

THE ANGEL SHIP

©2019 KJ Kennelly. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means, graphic, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, or information and retrieval systems without written permission of the publisher. This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, places, events and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

Published by Hellgate Press

(An imprint of L&R Publishing, LLC)

Hellgate Press

PO Box 3531

Ashland, OR 97520

email: info@hellgatepress.com

Interior & Cover Design: L. Redding

Front cover painting: "Dunkirk Beaches, 1940" by Richard Eurich

Cataloging In Publication Data is available from the publisher upon request.

ISBN: 978-1-55571-960-9

Printed and bound in the United States of America

First edition 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

THE ANGEL SHIP

KJ KENNELLY


Hellgate Press



Ashland, Oregon

*For Peter, an intrepid voyager and kindred spirit.
May your shipmates be loyal and your winds fair.*

Prologue

 ON MAY 24, 1940, the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) and Allied troops are pinned against the coast near the French port of Dunkirk. The Germans are ten miles away and advancing. There appears to be no escape. There are 400,000 men to be evacuated. Available warships draw too much water to get near the beaches, so smaller craft are needed. Volunteers come forward with their boats. It is one of the greatest rescues of all time by this fleet of small vessels designated “The Little Ships of Dunkirk.”

The heroism of these volunteers becomes legendary. This deliverance of 338,000 men safely back to England to fight again expedites victory in World War II.

“As long as the English tongue survives,” said the *New York Times*, “the word Dunkerque will be spoken with reverence.”

The historian Walter Lord said, “To the British, Dunkirk symbolizes a generosity of spirit, a willingness to sacrifice for the common good... to the French, a bitter defeat, to the Germans, opportunity forever lost.”

Marie Celine, also called “The Angel Ship,” was one of the “Dunkirk Little Ships.”

ONE

Marie Celine

*H*ER NAME WAS *Marie Celine* and my parents built her. She was fifty feet long, a staysail schooner, elegant and sea-kindly. I was born on the starboard settee in the main saloon. She was launched in 1936, and we were going to sail round the world. Then the war happened.

My, such a long time. Sixty years. A blind longing. A dream of *Marie Celine* coming back to me. That lost part of my life coming back. They all said: “You can’t go home again,” but I had a chance to return. I had to take it.

My, such a long time.

Sixty years ago I hid under the foresail bag on the bow of *Marie Celine* as she headed across the Dover Strait to help evacuate the British Expeditionary Force. I was fourteen. All so well remembered— as if it were yesterday. Black memories. Black dive bombers. Black thunder.

The *Marie Celine* was in the first convoy of Little Ships that left for Dunkirk from Ramsgate, 2200 hours, Wednesday, May 29, 1940. Outside the Ramsgate breakwater, the Channel was tranquil, like smoked glass against a curtain of low clouds. Putts and sputters of engines, fluttering sails, shouts, and whistles refracted off the dense atmosphere. Diesel fuel, coal, and petrol fumes mixed with iodine and the fishy odours of the sea.

The escorting motorboat, *Triton*, waited for us. Her skipper's bullhorn echoed off the fog, "All you ships close up now and follow me. There'll be no Stukas or Heinkels tonight. Not with clouds this thick."

And *Marie Celine* headed out under diesel power, her double-reefed mainsail up for stability. We towed two long boats with two-man rowing stations and two ship's lifeboats, each capable of holding maximum, about sixteen men.

I gripped the samson posts as *Marie Celine's* bow cut through the glassy water. She gently lifted and rolled with wakes from the bigger boats. Ahead in the vapour were about ten boats, mostly escorts. Dutch barges, a Portsmouth–Isle of Wight ferry, tugs, and a few open motor launches. Looking astern, I saw a flotilla of lifeboats under tow by another Dutch barge, sailing yachts like ours, and a string of Royal National Lifeboats towed by a couple of Thames excursion boats. Herring drifters, oyster dredgers, and cockle boat fleets from Leigh-on-Sea sailed out from the estuaries alongside single-mast fishing smacks and cabin cruisers in Bristol condition. The convoy stretched as far as I could see until it smudged into the horizon.

A destroyer moved towards *Marie Celine*. As she came abeam, I could make out the name on her quarter: *Malcolm*. Her engines hummed. The decks were laden with shadow soldiers against a dusky night. Tin hats like a field of domes. Rifles, slung over their shoulders, stabbed the night.

A Thames excursion boat passing on our port had BBC on the wireless. A folk song, *Widcome Fair*, rang out. It was a well-known ballad about a farmer who had lent his grey mare to a neighbour who wanted to go to the fair. He promised the farmer he would take good care of the mare. Instead, he abused her and loaded her down with all of his mates. The mare died of the weight. On moonlit nights the mare was seen running the skies of Devon, moaning under the heavy load. I gazed back at the figures on the *Malcolm's* decks. I wondered if they were feeling that weight of war and defeat, those silent soldiers against the night.

At that moment, artillery crumped in the distance. I saw a faint smoky-red reflection off the sky ahead.

After the *Malcolm* passed, her wake hit. The wave sent small craft off in different directions like so many wood chips. *Marie Celine* heaved, rolling violently, dipping her rails in the sea. Dad cursed from the helm. I lost my hold and tumbled down the deck into the boots of Mallory McCay. He huffed, "What in hell's name do you think you're doing here?" Mal's carrot-hair stood up like a brush on his egghead. Freckles blotched his pink skin. He was wearing his dress Royal Navy, all the brass buttons gleaming. My bully neighbor looked impressive and older, but that made no difference to me. I grew up with Mal.

Mallory McCay was a lowly Royal Navy sub-lieutenant. He'd seen action in the North Sea and got commissioned. And Mallory-Mad-Mal McCay was only sixteen. A big lad with no fear. His body looked stuffed into a uniform made for a normal-sized soldier. I knew Mal lied when he went in, as many of my schoolmates did. If it weren't for my parents, I would be in blues with brass shining everywhere. After all, I was actually taller than Mal, just not as thick. And I had more hair on my legs. And there he was on my boat, running the show.

The Admiralty had ordered their own to man the civilian boats going on this mission. Dad would hear nothing of that. But Mal had asked for our boat and Dad welcomed him. Family.

Dad looked splendid that night wearing his blue jacket of the Royal London Yacht Club, khaki trousers, and a tin helmet. He hovered over the wheel, tugged at his white mustache, and shook his head. "Colley, you were supposed to stay in school with the other lads." He slid open the binnacle. The red compass light sprayed his long face. His eyes flickered at me from under the deep cover of tangled brows, "Go below and help your mother." He checked his course, "East-south-east." Then he closed the binnacle cover and said to Mal, "Check and see that no one has lost his way. I know the compasses on some of those pleasure boats have never been corrected. We're under orders to follow the convoy. I think they may be off course."

Mal swept the horizon with his binoculars. "There are mixed messages, Doctor Neville.

At 2130 the signals said to instruct all personnel boats not to close Dunkirk harbour, for it's completely blocked; we were to head for eastern beaches to collect troops. Now I've got a signal from that destroyer to port. He's saying the entrance to Dunkirk harbour is practicable."

Dad said, "We'll have to stand by."

I hesitated, wanting desperately to be part of it all—to be on deck. It was always Dad and me. Now I was being sent below? I gave him a defiant look. He raised his brows, "Do as I say, lad!"

When I reached the bottom of the companionway steps, the galley steamed. A large stew pot foamed brown liquid, spitting onto the stove, and another pot bubbled with potatoes. The stew and potatoes gave off an earthy and slightly urine-tinged odour. I remembered that smell from the back lanes of town. Mutton. A copper on the back burner simmered boiled tea, so black it had a slick on it. We never drank our tea that way. And mutton? I thought it tasted like piss!

In the orange flicker of oil lamps, Mum turned from stoking the coal stove. With her grey hair pinned up into a knot, her wide face looked like a moon. Those rosy English cheeks glowed with heat from the stove; sweat came down her temples. Her eyes burned with a scary light and narrowed, "So! Dad knew about this?"

"No, Mum. Dad didn't know a thing. I swear!"

She paused and slid the palms of her hands down the sides of her apron. I knew I was going to catch it. I stood almost a head over her, but she had strong, tight arms. She let out a breath. "*Marie Celine* is having company to tea. These boys will be hungry and thirsty. We're taking them off the beaches tonight. We're taking our house to war."

An uneasy feeling had been lingering over my country. There had been no public announcement of evacuation, but Mum knew. She was a sister at St. John's Hospital. Whether she was allowed to be aboard, or whether she stowed away as I did, I will never know.

Mum and I worked together through the night. We peeled onions, carrots, and potatoes.

In addition to our full copper water tanks, cans of water were made

fast on the teak and holly cabin sole. The Admiralty dropped off cans of water, cases of Bully Beef, corned beef, Bovril, HP brown sauce and sherry. “Sherry?” Mum queried. “Why sherry, I wonder...” Dad’s cache of single malts lay up in the bin behind the counter by the galley. The Admiralty had ordered the boats to lighten up, to toss our non-essential gear. We had no time for that. Besides, our ship could carry a great deal of weight. That’s how Mum and Dad designed her—a heavy-built cruiser.

Marie Celine was Mum’s castle, her home—the dream and joy she and Dad had saved and worked for all these years. Dad laid her oak backbone in Philip and Son boatyard, Dartmouth, Devon, and she grew into a fifty-foot schooner. She was an exotic creature in England. Schooner rigs were rare; but in Nova Scotia, where Dad was born, a schooner was the best rig to have.

My dad was a doctor, but his passion was designing yachts. He was born and raised in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia. His father was a doctor in that prosperous fishing and shipbuilding town. Lunenburg Bay was a forest of spars in those days. Dad spent every free moment down at the bustling docks, or at Smith and Rhuland boatyard. At night, instead of doing schoolwork, he built model ships. After school, Dad went to the shore and tested his sailing boats. Determined that the boy get a proper education, and to wean him off boats, Dad’s parents banished him to an English boarding school at the age of sixteen.

At seventeen, he and a couple of mates joined up to defend England and Canada in World War One. It was after the war that he finished school in England and became a doctor. Before, after, and sometimes during his workdays, Dad designed yachts, sailed yachts, and later, built yachts. He designed some formidable boats in those days, *Marie Celine* being the queen of all of them. Dad believed she was the most perfect deep-water cruising yacht ever built. She was named after my Acadian grandmother.

We had lived aboard since I was born. Mum would not let me or my mates below without taking off our shoes. She polished all the raised oak and walnut panels. And not one fingerprint dulled our brass, copper, and bronze. That night it looked like a barracks. Mutton fog permeated wood;

it steamed up the brass fixtures and Dutch tiles of our saloon. Wool blankets, cork life preservers, extra sweaters, oilskins, Dad's medical bags, and rolls of spare bandages littered our plush green settees. And not one gun.

And all the time I heard the shelling getting closer. When I could, I opened a scupper and peeked out. The sky throbbed with flashes of red, white, and yellow light that outlined a black battlement of clouds.

In the pre-dawn, the interior of *Marie Celine* bled to crimson, and artillery thunder shook the hull of Mum's beautiful boat. Exhausted, Mum dropped off for a moment in the pilot berth, under the companionway. I climbed up the companionway steps and wedged into the hatch, facing Dad. Shepherding, Mum was up and right behind me. Dad was talking to Mal, "Dunkirk. Mark: 0500 hours. Off starboard forequarter. Doesn't look right. I believe we need to be at La Panne. Or Malo-les-Bains, along the dunes." Dad's face radiated the inferno that surrounded us. His white mustache and hair, fringing the edge of his helmet, blazed red. The sea was on fire.

We had to be more than a mile off Dunkirk. It was my first experience of gunfire. Salvos from a German shore battery came one way, and our ships answered back over our masthead.

The noise thrummed and cracked right through my body.

Mal sat in the cockpit with Dad. Fixed on the scene ahead, his young hairless face shone bright rose in the glow. "There appear to be some guns outside of town. Bloody guns! We didn't expect guns to be this close. Jerries' artillery can't possibly have the range!" He raised his binoculars and searched the shoreline.

I took glasses from the rack beside me and adjusted the lenses. The city of Dunkirk that I knew as a child, with its bathing houses and vacation villas, was ablaze. The oil tank farm had been bombed and spewed billows of black smoke and flame. Bathing huts, food stalls, and boardwalks along the beach were burning. There were two long piers, called "moles", built out into the sea before the port entrance, like breakwaters. Broken ships were all around the port entrance and out to the moles. Dead ships jutted out of the sea like charred bone

fragments of shattered skeletons. Prows, bows, sterns up, wedges of wide paddle wheelers, and spars crammed the entrance. Ship's furniture, bulkheads, tin hats, dead men. Dead men floated all around us. I thought I would be sick, but my mouth was dry from fear and my stomach heaved painfully.

An Isle of Man ferry, heading into Dunkirk to pick up troops, had just been hit and split in half. I heard Mal and Dad shouting, questioning the source of the explosion. They didn't know if it was a torpedo from a Schnellboote or a magnetic mine. Suddenly the water all round was aflame. The blast sent us surfing on confused waves. Dad was wrestling with the helm, zigzagging to avoid being hit. "Watch for debris lads. I can't do everything!"

Cloud reflection shone on fiery stumps in the water. I had to focus the glass on them, for the bomb surge was bringing them our way; they could puncture *Marie's* hull. I wish I hadn't looked. Those blackened stumps were bodies of men covered with oil, on fire, still floating in their life jackets and life belts, their burning arms raised, signaling for help. The urge to cry out rattled me. I was not going to cry. Holding my breath, I pressed my fist against my mouth. But sobs were swelling my chest and rising to my throat, choking me. I started up the steps to help, to bring them aboard, our men, save them. Mum pressed her face in my back and pulled me down the ladder by the hem of my shirt. She held me there on the steps. "They are gone, love. Gone to heaven." Explosive sobs jolted my body against hers. "Gone to heaven, love." After a bit, I got my breath back and finally my head cleared.

On deck I heard Mal railing, "Oh God, oh God, God!"

Mum observed, "Mal's grabbed his torch. Flashing to the naval ships standing offshore. His hands are shaking. I hope they can read his signals." She eased me up a step and together we watched.

The thunder of artillery clapped from the shore and was returned by our war ships. The sea looked like red oatmeal and smelled of oil so strong it was hard to breathe. Our escort ships had scattered. Spouts of water erupted on all sides of us.

Mal's torch blinked. He repeated, incredulous, "Shell fire from ashore. Germans are too damn close. They don't have their range yet, but God-knows, they will soon. They will soon." In seconds Mal caught a flashing message from a destroyer waiting offshore. "It's no good here, Doctor. They say we're supposed to be at the dunes near La Panne. Can you do it Doctor Neville? Do you know how to get there?"

Dad opened the compass binnacle, checked his headings, tapped the throttle up and turned the helm. "No worries. Hold on, lads."

TWO

La Panne

*I*T WAS HARD to tell in the mist, but I think we may have been one of the first small vessels at the beaches off La Panne. The Admiralty said there would be soldiers there to be ferried to the naval ships in deeper waters. We still had the luck of the weather and no Luftwaffe. At full dawn, Dad had me up on the bow taking soundings with the lead line. The sky and the sea were like mauve sheets. I heard a low roar. I couldn't make out the sound; it came from the beaches. I tossed the lead into the water and counted the knots in the line and called back, "Three fathoms, mark. Two, mark." I watched the shore. I could see lorries, motorcycles, haversacks, and rifles strewn about the water's edge. But I saw no soldiers, only dark spots on the dunes. The rumbling roar continued.

"That's as far as she goes, lads," Dad called out. Mal and I tossed the forward anchor into the sandy bottom. Dad backed off and set her right. The fog cleared enough for us to see the spots on the beach moving. I realized that the roar was the moan of the wounded, the shouts and the murmurs of thousands of men. Soldiers crawled out of bomb craters and off the dunes. In a confused mass they made their way to the water. Muddied, caked with blood and sand, they waded out. Some

carried bloodied and bandaged mates on their backs. They looked like walking dead men. I was shaking and fearful.

Mal put his arm over my shoulder. "Shit," he said, "is this what our army has come to?" Overwhelmed, Mal and I fixed on the spectacle.

"Lads. Lads!" I heard Dad call, as if from another world, "Let's press on!"

Marie Celine's draft was too deep; we couldn't get in close enough. Some of the troops began to swim with their gear still strapped on. They didn't look as if they could make it. Dad quickly untied the longboat and handed the painter to Mal. I shipped a lifeboat, tossed in the oars, and jumped in. I had another set of oarlocks and oars, but I was only taking one set until we got our bearings ashore. Mal was ahead of me rowing; he could hold more than ten men. He also had another set of oarlocks and oars.

Mal hit the shallows by the beach first; the soldiers swamped his boat, which capsized, and the oars floated off.

Soldiers surrounded me. I yelled, "Keep off! Stand clear!" They grabbed onto my rails trying to board, pulling the boat and me under the water. Some men tried to help, but they didn't know anything about the water. "Help me!" I screamed. "Get under here. Grab the rail. Pull, pull, pull! Up and over." No one heard. They were trampling me. I was invisible. In the confusion, I thought I heard Mum calling my name. My boat was completely swamped. I was sure I'd lost her. A couple of men tried bailing with their helmets.

Dad tossed out a line with a cork lifesaver on the end. A few of the soldiers were able to grab it and work their way along the rope to the boat. My parents helped them up the rope ladders. And I was still left with a swarm of desperate soldiers.

At that moment, a jet-haired, thin, fragile-looking lieutenant came wading out to me.

Natty, in army uniform, all his brass shined. His face was clean-shaven and chapped. His voice boomed over the confusion, "Rutherford, here. Fifth Medium Regiment. Royal Artillery. Chappies get a sea unit going!" Rutherford, the only officer I saw, seemed to bring the men together. We dumped the water, righted the lifeboat, and Ruther-

ford organized one group of soldiers to hold the boat while the others boarded in orderly fashion. These men would be the next to leave and another team would come in. How we managed to pack so many men on the bench seats and the floorboards was a miracle. There was so little freeboard, one shift would certainly capsize the boat. I was on the center bench with one soldier beside me on the other oar, learning how to row. I coached, “In and out, in and out...one, two, in and out...”

We reached the side of *Marie Celine* and I held on to the rope ladders. A couple of the soldiers scrambled up, throwing the boat out of balance. “Stop! Don’t all leave from the same place. You’ll toss us in the sea! Slow down!” This time I think they listened for they did snap to and send one man up at a time. Others did not move at all. They stared; the tired faces went blank. I said, “Up, go up the ladders! We’re taking you home! Now, one, two, upsy-daisy!”

Balancing in the boat, I boosted while Mum and Dad pulled. All aboard. I went back for the next lot. Mal was up and rowing out with a full load. Rutherford manned the second set of oars, yelling, “Cheer up, lads. You’re going home. To hell with the Germans!”

“To hell with the Germans!” the men cheered.

“To hell with the Germans!” a naked soldier shouted. Rutherford grabbed him and another soldier threw a greatcoat over him.

On my next trip to *Marie Celine*, I saw Mum making a face. The stench from the men was acute. She shouted, “Get out your mess kits. Come to the companionway.” She dashed ahead and slipped below. Anxiously, I followed the men mobbing the companionway. I saw some climb in from the midship hatch, some squeezed down the ladder to the forward crews’ quarters—my stateroom. They rushed aft to the main saloon, crowding Mum. She was pinned. Tin cups and bowls were thrust at her from all directions. I saw confusion and fear on Mum’s face. These men were starving. The rusty-nail smell of dried blood and the sour odour of urine, feces, unwashed bodies, and cigarettes clogged the air. I offered to go below, but she shook her head.

Helping new soldiers aboard, I looked down the main hatch. With-

out looking up, Mum ladled stew, water, and boiled tea into an assortment of containers. Filling one tin bowl, she noticed she had ladled stew over a bloody field bandage dangling in the dish. The young man pulled up his wrapped hand, sucked the bandage dry, and flipped it back around his hand with his teeth. His wet brown eyes followed each ladled splash of stew with wonder. I watched Mum turn her head away and take a deep breath. Then her tear-filled eyes met his, as she smiled and slopped an extra ladle in his bowl. "And that's one to go home on, love."

Dad managed to keep a small lot of the men below, low, on the cabin sole, to balance the weight in the boat. The others, topsides, were to lie down or sit. He attended those who needed medical help. "I hadn't realized there would be such chaos. Such chaos, such chaos," he muttered to himself as he moved from soldier to soldier with his medical bag.

When he was not tending soldiers, Dad helped Mum. She worked on, breathless, brave, weepy at times, sharp and cranky other times. Dad went below and said to Mum, "We're full. We are too low in the water as it is. It's been slow going; next trip we'll be more efficient. But there were more soldiers coming on the beaches, last time I looked." He lifted another jug of water up on the sink board and poured boiled potatoes and gravy into a bucket and started up the ladder. He paused, "This whole process is too slow. Messages say Jerry's moving down the coast."

"What's that mean in time, love?" I heard Mum ask.

"Time?" He took in her look. "Could be a day, maybe two. Jerry is already on the outskirts of Dunkirk. The British Expeditionary Force and French are holding them off." He let out a tired sigh, backed down the ladder, and kissed her forehead, his lips lingering there longer than usual.

Mum glanced up at his white-whiskered face and intelligent eyes. "I hope we make it through."

He touched her cheek. "Oh, we'll make it through all right. We'll win this war. Then, we'll be sailing the South Pacific. Colley will be fishing from his canoe. And you?" He chucked her on the chin. "You'll be dressed in a sarong, suntanned, bringing me my Glen Scotia in a co-

conut shell.” He continued up the ladder, “Right now, we’ve got a man in every crack of this boat. We are putting up some sails for extra power.”

A navy launch bumped to port and unloaded small stores of Navy cocoa, bread, tinned beef, and jugs of water. Mum worked on making sandwiches of corned beef and Coleman’s mustard. She added Bovril, HP sauce, and water to the stew. She also tended the wounded below.

On deck it was hard for Mal and me to move about getting the sails up. The engine kicked in for Dad, and we got the foresails up and shook the reefs out of the main without tangling anyone in the lines. *Marie Celine* turned offshore. We were tense; what with the weight, the easterly breeze, and the currents, if she decided to flounder or balk, we could be dead. Sitting ducks. Would we get a way on? We felt her shudder and remain perfectly still.

Mal bounded from port rail to starboard rail, “What? Hell! We’ve run aground!” The soldiers’ voices dimmed.

Dad stroked *Marie Celine’s* cockpit coaming, reached over, patted her sides and said in a tender voice, so the passengers would not hear, “Come darling, love of my life, Old Thing. You have lives to save.”

Marie Celine shuddered again, creaked and moaned, as her keel dragged the bottom, and she gradually moved off the wind. Gaining speed, she headed out and into the Channel. There was a breath of wind. The diesel chunked away. Clouds began to thin. For the first time we noticed the odd assortment of boats that were with us, ferrying BEF.

The soldiers aboard were beginning to look less haggard. Atmosphere lightened. Some flat on the decks in oblivious sleep. Others smoked and chatted with their mates and shared bottles of sherry passed around by Mum. Some curled up in balls around the mast and anchor windlass, anywhere they could fit, and slept. Some got sick on the deck.

“Look Mal, wind for our lady. I see patches of blue.” I felt infused with triumph.

Mal frowned up at the sky. “Man, you don’t want that! Clear skies, we get Stukas! Wind, we get waves so we can’t get chaps off the beach!”

That first trip, overloaded with BEF, was long. Currents were strong

and *Marie Celine* made a slow, but gentle headway for the waiting destroyer, *Oriole*. Bombs were going off by the Mole, fires belched into the sky. So far, we had been free of enemy aircraft near our part of the coast, but at that moment, we heard the roar of bombers headed for our beaches.

By the time we returned and set anchor off La Panne, the beach had a new appearance. There were piles of dead soldiers, eight deep, along the dunes. Dead fish floated everywhere: herring, mackerel, sprats. The stench was choking me. Then the real horror began. Bumping up alongside the boat and lining the shore were khakied corpses. Poor devils, they'd waited to go home. Mal and I rowed on ashore, pushing through the dead. We found Lieutenant Rutherford heading up the construction of a jetty built of abandoned lorries, scavenged lumber from a lumberyard, cable, rope, and decking torn from stranded ships for a plank walkway.

Rutherford bristled, "I don't know much about soldiering, but even I could see that shore detail wasn't working. Went round the dunes, found a company of Royal Engineers. We rolled the lorries out, lined them up side-by-side, shot the tires flat, loaded sandbags on the frames.

Have a look: we've even got ourselves a walkway with a rope railing." Rutherford hustled away and frisked at the sides of the soldiers.

The jetty company worked all night, while Mal and I and all the other small vessels ferried soldiers. The first day, we small ships took about 14,000 off the beaches. The next day, after the jetty construction and with the arrival of more small craft, we got nearly 30,000 off. Those two days we saw calm in the Channel.

The following day the skies cleared, and for the first time I heard the screaming whistles of the Stukas as they swarmed out of the rising sun towards us.