

Edith Olive Weaver  
English War Bride  
Britannic  
May 23, 1945

CANADA'S IMMIGRATION MUSEUM  
**PIER 21**  
A WORLD OF STORIES



Edith Olive Weaver - My War  
Bride Story

On May 8 1945 at 10:00, the islanders were informed by the German authorities that the war was over. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill made a radio broadcast at 15:00 during which he announced: "Hostilities will end officially at one minute after midnight to-night, but in the interests of saving lives the 'Cease fire' began yesterday to be sounded all along the

front, and our dear Channel Islands are also to be freed to-day."



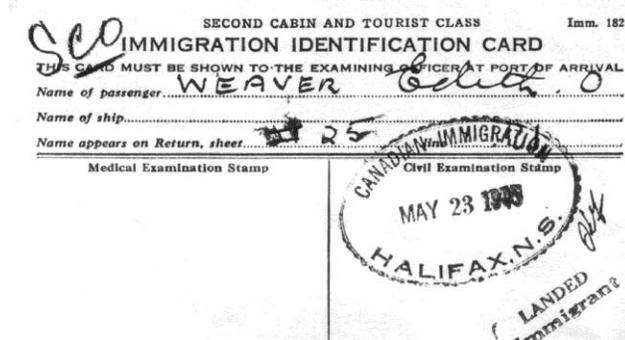
Red-headed Michael Weaver cuddles up to his pretty brunette mother, Mrs. Weaver, from Wembley, England. He was born nine months ago and his father is man Winston Weaver, now in Germany. He and his mother will live with his grandparents near Chatham.

I don't recall hearing this broadcast as I was on my way to Canada with my newborn son Michael. I wish now that I had written down the name of the ship that we traveled on, however I do recall leaving Liverpool and traveling in a zigzag fashion as there was still a concern for German U-boats. The conditions on the crossing were quite basic with four other women and their babies sharing the room. We each had a bed and the children slept in a hammock by the bedside. In those days we all used washable nappies and the engine room of the

ship served as the drying area. Unfortunately some of my nappies went missing as there were others on the passage who were not so well prepared. When one thinks about the comforts of today's cruise ships it is interesting to look back to this crossing of the Atlantic. I can recall sitting on the deck as there were no comforts such as deck chairs. I must say that it was a relief to finally arrive in Canada at Pier 21, Halifax. My husband was still active in the Royal Canadian Signal Corps and wouldn't be discharged until November 15th, 1945, so I was on my own. My Landed Immigrant papers, while the date is somewhat smudged show an arrival date of May 23rd, 1945. The immigration

process through Pier 21 must have been very straight forward as I don't remember waiting around and I believe we were put right on a passenger train for our final destinations. So off we went to Toronto. While my travel prior to immigrating was restricted to Great Britain with fairly short travel distances, I do remember wondering when we would ever arrive in Toronto; it seemed like such a long journey. We were met in Toronto by my brother-in-law and his wife, the first contact that I had with a member of my husband's family. While we were one of the many war brides with children

getting off the train, I was approached by a news reporter who took our picture. The Canadian Red Cross provided us with a new supply of nappies and I suppose that this made for a good news story - we were just like celebrities with our picture in the paper. I don't



recall much about the trip to the family farm just outside Chatham, Ontario and with all this travel in a new land I was just looking forward to getting settled in one place for a while. One of the first things that struck me strange was that my husbands' family didn't ask questions about the war, or wonder what things were like in England and Europe. I soon came to realize that they were too busy just surviving in their own right. I do recall my mother-in-law once asking me to give her a hand. Some of the chickens were up in a tree and I was asked to take each chicken from her as she passed them down and drop them into a pen in the barn. Silly woman, I thought, the chickens will surely die. So much for the Londoner who found herself on a farm in the spring of 1945. So what was it like growing up in London and experiencing those dark days of the bombing? My early childhood was very typical of a working class family in London. My father, a veteran of the first war worked in downtown London for a company that outfitted families posted throughout the British Empire. I grew up with lots of encouragement in sports and reading and attended Henrietta Barnett High School as a "scholarship girl". After I graduated I started to work at the telephone exchange, which became a hub of activity as the war started. I lived at home with my parents and older brother while my younger sister was sent to the English countryside away from the dangers of war. One of my duties at the exchange was to go on roof top patrol in the event of a fire bomb landing on the roof and starting a fire - I guess that we were to kick them off the roof! We were very fortunate with no bombs landing on our home, although the bombs came very close with damage and death just down the street. We religiously used the black-out curtains but instead of running off to the bomb shelters my mother would play the

piano and my brother his guitar and we entertained ourselves as the noise and destruction prevailed outdoors. Of course there were many young men around London and on one occasion I went to Covent Gardens with a girl friend to the dance. After turning down a request to dance we moved to a different location and soon I heard a distinctive voice behind me – soon this young Canadian soldier was standing there asking me to dance. I accepted. Later that evening we took the train back to my home. As was common during the blitz the railway was used during the night to move the anti-aircraft guns, so my date and as it turned out my husband to be had to spend the night in a bomb shelter. You can imagine the surprise on my mothers face when she was awoken early the next morning by this stranger in uniform asking if Olive was up yet. During that first spring and summer in Canada there were two events that have had a long lasting affect. I went to visit my Aunt Win, my father's sister who had immigrated to Canada with her husband after the First World War. This family connection to home provided an important link and for many years thereafter Aunt Win visited with us and our growing family. The second family connection was with my husband's younger sister, Ruth, who was also waiting for her husband to return from the war. Ruth and her son David and Michael and I had a great time together, visiting, gadding about and developing a close bond that exists to this day. In looking back it was these connections and friendships that made that summer and fall of 1945 go by quickly while providing a more gentle transition from the hustle bustle of London to the quiet rural lifestyle that I was soon to experience. After a short time living in Chatham, my husband bought his father's farm and we started our rural life together.



Over the next 30 years we raised our family of 10 children, prospered through hard work and the agricultural proficiency of my husband and in turn now observe the family farm continue under the ownership of one of our sons. Retirement has

been a new and rewarding experience as we now had time to travel, take

up golf, sail the great lakes in our boat the Wood Duck and volunteer in community organizations. We are still the best of friends after more than 65 years of marriage and have very recently moved into a wonderful retirement community. Our family provides to us the stories, the love and attention as they lead their lives and in turn watch their families grow and explore. We have a wealth of memories and a family living coast to coast in Canada, Asia, the USA and Africa. Grandchildren and great-grandchildren now count over 50 – so for that point in time at Covent Garden when a voice stirred a response I look back at a life fulfilled and a memory bank full to overflowing – and best of all Germany is now our friend.

E. Olive Weaver  
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