

EYNSHAM PEOPLE: WIN GOODY – 90 NOT OUT

I grew up in Liverpool in a happy, secure, middle-class home. I had a brother (older) and two sisters (younger), and we had lots of aunts, uncles and cousins within easy walking distance. All the girls were expected to stay home and help their mothers, careers not thought of and certainly not encouraged. However, because I was mad keen on babies I was allowed to go and train as a nursery nurse. What I learned there would come in useful for a girl anyway, they thought.

After school I went to the Princess Christian College in Manchester to train. It was the northern equivalent of Norland College except that Norland don't reckon they have an equivalent. "Baby nursing is common sense scientifically applied", we were told when we arrived! I spent my first month in the laundry. No disposable nappies and no detergents in those days and we were not allowed to use soap on the nappies. Imagine it!



Next month the kitchen, after that I went into the nurseries, first as an under-nurse and then a head nurse with my own baby. In the afternoons we took the babies out, pram-pushing and had lectures. A local 'lady' came in to take us for knitting. I could have run rings around her having started on clothes for my dolls and was already doing Fair Isles and other complicated patterns for myself. She had two set phrases – 'perfectly ghastly' and 'too too'. My friend and I took one each lesson and tried to see who could make her say theirs the most. Girls will be girls – nothing changes!

We were allowed out of College on Sundays to go to 8 am Communion. That was the first time I fell asleep in Church, on my knees, if you believe it. I was in charge of a delicate baby on three-hourly feeds right through the 24 hours. I don't have that excuse now! After College I had a few temporary jobs, one with a precious baby whose mother had previously had a cot death.

Then came the War. Not wanting to wait to be called up, which was going very slowly, I went to the Registry Office looking for a war job. "Have you got a degree?" they asked. "No." "Well we've got nothing for you."

A friend introduced me to the MTC (Mechanical Transport Corps). They were looking for drivers. You did a bit of training, bought your own uniform and got stuck in. They were a kind of agency really, providing drivers where wanted. They had something of a bad name in London where many of them were owner drivers driving officers around. Trying to escape being called up, people said. Not so up north. My first job was for the West Derby PAC (Public Assistance Committee) where they had departments like ERIK (Emergency Relief in Kind). No state pensions in those days, no cash handouts. They arranged vouchers at local shoe shops for children's shoes, ditto coats and deliveries of coal, etc.

We were busy taking a whole fleet of canteens down to the docks to feed the dockers whose eating places had been bombed out in raids. Later, when school meals started, we also took dinners around to the schools, most of whom didn't have their own kitchens. We collected from central kitchens, often hospital ones and delivered to the schools.

We were allowed one morning a week in a local garage to learn to look after our vehicles. This was optional and not many girls took it up. I found it useful especially with one canteen, a converted Bedford truck called Denmark (it was given by the people of Denmark) because it had a faulty starter and I could do it from under the bonnet. Our canteen fleet were all called from the places that had given the money for them. We had all

the West Indies. We also had a fleet of cars, a real assortment. There was a Buick with balloon tyres that just loved sitting in the tram lines. It was a real knack to get it out – a quick twist of the wheel with a jab on the accelerator.

I went to collect a car one day, a fancy American job and I couldn't find a starter in it anywhere. I sat there and said to myself, "It *has* got a starter." Guess where it was? Combined with the accelerator pedal!

We dispersed the vehicles at night so that one bomb wouldn't get the lot. We had to take the rotor arms out to demobilise them and in the winter drain them. No anti-freeze then. What a pain!

Other jobs we had were mainly meeting people coming in at the port. I remember the refugees from Singapore when Singapore fell. They had to be taken to the PAC refuge houses. Some had homes to go to, some had families or friends to take them in, all to be arranged, and some had to be found permanent accommodation, not to mention warm clothes.

I met my first film star! He had taken up the Services offer to pay fares home for any Brits who were stranded overseas as long as they joined up. I don't remember his name though I can still see his face. One day we met and fed a liner full of German prisoners of war who were brought ashore to question, delouse and feed before setting sail again to Canada POW camps. The Intelligence Corps were busy on the landing stage, amongst them the local Greek restaurateur's son and the son of one of the foreign Consuls. Busy translating, I guess. There were all nationalities there. We fed the prisoners with nourishing beef stew with liver in it.

After three years of this the Yanks arrived. They were looking for drivers and I switched jobs. My American Colonel was a master stevedore and it was up and down the dock road again. I was good at dealing with the pigeons of which there were hundreds scavenging the cereals that had escaped from sacks on the lorries. You had to steer at them and put your foot down and they got out of the way. It was no use slowing down for them, they would just loiter on forever. Try and run over them and they got the message.

My Colonel smoked cigars non-stop and I was green by the time I got home the first day. Talking of getting home, I went by tram when I had finished in town, in the rush hour which started early and finished late. You had to catch one going the wrong way, stay on at the Pier Head (terminal) and come back past the place where you started otherwise you would not get on.

I had one trip out with the Americans, all the way to Anglesey to sort out a serviceman in police custody for being drunk in charge of a tug boat. It was lovely to see the countryside: it was still there. One morning I woke up to the radio telling us the Allies had landed in Normandy, the second front, D-Day. My Americans had gone. I hadn't realised that that was what they were organising, all the supplies and transports. You'll think I was dim but secrets were well-kept in those days and you didn't ask questions.

So I found another job. One that promised 'overseas'. It turned out to be for ENSA (Entertainments National Service Association) and I went to London to be interviewed by Basil Dean, the great impresario. I could say I've been on stage at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, but I was not singing (you'll all believe that easily enough). I was going for injections - typhoid and typhus and stuff. After a few days in Sussex, wonderful country again, where we were allocated our trucks, TCVs (troop carrying vehicles), and got them all ready to go, we embarked at Tilbury for our journey overseas.

We took ten days to cross the Channel, believe it or not. After loading up, we sailed to the mouth of the river and waited for a convoy to assemble in order to have naval escort through the Dover Straits. When we arrived at Mulberry Harbour, Normandy, the harbour was already full of ships unloading and we had to wait. Our Captain preferred not to be a sitting duck so we sailed out west and back. We eventually got our turn to unload and engineers came aboard to see the cargo overside with cranes on to a landing craft. Things were going nicely when a storm brewed up. Work was stopped and we had another trip west, including engineers strewn all over the deck. At this time we were getting short of rations. We had tinned salmon for breakfast. The ship's Officers hid slices of bread in the dining table drawer and we had that – white bread we hadn't seen for years! They also let us use the Officers' shower. Great. It was my first hot shower ever. Nowadays nearly every household has one. Changes!

Then back to finish the job. It was dark by the time we got to go over the side, and a heavy swell. We had to go one at a time down a rope ladder hanging down the side of the ship and wait for the signal from above. “Now,” and you jumped off backwards to catch the landing craft on the top of its swell. We landed in the arms of American GIs.

“Cripes, Jo, dames, watch your language.” And they gave us Hershey bars. We found our trucks and prepared to drive up the Bailey Bridge one by one. “Don’t start till the truck in front gets to the top and follow it when you get there.” When you did get there, there was no sign of the other truck. It was pitch black and a sea of mud. Of course we had dipped masked lights that we’d been using all through the war. We fetched up in a French holiday B&B, the *Clos Fleuris*, and were given vegetable soup for supper. Delicious but dire results!



To begin with we met parties arriving at the coast, mainly big bands – Henry Hall, Geraldo, Joe Loss, etc, and took them round their whole tour, camps, hospitals and in Paris, the theatre. When we got to Neijmegen with Joe Loss, somebody had nicked the ivories out of the piano. “Why are we waiting?” sang the troops.

When we were at an American hospital with Geraldo’s lot one of the musicians¹ sitting next to me in the coffee break said, “You know, you’ve knocked me for six.” I had a mouthful of iced bun and didn’t reply. It was an odd thing for him to have said because I don’t think he knew one end of a cricket bat from the other. “Do they play in the rain?” he asked me years later of footballers. No wall to wall soccer on telly in those days. Phil’s friend told me later that Phil

had spotted me on the quay waiting to pick the Band up when they disembarked and told him, “If I ever marry again that’s the girl I’d like to marry.” Do you believe in love at first sight?

We were not allowed maps and signposts had all been removed. You had to work out where you were going before you started and hope it would work. Some routes had signs like “Maple Leaf Up” on odd trees and posts. And there were notices – Verges cleared to 25 feet. No straying for a comfort stop. It was men to the front of the convoy and women to the back and stay on the road.

After we had dropped off the Joe Loss Orchestra in Holland, there was a breakthrough somewhere in the line and we were sent all the way back to Paris. Going the other way was an endless line of vehicles going up, including Monte in his staff car with red flags flying.

After this we were stationed permanently in Paris where ENSA had a cinema and a theatre – offices and premises in a large concert hall where classical music was played non-stop – canned of course.

We had whole companies from the West End theatres bringing their play out to our theatre. With these came Rex Harrison, Yvonne Arnaud, Sybil Thorndike (I took her to the Anglican Church where she read the lesson) and many others including Sadlers Wells Ballet (Margot Fonteyn; Robert Helpman); Moira Shearer in the Corps de Ballet (and shining like a star) and the Old Vic (Ralph Richardson, Laurence Olivier, etc). I had the dancers of the ballet and my friend took the orchestra. As well as daily rehearsals and shows I took my lot to a lesson from an old Russian Ballet teacher. I was allowed to sit in and watch. We went to the theatre every night while waiting to take our parties home. I could go on forever name-dropping.

I could go on forever telling you about adventures in the snow and skidding down a frozen hill in Versailles, and doing a complete circle skid round on a Paris Boulevard, French cars swirling past and avoiding me with great skill.

1 Phil Goody, flute/trombone/sax: d.1968

After fourteen months we came home and a year later I married my musician and settled down for twenty years: happy family life bringing up three lovely girls – lovely then, lovely now.

We lost Phil suddenly. I went out shopping with him. I went my way, he went his, to meet at the car afterwards. When I got to the car I couldn't open my door, knocked on the window but Phil didn't respond. I went round to his side and I didn't realise immediately that he'd left us.

The girls were still with me then but as they got married, one by one, I joined adult classes to keep me busy and stop them from feeling they had to stay in and keep me company. Painting, pottery, woodwork, Italian, social studies and keep-fit were all on the list.

My Father was Anglican, my Mother Congregational and our family was brought up in the Anglican Church but loved our visits to Handsworth Congregational when visiting our Birmingham relations.

During the war years at home I still went to All Hallows, Allerton – when I had time off on a Sunday, not often. When Phil and I settled in Eltham I tried the nearest Anglican Church. It was very High Church compared with what I was used to and no one spoke to me. I didn't go again except to have my two youngest baptised. Margaret was baptised in Liverpool.

I took the girls to dancing classes in Sidcup, having enjoyed dancing myself when young. Came the day when the two older girls were called to rehearsal for the Annual Display on a Sunday morning. I decided to try church again and took my youngest, then about six, with me. Phil was always working on Sundays doing "Chelsea at Nine" or "Sunday Night at the London Palladium". No pre-recording in those days, everything went out live. I went to Eltham Congregational. While we were waiting for the service to start someone from the pew behind leaned over my shoulder and said, "There's a Sunday School in the Hall if the little girl would like to out with the other children." Philippa said she wouldn't but when it came time for the children to go she got up and went with them.

When we got home for lunch Philippa said to her sisters, "There's a Sunday School and it's lovely and we can go this afternoon." They did and from then for years they did not miss a single afternoon Sunday School except when we were on holiday or visiting my family home in Liverpool for Christmas.

I settled in well at the Congregational Church too. I was soon asked to represent them on the Eltham Council of Churches. It was a big Council with eight Anglican Churches, two Methodist, two Baptist, a Presbyterian, Congregational, Church of Christ and an independent called Eltham Park Chapel.

I was voted on to the Diaconate (now Elders) and became their Secretary. I was the Chairman of the equivalent of Anglican Deanery Missionary Council, and Secretary to the newly-formed Sunday School Parent Teachers Association, where we tried to take some of the load off the teachers by organising the outings to the seaside and sports in the local parks.

I also got involved in the Congregational Church newsletter, was Editor for years, and Congregational Editor to the Eltham News, which was a monthly ecumenical paper. Each church involved had its own page and we shared responsibility for the joint pages.

We had to go every month to a printing firm somewhere in North London to proof-read – upside down and backwards for the final check. It was a day's outing. I used to drive an Anglican Rector who read his daily office or whatever on the way. He would look up somewhere in the middle of Piccadilly Circus and say, "There's someone trying to overtake you on your left." "Well, he can wait, it's my right of way." "He doesn't look as if he's going to." "Well, he is."

I used to go to all the church 'do's' and take photographs that Phil processed and printed for me. When he died I had to learn to use the dark room myself. The pictures were never the same.

After Phil died I got a part-time job in an office. Terrifying to start with. I had no shorthand and my typing was self-taught for church newsletters. However, I managed to get through by sticking at it – spending less time chatting and doing my hair, etc, in the cloakroom than all the smart trained little girls.

The Vicar of St John's (our Congregational partner church) came to see me one day and asked if I wanted a job. I said I had one. He was looking for someone to do office work and generally help the General Secretary of the New Guinea Mission, another clergyman. The Mission Office was moving from Northampton to Eltham and St John's were providing premises and a voluntary Treasurer. I changed jobs and stayed with the NGM for thirteen years. It is now the Papua New Guinea Church Partnership, the country having joined with Papua and then won their independence. I visited PNG for a holiday and met my first cannibal. Could fill many more pages here, but I won't.

Soon after Margaret and John set up home in Eynsham. I moved here, too. I hadn't been here many weeks when the Vicar came to see me and asked if I would be Deanery Secretary. I said I'd give it a go and was plunged into work at St Leonard's. Being on the Deanery brought me straight on to the PCC who were also on the look-out for a new Secretary.

I got involved in other village organisations and picked up three other secretarial jobs. The Vicar only stayed about eighteen months and then left and threw Roundabout at me.

I won't go into more details about Eynsham – you must all know what I have been doing.

Times change. I do much less now. My legs think the Co-Op and back is far enough to walk. I gave up my car years ago. I don't go out much but find plenty to do at home – reading, knitting, sewing, painting, crosswords and jigsaw puzzles. The days are not long enough!

I miss taking the grandchildren out at half-term, baby-sitting, family holidays, and trips to the Holy Land. I went twice with Arnold and Kathleen Lee, and then to Oberammergau. Physically I couldn't cope with it all now so have had to draw in my horns and stop hankering.



My Christmas card list gets shorter every year. Did I say nothing changes? I was wrong. Everything changes – no – there is “One who changes not.” “Abide with me.”

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