

THREE YOUNG MEN MEET IN 1943 WHILE ON LEAVE

There was Peter in the Royal Navy, dressed in the Bell Bottom uniform known far and wide throughout the world of ships, no longer was the ship name on a ribbon around his hat, just Submarines.

Reg in the Royal Air Force dressed in grey blue battle dress, a single wing badge on his left breast with E in its centre, and sergeant stripes on his sleeves.

And Jack, 6 feet 2 inches, towered over his friends, dressed as a Commando, red beret at an angle, the badges declared he was in the Parachute Regiment, everything polished and glowed, a perfect picture of a soldier in a fighting army.

The friends were all on leave from their units and were catching up on what had happened to each other since leaving the same school.

Reg and Peter said little about what they had done and seen, just stated that they could not do what the other was doing, one under the sea the other up in the clouds.

Jack still under training, and hoped to see some action soon, all three pleased to see old friends alive and doing ok.

We move forward to 1947, the three are back home and out of uniform, Peter is now employed as a compositor on a local newspaper, where I found out "upper and lower case" originated, plays a double base in a band in the evenings, hopes to one day give up his job and form his own band, Reg still an engineer but working for a construction company, employed to service and repair machinery used on buildings.

Jack lives in London, has no real job, lives in Soho over a place of ill repute, makes lollies from anything he can get on the black market, to sell on the streets, works part time for a well known dance band as humper of baggage when it is touring England.

Forward yet again many years, Peter has formed his band toured the USA, married with children, and doing well in the entertainment industry, opened a club for young people in a seaside holiday town in south England, the local Drug lords tried to get him to sell drugs, refused and ended up being found dead under a collapsed part of his club, local police found no cause to investigate .

Jack has a good job with the BBC, invites Reg and his wife to come up to London and see an episode of "Are you being served" being recorded. A very welcome invite for Reg and his wife Phyllis who drive to London, park in the BBC car park where Jack had organised a space, and a greeting at headquarters, a meal in the massive restaurant, surrounded by stars of both TV and Film, many of whom , greeted Jack as we found a reserved table. Jack was a well known figure in the BBC, and seemed to be the head of a department that controlled certain aspects of TV shows.

Time to walk to the theatre said Jack, only a few streets away from headquarters, as we arrived at the road leading to the theatre found a long queue of people waiting to see the filming, we walked along beside them and entered the "stage door" Jack taking the lead to greet and be greeted by actors and stage hands as we moved onto

the stage itself, Jack of course wearing the latest in fashion. Phyllis wearing a long wool coat and pretty hat, Reg wearing an Australian hat and lambs wool jacket with lots of wool showing. As Jack pointed out where the cameras and directors would be situated, the gallery above was filling with the excited crowd, our little group being pointed at and assumed by them to be people of importance.

We now moved to our place in the gallery, Jack refused the one reserved and we were quickly found the best spot, he'd selected, Jack sitting between us to keep us well informed of what was about to happen. This episode of "Are you being served" was a winter one, in line with the weather at the moment, and as the actors rushed from the lift, clouds of fake snow pour out with them, many takes were needed as lines were forgotten, Jack said on purpose by a certain actor who wanted the audience to remember him, and the poor stage hands dragged out large vacuum cleaners to clean up the mess, but Phyllis and I enjoyed the show and had a better understanding of what went in to a popular series on TV. I remarked to Jack that all the furniture used was so much smaller than they looked on the TV, Jack explained that it was all to do with camera angles, and movements on stage, full size would look massive.

It is now about 1995, Reg and Phyllis with their children moved to Australia in 1964/5 have retired, and are living at Eimeo a suburb of Mackay in Queensland, Reg bought a computer, much to the amusement of his family who stated he would never work out how to use it, well no longer at Eimeo but at 92 is still using it or its many replacements in 2016.

Jack also has retired has houses in London and in the USA, sends an email to ask? , can he come and visit us in Australia? Phyllis is over joyed Jack is one of her brothers and last seen many years ago, so back went a certain yes please and Jack duly arrived. still tall, still filled any room with his presence, but showing signs of the passing of years and a diet which we were told included lots of whisky.

Phyllis had organised a couple of weeks for just Jack and herself at Hamilton Island, where they could catch up on all that had happened over the years, Sheila, Jack and Phyllis the last three of a very large family, Sheila had moved to America soon after the end of WW2. Phyllis and Jack enjoyed a wonderful few days together, and returned to Eimeo for some more time together before Jack had to return to England.

We spent many hours reliving days long gone, I had always wondered what Jack had done during D Day, what position he had held at the BBC and just how he had got such an important job, so came yet another page of history, told with ease by a con man who never really harmed anyone.

One of the band jobs was with Joe Loss Jack said, which toured many towns in Britain, and often played at country mansions for a private dance and party, some where Jack picked up blank printed letter headed paper of a Lord "some body", back in Soho Jack wrote in flowing language a wonderful personal recommendation from this Lord to the BBC about himself, which got him an interview with BBC TV, his story of WW2 heroics and service in the Commandos and its Parachute Regiment, a certain job, which turned out to be head of a department responsible for sourcing the furniture etc for every series of shows being produced and filmed by the BBC, as for

D Day, leaping out of a perfectly good aeroplane on a parachute was not his idea of fun , so had put off contact with the enemy but did arrive later on in Berlin to ensure order was being kept.

After some prompting went on to explain what his job at the BBC entailed, and likened it to making a cake from a recipe.

Jack received a rough plan of a new series, giving types of furniture where it should fit in and general details of the script, all new series were recorded and made in one of the theatres owned by the BBC, so as one series of about ten episodes finished and cleared of its settings, the sets for the next series would be assembled, Jack, the writers, directors and producers would meet on site and finalise the sets, the actors chosen for the series would also meet and do a run through to ensure everything worked, changes where required would be noted by Jack or one of his staff and replacement furniture installed,

Each episode may require some special items or clothes for an actor, Jack and his staff made sure these were available when required, as each series was completed in the same theatre, being filmed one day each week with a live audience, the actors could get employment on the other 6 days, with this type of show learning lines was no great strain , and more than one episode was often filmed during a week.

I have not seen Jack since his visit to us in Eimeo, cards at Christmas each way kept the link , but recent years do not bring any answers to our “ how are you” cards or emails. We have heard that Jack and his wife Pat moved out of London a few years ago , both not in the best of health, time I phoned again,

All the people and events in this short tale are real, Jack is not his real name , all others are .

Remembered and typed with the one finger not crippled with arthritis,

On 7.04.2016 by Reg Miles Maryborough Queensland Australia

