening potential accomplices, we settled on Hugh Willis, as much for his fearlessness and daring as for his irrepressible good humour.

Our motorised foursome could now scout further afield, and presently we settled on yet another girls' school, this time somewhere in Knightsbridge. We approached our target under cover of darkness to examine our options. Steps descended to a sub-terrestrial entrance which could not be breached, nor could we open the main entrance door to its left, but between them, a window on the first floor offered a promising prospect.

As it was too high to reach from the sidewalk, Charlie improvised a human ladder wherein he would act as the lower rungs, and Larry, standing on his shoulders, would provide the extension. This ingenious arrangement worked splendidly, and presently Larry was up there manipulating the window when an unforeseen *défaut de construction* became evident in the form of a tilt to the right.

No more than the Tower of Pisa at first, this displacement unfortunately embodied momentum, and now Hugh and I perceived Newtonian physics in action where Larry was about to play the role of the apple.

The height of the fall would technically only measure the distance, foreshortened by his burden-bowed legs, from Charlie's shoulders to the sidewalk. With Charlie grimly gripping Larry's feet, however, this dictated a trajectory the 3 o'clock apex

of which terminated directly over the sub terrenal vault. Once begun, stabilising this living pyramid was out of the question; toppling like Big Ben's minute hand in freefall, Larry described a slow motion arc and disappeared into the chasm.

A terrifying silence followed the dull thud.

Instantly we swarmed down the steps. Larry was out cold, but he was still breathing. Now our first aid training kicked into gear, and a life saving bottle of rum was administered to his lips. The effect was immediate and encouraging. Larry reacted to the medicine like a baby to a mother's breast. We helped him up to the sidewalk and propped him against a wall. There was blood behind the ear, and his eyes swam in uncoordinated circles, but clearly he was going to survive. We bundled him into the car and for the rest of the trip, like a stuck record, he kept repeating the same question: what the hell happened?

From that moment on, girls' schools lost their appeal and our interest re focused on hospitals.

The reason for this change of target probably began as a result of a wound sustained by Mel Gilliland in the course of a billiard game, which we ascertained required medical attention.

Accordingly, we bound his heroically resisting body with belts, and with his mouth gagged for his own safety, trundled him through a back door into the Greenwich infirmary.

Diagnosing his condition, we unanimously concluded that it was essential for Mel to be X rayed.

Somebody discovered a large pliable sheet of lead, which we knew was associated with this procedure, but unsure of how it conformed to the modus operandi, we chose to wrap it around him like a gown. Before restorative rays could be directed through his body, however, someone raised an alarm, which forced us hastily to evacuate the cocooned patient back to the bar.

This experience whetted our appetite for a more ambitious objective, which materialised in the form of the venerable St. Bartholomew's Hospital in Montague Street.

In his finest Etonian, Hugh succeeded to distract the staff sufficiently to permit us to enter unchallenged, and after letting Hugh in through a previously scouted side door, we commenced our inspection. Presently, we found ourselves in a classroom with a large blackboard which sported a diagram, meticulously executed in coloured chalks, depicting a cross section of human organs and the intricacies of their blood supply.

With great care, we re-plumbed the network of veins and arteries creating a nightmarish routing which no physiologist without a solid grounding in hydrology could ever hope to untangle.

Moving right along, we discovered linen closets and an empty hospital bed.

Soon startled patients and staff were sent scattering by an emergency team of green clad attendants who at break neck pace careened along the corridors wheeling a sheet covered body obviously in need of immediate medical attention.

It wasn't long before all this momentum was required just to stay ahead of the alerted staff. Shedding our disguise and whisking the sheet off the miraculously recovered Larry, we found ourselves in the basement in a warren of furnace and electrical rooms where we eventually found a window through which we escaped giggling into the night.

Our final caper was staged in Cambridge and was entirely unplanned.

Ostensibly we drove there to visit a chum on a Rhodes scholarship, but mainly in search of adventure. After pub closing time, while causing some general disturbance in the dormitories, we lost track of Larry in the dark.

He smoked in those days, and now the glow of his cigarette betrayed his position across an open square. In stage whispers I gave him directions, and we observed his progress by watching the loping arc of his fag as he trotted toward us. Suddenly there was a crack; the cigarette's trajectory catapulted upwards and in a succession of little circles descended to the ground.

We located Larry in the vicinity of the cigarette next to a kerb surrounding a statue which adorned the centre of the square, and escorted him to the Vauxhall.

As we drove through slumbering Cambridge, we passed a church, its spire a black tusk piercing the star studded sky.

The association linking spires with church bells must have struck us all simultaneously as we stopped and piled out of the car.

An inspection of the obvious entrances disclosed that the building was forbiddingly locked; decidedly not the anticipated condition for a house of worship which I assumed should be ready night and day to embrace a penitent in need of emergency spiritual attention.

A further search around the back of the building, however, revealed a basement window which resembled a loading chute.

When this eventually succumbed to our determined ministrations, we were confronted with a stygian black hole which sucked in all hint of purpose, depth or content.

As usual, only Hugh possessed the recklessness required to unfathom this chartless mystery; gently he lowered himself in, and as he let go, he landed in something that felt like a pile of rubble.

One by one we tumbled inside, and collecting ourselves into a group, groped along a wall which eventually led to a door which opened with a disquieting screech onto what seemed like a stairwell.

The tomb like silence magnified every breath and shuffle, stiffening our neck hairs and honing our alertness to levels of hunted quarry.

Are churches haunted, I wondered? Surely the priests must be trained to perform some kind of regular exorcistic defumigation. Could one be overdue?

We inched our way along the stairs, gripping each other like the blind men in a Breughel painting, till we emerged in what may have been the vestry. Another door and we were inside the church; now we could start orienting ourselves by the glimmer of starlight seeping through the stained glass windows.

After identifying the altar, we crept along the nave past the transept and then, near the stairs leading up to the choir, there it was! Coiled around a wall fitting, the rope like a ready fuse dangled provocatively from the blacked out firmament above.

Larry uncoiled what was now the tail end of a satanic snake and gave it a vigorous pull.

A fearsome metallic clang shattered the solemn gloom!

As we took turns on the rope, the night roiled with harrowing alarm; the clamour pierced the surroundings and spooked the resident detachment of negligent guardian angels, who in an applause of pigeons' wings fled into the night.

The spell was broken, and now with eyes like cats' we scurried through the church, retraced our steps to the basement, frantically struggled to help each other out and bolted to the car. A spirited push revived the napping motor and in a torrent of tension relieving hilarity, we left the holy hubbub behind us.

We didn't get far; finally sapped of energy, we pulled over somewhere on the outskirts of town and like rag dolls collapsed into a heavy sleep.

Presently, an alarming knocking sound intruded on my slumber. I dismissed it as a dream, - probably the nudge of an overburdened conscience - when it came again, this time with dangerously emphatic deliberateness.

The dream which materialised outside my window, however, bristled with authenticity.

With an air of implacable authority, shod in high lace up boots, caparisoned in a uniform harnessed in leather with a white helmet and elbow high gloves stood the intimidating embodiment of all the majesty of The Law.

I rolled down the window; Good Morning Sir! I blurted out unconvincingly.

Good Morning, The Law replied, and then got right to the point. Did this bunch by any chance have anything to do with the ringing of the church bell last night?

My impulse was to reply in a, - who, us? - kind of tone, but turning to my awakening companions for support nipped that evasion in the bud.

To my astonishment, I realised that I was accompanied by a troop of chimney sweeps!

[So that was the rubble in the basement...]

I was compelled to nod my head resignedly.

Where are you from? He inquired.

Sub Lieutenants from Greenwich, I offered, we just drove up for a visit.

There was a momentary pause, but during it something fundamental had changed.

Very well, he said, I trust you will not do this again. Follow me, gentlemen! –

Gentlemen?

Whereupon he donned his helmet, mounted his bike and bid us to follow.

He escorted us at a modest pace to a safe 10 miles out of town, then executing a U turn, chopped off a natty salute and disappeared behind us.

This jaw dropping display of dignity and authority remains ineradicably etched on our memories.

It stands in silent rebuke to the knees on chest, handcuffs behind the back, fingerprints, fines, jailings and bribes we were shortly to experience for much more venial transgressions during flight training in Florida and Texas, but that will be another story.

Greenwich College lived up to its role in becoming the most cultivating stage of our naval careers.

How incredibly fortunate we were to be offered the great city as our playground with so few restrictions and so much time to explore.

We were free to visit the Continent when the college closed for Easter and the summer break. Jacques Petit bought a new Morris Minor in which, with Poirier and me, we made an unforgettable debut visit to France, Italy and Switzerland.

London in the fifties was, like most cities, a calmer and more embracing place than today, and vastly more affordable. Many of us took advantage of the galleries and museums and the exploding theatre scene.

Although at the time there was only one all night restaurant, it happened to be a greasery off Fleet street which served the newspaper publishing crowd and sat conveniently astride the road back to Greenwich.

There was no problem about drinking round the clock. After the pubs closed at ten, we all met on Denman Street in our beloved den mother Mary Dowse's White

Room, long established as a home by previous generations of Canadian Naval brethren, where the decor was composed of our portraits affixed to the walls and where our credit was always good till the next payday. At the time, the bar maid was a lady named Joan who became a friend of Larry's before she married Wally Schroeder.

When Mary finally shooed us out around one thirty, we could repair to some blind pig or to any hotel which could legally serve drinks in the lobby all night provided you could convince the barman you were a guest, which was a cinch at the accommodating Regent's Park Hotel off Piccadilly Circus, after which everyone congregated at Covent Garden where the pubs opened at five to ogle the multifarious mosaic of brawny fishwives, bloodied butchers and con men mixing easily with tuxedo clad revellers and their diaphanously costumed escorts.

Back at the Yacht for a ten thirty eye opener, we were just a short stumble away from the classroom where the eleven o'clock lecture finally offered an opportunity for some well deserved shuteye.

Under no circumstances am I suggesting that any of us followed such a routine; it's just to illustrate the possibility.

Among the numerous extracurricular activities available at the college was a thriving theatre department which produced shows of remarkably high calibre; landing the part of my namesake in Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* cemented my addiction to theatre.

We also produced variety shows with original music and lyrics, where I attempted to play the role later immortalised by Joel Gray in *Cabaret* featuring our pivotal attraction in the person of Larry Washbrook who performed pirouettes en pointe in a tutu; you simply had to have been there.

The nine months spent at Greenwich would prove to be the richest and most satisfying period of my life, a fact of which I was supremely aware at the time.

The technical Sub Lieutenants' courses were a distinct anti climax. At their termination, we were asked to choose a career path indicating where and in what capacity we wished to serve.

Charlie and Larry requested pilot training, whereas I had never entertained this as a possibility and opted for TAS, [Torpedo & Anti Submarine] and specified the west coast.

When we were all accorded our wishes, it suddenly dawned on me that this would mean an existential separation from my running mates.

Whoa there!

Something was horribly wrong in this arrangement.

Hastily, I scribbled an amending letter to Ottawa in which I expressed my sincerest thanks to whomever it was who so considerately endorsed my initial request, but at the same time made it clear that I had in the interim experienced a searing epiphany which revealed that I would actually be overwhelmingly more useful to the Navy as a pilot!

Would their Lordships in their Wisdom therefore reconsider my appointment?

Without any fuss my new orders arrived forthwith, and to this day I wish I knew whom to credit for endorsing what for me proved to be a fundamentally life altering change of direction.

George Plawski

