David’s Navy

Part 3 June, July 1945 Midshipman D.A. Whiteman

Date 2-6-45

Is now Snotty

At last I feel like a ‘middy’. Yesterday we got up to Melbourne about 2pm to complete our shopping & to pick up one of our suits. I got to work & spent a mere £18! It just seemed to vanish. Spent £7/12/- on the suit, £3/10/- on sheets etc, 32/6 for a ‘tiddly’ cap badge, 33/6 for pair of grey trousers, £3 for a weekend case - & there you are. I’ve only got £4 left out of my £32 – so will have to draw another ‘tenner’ from my bank account next Sat. when I pick up my other suit and great coat. Well, I guess you don’t become a ‘middy’ every day.

Brought all my gear home here & had tea & stayed round the fire. This morning got up and got ‘togged up’ & went into the city for a fitting for my other suit (wasn’t ready yesterday). It certainly is great to get into civilized clothes again – really comfortable & it is a pretty good fit. I wasn’t game to wear my gloves in the morning – just carried them in my hip pocket – tonight I will though. Our course is having a ‘celebration’ dinner tonight at the Australia, so will have to be ‘complete’ for that. I don’t know what we will do after that.

By the way Mum, thanks very much for the parcel that arrived last week with the sweets! (I think I thanked you before, didn’t I?) Last week was miserable – all we did was working party, our assault course was cancelled. Still guess will make up for it after Monday – my word, this next week or so is going to be funny: you folks had better laugh for me – I won’t be able to! We have had a couple of lectures on wardroom and mess etiquette – it certainly is amazing!

Got a letter from Darby Johns & Monty (he asked to be remembered to you Mum) last week. Darb hopes to be coming south soon; is on the frigate ‘Hawkesbury’. By the by, hope John M. got my telegram; I gave it to a lad who going near the P.O. to send it. Glad you two had such a good weekend. Haven’t as yet got case – am using one from here. Sorry Mum, my writing again ‘tids’ not ‘dibs’ – your best clothes; i.e. not pusser issue (excuse those ‘lower deck’ terms!)

Well, it’s time I got cleaned to go to this dinner, so had better ‘scoot’, hope everyone is in the tops spirit – no need to add that I am; so cheerio for now.

Lots of Love from

“Snotty”,

David

P.S. Only 3 weeks to go Mum.

Date 10-6-45

All this ‘Six’ stuff

Now we get every weekend up the line, so I’ll just about be living out here – that is if they will have me!

Last week seemed a great contrast to previous conditions: being waited on at the table, dressing for dinner at night, being called ‘Sir’, etc, etc! (once again have only just over ½ hour to go – stopped for tea).

Came up on early train yesterday & picked up my second suit & great coat (had to draw out £10 from bank which reduced it to £15 ½). Also got a bow tie & dress collar (ahem!) for guest nights when we are invited over to the wardroom.

Our new course lasts for 8 weeks after which we go on draft. Last week we did gunnery; also next week with a couple of exams.

Tomorrow I’m going into hospital to have my foot fixed up – remember that lump on the sole. It is some type of wart & they are going to cut it out – am having local anaesthetic (?) so probably won’t be staying there. May be there for a night, don’t know yet.

Have got so much to write about, will just answer your questions Mum, & tell the rest in a fortnight’s time. We won’t be leaving Melbourne ‘till Sat. so will come home Sunday, if there’s a train.

Thanks very much for the case & greys – will be taking it back tonight. Also will send a blue bag packed with old gear, by rail; to Mr. A. Whiteman, Vict. Rd., Clare.

Yes, got 3 pairs of new undies, no overalls. That Chinese dinner was dinkum Mum – waitress couldn’t even speak English, we went out the back and looked at the production – amazing! Gar-look-yook & foo-young-gar: whacko!

There is one other S.A. in class – father is a Cong. Minister. We got coupons for sheets, etc. – so had to go shop-raiding properly. No Mum, no need for official no. now – that goes with the wind. Last week we got out our official appointment, will bring it home on 23rd. Hope you like the snaps – Mr. Cowden took, developed & sends them to you. There are red patches on my lapels with a brass button (no stripes – yet).

Well, time’s up, will try & write again during the week,

Date 17-6-45

Had plantar wart out

Thanks for the letters & bundles of magazines & papers which I received last week. Hope you, Mum & Dad, enjoy your weekend in town – I should be there next Sunday – I hope.

At present young – Karl is dressed in red Indian garb, which I made for in, & is riding on a cushion horse, shooting arrows all over the room – remember anything like that!

Last week passed very quickly’ spent one day going up to Melbourne for a gunnery shoot. We went out on “Doomba” but had to come back due to heavy fog. When we all came back – no WRAN driver – so finished up by getting a free night until 9.30.

The operation on my foot was postponed till Frid. Afternoon. They burnt it out with an electric needle. It was a germ that caused growth – biggest he’d ever seen. Still pretty tender; have to go back tomorrow. When I returned about 2.30, had to do a gunnery exam – didn’t much feel like it.

Went to the pictures with Mrs. Cowden last night. This afternoon went over Box Hill Hall with an Ex-Mayor. A beautiful place, will tell you all about it when I come home.

Hope your ‘dermy’ is better Dad. Cowden family wished to be remembered to you. Glad to hear that bag arrived so soon – only sent it Sunday night. Those boots are 8’s – stretched.

Well, just a short note (as per usual, I’m afraid) but will soon be home – only a week to go. So until then hope all are well,

Date 29-6-45

Completing OTS

Am writing this in an armchair in front of a beaut. fire. This weekend I didn’t go up to Melbourne, decided to stay down & do some shooting & just laze around. Thursday night I rang up Cowdens & told them. It has turned out to be a very good weekend.

Saturday it rained all day, without a break; so spent the afternoon reading &smoking by one of the gunroom’s fires. Got dressed, after a shower - & went to the pictures at night. This morning we (Tom Edwards stayed down too) slept in till 9.45 & we had toast & tea brought to us at 9 by the stewards. We got dressed & went to church, after which we had a beautiful dinner – roast pork (can I make you envious). Then we changed into slacks & jumpers & drew a rifle each & 50 rounds & set off with hopes of some game. The rifles were .303’s with a .22 bore in them. Needless to say we never shot anything (live, that is) but we had a very good walk – went over through Summers & came back by completing the circle. It was just as well we had our Burberrys on because, sure as eggs, it rained on & off all the way! Never-the-less I thoroughly enjoyed it – haven’t been for a good walk for ages. I would have gone Sat. if it hadn’t been so wet; still I read that book Miss Jane gave me – the first I’ve completed, you might tell her I liked it very much, Mum, next time you see her.

On Friday morning we finished nav. at 11, came back here to change into blues & had our group photo with the Commodore & Commander taken. Will forward it on when we get it. Nav. is getting more interesting as it goes on – we have done sun, stars & moon sights so far – that is, working out your position from them. This includes study of the celestial sphere, - position of stars, etc – also all other heavenly bodies!! It certainly makes the earth seem a very insignificant thing.

Last Wednesday I played soccer for the Officer’s team. I think I like it more than rugby – it is a very good game. Quite a few ‘kippers’ were on the lines & adding plenty of comments; I’ve watched some of them playing & they certainly can handle that ball. Tomorrow night those of us who had been playing rugby for the wardroom, are invited over to dinner. We gunroom chaps are supplying half the numbers for every team of theirs – not that we mind. Will be playing rugby, tomorrow & Aus. Rules on Wed.

Thanks for your letters Mum & also thanks a lot for finishing that jumper Marg. – as yet I haven’t received it but am looking forward to it. (Haven’t got the grey one yet Mum). Yes Mum, Mrs Clarke is coming over to Vict. next Tuesday, I believe, also Mr. – don’t know for how long. I will get two large & 6 small photos for that price. Can see the proofs next Sat, so will get them to post the results home whenever they are done. Would you, or would you not, like one of the large in colour? Doug Gordon’s course was 20th – had middle board last week – he dipped, is on “Westralia” – Bishop’s son is still here.

One of our course is leaving Navy I think: Lafferty. His father had a stroke about a fortnight ago & we haven’t seen him since he left then, but have heard he is trying for a discharge.

All the best for your sports on Wed. Gordon – how about Scott’s winning this year? Glad you enjoyed the opera so much Marg – that snap is pretty good – never know Mary B. though!

It wasn’t chance where I sat at that guest dinner Mum, they called me over there & I had to sit down; at a dinner like that, apparently you forget about ‘gold rings’ & everyone was extremely friendly – quite normal in fact! No soft drinks there, if you don’t take any wine, they pour you water for the roasts.

Yes you should have seen your son at the dance – butterfly collar & bow tie – I didn’t know myself. We pay for it on a stripe basis which means least for us middies – just as well too, have another month’s bills to pay this week.

Well folks that’s about the limit for now, hope all are well – Marg the needles are doing you good, so “Goodnight all” & cheerio for now,

Date 1-7-45

Waiting for appointment

Well, this week I’ve received quite a bit – first thanks again for that beaut jumper Marg (hope the grey one has arrived back & towel). Also for letters, magazines & papers.

Gosh, how the weeks have skipped by – as you say, have only got a week to go. We should find out what ship next Friday & then leave Sat. morning – I wonder, where? I am afraid there isn’t much chance of that leave eventuating (arrived back & it is now Monday night – sorry). We haven’t heard definitely but it is almost sure we will go up to Melbourne early Sat. morning & proceed from there – probably to Sydney & probably Sunday. So you can see things are indefinite. Also heard today we may know our appointments Wed. As it is O.K. with the Cowden’s I will leave all the gear I don’t need, there, then I can always pick it up when on the way home.

Mrs. Cowden was very thrilled with the bag - & the little hankie. Yes, I received it Friday afternoon – thanks very much Mum. Could you send me over one of my cheques please (I think the book is in the middle drawer), & is your account in the name of D.M. Whiteman or A. W.?

Last Monday the rugby players of the gunroom were invited over to wardroom for a dinner & afterwards. I had the dinner & then Nobby & I came back – the others woke us up about 2 am. – there were some funny incidents too. On Thursday we had a return party over here, which finished up just about as funnily. I wonder what life would be like here in peacetime! On Friday I went to the boxing tournaments as a member of the Gunroom; some good fights there too. So what with going to the pictures (Going My Way) Tuesday, it was a full week.

During the week we had to fill in a form of 4 clauses: A – immediate demob., B – finish of hostilities, C – duration plus and interim period, D – transfer to perm. service. I signed as a “C” man, which I consider best at present, as no details were given about “D” & it could mean anything. Anyway there is nothing binding in it – just to see every man’s ideas, I think.

On Sat. I saw the proofs of the photo – I don’t think I’ll say much about them except that studios don’t agree with me. Still the finished product might be better. Anyway you might have a different idea than I, let’s hope so. I’ve got the large & 6 small; cancelling the coloured one reduced the price to about £3 ½ . I told them to forward results on home, but they won’t be ready for about 6 weeks. Also saw proofs of groups snap – quite good of everyone, will forward it on next week (sorry this week).

The afternoon I went to the pictures in Melbourne & as I was going to a party the opposite side of Box Hill I stayed in town for dinner. Guess who I met at the gate when I arrived home – the milkman – yes, it was about 4 am. It (the party) was put on for one of our lads & there were five of us there. It was really a cocktail party & before long most were getting quite merry. They had a pianola, so I played that for the dancers. Expect you don’t agree with that sort of party, but everything went quite well and I enjoyed myself. I’m just about used to seeing drink around these days. There was a beautiful supper, so I made up on that. It was at a doctor’s place at Sandringham – right down at the beach. I got a lift home in one of the chap’s cars – or most of the way: you see there was quite a heavy fog & I had to try & direct him to Box Hill.

Things should be pretty busy at the end of this week; we have our nav. exam Friday – we haven’t finished yet Mum – don’t know where you got that idea. By the way I’m one of the auditors of our mess for the two months we’ve been here – just as well there are two other auditors!

Mr. Cowden has been looking for a camera for me – hasn’t heard or seen any that would do yet, but said that he would keep a lookout & if he finds one will send it on.

I’ll get you those gloves Gordon, but don’t know about the size – just have to hope they aren’t too big – but it’s better that way than too small, I suppose. Good work on running the sports, old man, it must have been pretty close at stages. A bit of a marathon summer, eh?

On Friday I went to the dentist to check up on my teeth – he found one small one to fill & there was an old filling he took out & redrilled, so it is pretty right now.

Yes Mum, that Somers is (or was) the RAAF camp. You’ve got the wrong chap in Lafferty Mum - Palliser was the tall chap. Laff. came back last week; has now got his ‘ticket’ (discharge).

Must do a bit of nav. swotting , so will say cheerio for now. Of course will let you know what happens.

Date 9-7-45

Back from leave

Well, back here again, & after the first day, home again seems far away.

Hope you had a good relaxation on Monday Mum. You certainly seem to know a few people – rather amazing, isn’t it?

As soon as we left the station, Nobby & I got changed into sleeping gear. We put the seats up on the armrests & as there was only 3 of us in the carriage & one of the chaps wanted to sleep on the deck, we each had one seat. It was just like a bed; & I wrapped myself in my great coat & Burberry & slept almost all the night, until we were woken at Horsham for breakfast. My gosh, it was cold though – although it wasn’t worth taking your rug.

On leaving there I had another sleep ‘till Ballarat, where we had to get changed for lunch. So we arrived in Melbourne about 2.15 & a rather enjoyable trip.

We had about ½ hr. in Melbourne – just went for a walk up the street & so got down here about 5.45

This morning went along to the doc. – was pleased with my foot. Have to go along every second day for some application. There are another 8 new chaps over here with us today – so the place is a bit more lively.

Expect you had a fairly long day on Sat. Dad – wonder whether Labour went down.

I gladly handed over my tobacco books tonight. Had a general meeting & am now one of the Mess committee – a good job compared with my bookkeeping effort.

Well, this is just a note – must off to bed. Thanks for oranges & that parcel Mum – will need them after eating turkey & fowl for a fortnight! They were beaut – couldn’t help thinking of them when eating my cold lunch today.

Date 16-7-45

More Gunroom courses – at sea

Ere this arrives you will have had your birthday, Dad. Do hope you had a very happy day & like the present. I wonder if it has been as cold at home as it has been down here. Whew! We’ve had fogs & frosts plus cold. It was hard to sleep last night. This is all after about a week of rain; so you can guess what we’ve been all thinking about Victoria.

Last Friday we finished our Convoy Escort (sub-sinking course) & today we started our four weeks navigation. There is going to be plenty of it, but interesting – I hope.

When I got up to Melbourne on Sat. I went up to a studio & had a few photos taken. They should be good, for the money, but I’m dashed if I like being arranged & then after 5 minutes waiting tole to smile. Still will see; can get proofs in three weeks’ time. Got out to Box Hill late in the afternoon. Found Mr. Cowden had been home for three weeks – gall trouble – has to have an operation soon. Bill has been home for about 5 days.

Sat. night went to a party at South Yarra, given by a lad who was dipped in our course & was home on some leave. Got out there at 6.45; not a bad show; a beautiful spread & I was hungry. Sunday stayed in bed ‘till after 12 – had breakfast in bed! Spent a lazy afternoon. Am afraid that is why this is late – meant to write it after tea, but didn’t have time then.

Next Friday night we (Gunroom officers) are putting on a dance & supper over here. Should be quite good – having a four piece band, inviting all nursing sisters over & the Commodore & a few Commodores & their wives. On Wed. we are all going over to the Wardroom for a guest night. They say the dinner lasts almost two hours; a chap won’t be very hungry next morning. Of course, it will mean bow-ties etc.!

Glad to hear you had a good sleep in at Wayville Mum – guess you felt like it. So Noye did win after all his campaigning (?) – Clare will certainly lose all his good ‘ideas’ – guess it will be a big loss. How is the jumper going Marg? I certainly will appreciate that. Did you win the footy match Gordon? – expect so. The doc said I could play again; so played rugby this afternoon. I only have to go back once more, I think it feels quite O.K. now.

Must off the bed very shortly – feel rather tired; once again wishing you many happy returns of the 17th Dad; cheerio for now – hope all are well

Date 23-7-45

Formal dinners

Once again this is a day behind schedule – blame those rowdy Cowdens! Last weekend was as per usual – very lazy: I was pretty tired as I’d been to three parties in one week – getting a bit of a society bug! Had lunch in Melbourne Sat., after a march past, i.e. at the Depot, then met Mr. Cowden at Richmond, & went to a football match – a pretty good game. Stayed by the fire at night & went to bed early. Sunday went for a ride on Bena’s bike before lunch – covered quite a bit of country – from the city into the bush. In the afternoon got to work on a model aeroplane for Kare.

Thanks for your letters, Dad & Mum – that fowl sounded just the same as the ‘mate’. Glad you had a good day, Dad. Thanks also for that cake, biscuits, etc Mum, which I brought over – no need to add they have gone. The course that came in have already gone (this morning); they were ‘specials’ green stripers. Only 2 got through the 19th course – they are over with us. You certainly had a good win over Riverton, Gordon – you had better do the same at the sports. Hope those needles do you good Marg.; how did you enjoy the theatre? Guess you had a good weekend. I’ve paid £2 off the photo already, there is another couple to go yet – so it had better be good.

By the way Mum, I asked Bena about that brown bag & she said that would be excellent as Mrs. C. wants a brown one – so if you could get one for me please & send it to me, I will fix it up with you. Note enclosed postal note & coupons Mum.

Must tell you about the guest dinner night at the Wardroom. It certainly was an experience. We got over there about 7.15 & the dinner began at 7.45. Gosh the dining hall is some place: great paintings from wall to wall & there is an alcove above the president’s chair where the band plays selections from beginning to end. Nearly everything on the tables was beautifully worked silver. Well the meal consisted of five courses & there were over 40 stewards waiting. They would rush down in a body & everyone would be served at once. Similarly everything was removed all together. During the procedures others were coming round with wines, cigarettes & even cigarette lighters on long handles! I had soup, oysters, roast duck, etc., fruit salad & ice cream & savoury & fruit. It lasted till after 10 – some dinner, eh! I sat between the vice-pres. & a commander – amazing isn’t it?

Our dance on Friday night was a great success. Our gunroom looked like a bazaar (?), we borrowed flags from the signal school & decorated the walls, rafters, lockers, everything. Had a four piece band, a beautiful supper & about 50 or 60 here. Everyone was very pleased with it: the Commodore & Commander & all guests. Had nursing sisters, WRAN officers & a few girls from Melbourne & a couple of commander’s daughters. Well must off, hope everyone is feeling great, Cheerio for now,