

Written by Jo Chesterman

I begin on Friday September 1st 1939 about 9 o'clock in the morning with my Dad taking my sister and brother to Ivydale Road school to be evacuated to the country for our safety. My sisters seemed quite happy to be going, but not me, I was crying. I didn't want to leave Mum & Dad.

We were taken to the train station with our little brown cotton shoes bag, and a box with gasmask. In the bag was a tin cornbeef, a tin in condensed milk and a Lyon's apple pie. I cannot remember taking any change of clothes. The train went to Oxted in Surrey to a school hall, where people picked the children they could look after. My brother Jack went to a policeman house, my sister Rose went to a cottage where the man was a farm worker. My sister Phylis and me went to a farm. We slept and had our meals in the same room, which was boiler and drying room. They had a maid who help to look after us. We were both very unhappy. It was so different and strange to wake up in the morning with cows mooing in the window early in the morning.

Dad came to see us on a Sunday. Then, when Mum came, she had us moved because Phylis had heart trouble and it was not healthy. Phylis was taken back home and Rose and I went to another house 3 houses away from school, which I liked because at the farm we had to walk about 2 to 3 miles. The lady of this house, Mrs Ashdown, was not very good to us. There was another girl from London, who went to a grammar school. She had eggs for breakfast and toast whereas Rose and I had only porridge and I was very homesick. So we were brought home. We had 9 months of unhappiness. Now I've lived through life I realize, my mum was right to bring us home. (Mr of the house?)

Back home was great for me. The schools were closed. One had to listen to the wireless to know which schools were open. I go to the school which I knew was closed and then go home and tell mum it was closed. So I was given all jobs to do. (I remember my sister Alice who was in the ATS army was a singer to the troops in Halstead). There was a air raid on and I had to go to the shops so mum made me wear Alice's helmet which I thought was fun until, on my own and with enemy planes flying above I could not get home quick enough.

In the autumn of 1940 the raid became very bad. One night I stood with my dad looking towards London docks which was all on fire, that night in bed was very bad. So mum and dad talked about mum taking us to Halsted if Alice could find somewhere to live which she did. So anyway we went. A new area for me, new school, new friends they would come to our flat and play cards for fun, my job was to make tea for them as we never had a lot of money. I had to find tin cups and jam jars to put the tea in.

Alice got married. My oldest sister came and lived with us with her little girl because the bombing was very bad in London. Once day I was at school, my sister Alice came and said I have to come home mum wants to tell me something, I walked up the stairs to the room where all my brothers and sister were and then I got told, 'Your dad is dead and brother Jack has killed by a bomb hitting our London flat'. Jack who was 14yrs had just been to work for 3 weeks. Dad was injured from the waist down and

died on the way to the hospital. This was 1941 11 May, the most heaviest night of bombing. It was a long time before I could believe this was true. In 1942 when we came back to London I looked very hard in case my dad was still alive. It was quiet with the air raids at this time. One night we had to get up and sat under the kitchen table. You could hear bombs falling and if you could hear a whistle, everyone would say it wasn't going to hit us. One day I had to have a day off from school to look after my brother Sid, who was home on leave from the Navy. During the morning a school board man knocked to ask why I wasn't at school. I told the truth that I was helping to cook his dinner because my mum had to go to work and he left after a few home truths saying I was doing my bit towards the war effort, I was pleased.

During this summer we had bombing of houses near us so to help, mum, me and friends would collect wood from the bomb damage for fire wood as coal was scarce. As was many things that people take for granted today. School was great in these days not much air raids. Then it started again with the doodlebug. This was a small aeroplane with flames coming out of the back. When the engine stopped it would dive down to the houses. I see many of these so I was going to work one day at 8-15am, I just got off a tram, when all the people were running and shouting go to the shelter which I knew was just across the road from the tram stop I just made it in time before the bang. When I came up from the shelter was a lot smoke and the corset factory was just a lot of rubble. People all running around trying to get the people trapped in the rubble. Me and my work mate walked to our work place, talking about how lucky we were. Our boss who knew we were coming along at this time was very pleased to see us. Many young girls and boys were trapped for at least 2 to 3 days and nights. One girl was a friend and was injured and ill in hospital for a long time. Then after sometime the V2 which was a silent bomb that you didn't hear until it landed with a very large bang and did more damage, very frightening so everyone was living in their nerves all the time.

When I was a 15yrs I attended night school. One night May 14th on our way home about 9 o'clock everyone was excited because news was THE WAR WAS OVER. We arrived at our area to find a bonfire and every one singing and dancing the older folk saying no more rationing. I being a child, having not had many things such as oranges, bananas, sweets which were all short in supply not many new outfits, had a lot to look forward to but I must say it didn't do me any harm as I came through 6yrs of war with no injuries, but the lost of my Dad, and a happy childhood with my family.

Who ever reads this its only a 9 yrs to 15 yrs of age 6yrs my life and memories many more people suffered much more than I.