

It was certainly the splendid life of a youth in Shanghai, a life of a good public school and privilege with servants at ones beck and call. A feeling of superiority, which was soon dispelled when we were interned by the Japanese. Made to feel inferior by the empire of the rising sun, especially when they overran Hong Kong and overtook Singapore. Then roll call in the mornings were difficult until we got the hang of it as we had to number off in Japanese, and until WWII and the Pacific War had ended we had to obey our masters. It was a lesson well learnt as it has served me in good stead. I was, and am neither superior nor Inferior to anyone. Those idealistic days of youth, being chauffeured to school, the long hot summers and spending holidays in Hong Kong in my grandfather's mansion, being pampered by aunts and uncles. Those days are gone forever, regrettably a way of life, never to be regained and totally lost to me.

Instead we had to endure the real world, the hard knocks of life. In 1947 when I arrived in England, I was confronted with a new life. I had found salvation in the spirit of that age. Of course everything was dull, grey and most things were lacking. Bombed sites were everywhere. More so in Coventry than anywhere else with the exception of London. In fact the term "Coventriated" was a term used to describe a place bombed out of existence. But I was there to see the rebuilding of the city centre, the new 50 metres swimming pool whose exterior was shaped like an elephant, one of the symbols of Coventry. I was there to see the new Coventry Cathedral arise from the ashes like the phoenix to abutt the shell of the bombed out one. I was there to see Coventry City resurrected to become one of the first modern cities of England. Exciting times indeed. There was rationing of food, clothing, furniture and they had to bear the kite mark, but everyone pulled together and there was an air of optimism that pervaded the country, the Festival of Britain, in 1951 was brilliant, celebrating British industry, arts and science, showing the world what an inventive nation we were. The first jet passenger airplane, the De Havilland "Comet" flew in 1949, and later in 1959 Sir Christopher Cockerell's Hovercraft, crossed the channel from Dover to Calais in 2 hours. The new Elizabethan age had arrived. with a young Queen Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh. I remember the street parties for the coronation of our Queen, It was such a time to be so alive and confident of the future. As ex-internees and repatriates we were offered two towns to establish ourselves. One was Kidderminster and the other was Coventry not a town but rather a city as it had a cathedral and bombed heavily in the war. We, my two brothers and I, chose Coventry for its many industries, i.e. Cortaulds, Cashes, GEC, coal mining and the motor industry. We were billeted in Baginton Fields Hostel. Apart from the manager the staff were all Dutch. I found this rather curious, perhaps it was a hostel for the Dutch army. 1947 was the year when we had one of the most severe winters on record. At the Hostel the snow came up to the window sills and sometimes we could not push the front door open for snow. In dips and hollows it was known that

snow still lay on the ground in June. We were well looked after here, as I understand it we were given double rations to feed us up. Things like spotted dick, plum duff, toad in the hole, boiled cabbage, scrambled eggs made with powdered egg all these were unknown to my palate. We even tried snoek and whale meat, both were unpalatable. We were also given a hot drink of cocoa last thing in the evening.

My first job, which I obtained at the job centre, was in itself strange too, everything to a young man a bit wet behind his ears was strange. We had to queue for quite a while shuffling along until we arrived at a desk to be interviewed. Finally I was given a card with instructions to attend at the Royal Naval Stores Depot together with my older brother Lewis. We were accepted and started work the following week for £2 per week. I had to deal with Asdic equipment but clerical work was boring and not to my liking, fortunately the stores were in the stage of winding down anyway. Shortly after I applied to G.E.C. as a trainee draughtsman starting there only a few months later. At this time the three brothers made a pact to help each other financially so we pooled our earnings and shared it out equally. Lewis studied architecture, eventually becoming an architect working for Coventry Council. My younger brother joined Rootes Motors as a student engineer. He was a brilliant scholar, one of the few to gain a Higher National prize in mechanical engineering. He got a distinction in every subject. He became a M.I.Mech.E and went on to great things. He worked at Rootes in the engine and transmission department, then worked for Foxes Glacier mints as a development engineer and finally ended his career as the project engineer for Kodak in charge of large projects they were developing. When we had all progressed in our chosen careers we ended the pact.

But what of the duffer? Of all the siblings and there were 6 of us I am the survivor, the last man standing. From June 1958 with the Rover Motor Co. in Solihull to December 1990 with Nissan in Washington Tyne and Wear when I retired, I had spent 32 years in the Automobile industry. I have found my way to a wonderful life, with four wonderful children and eight beautiful grandchildren. I am truly grateful to be in such a happy state, in good health, without any worries or stress. And yet the menace of the years, finds and still finds me unafraid. I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul.