

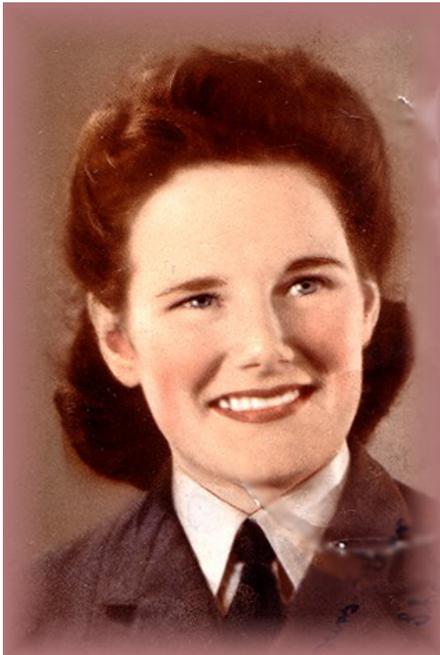
Ada Sheila Laird  
English War Bride  
Queen Mary  
May 8, 1946

CANADA'S IMMIGRATION MUSEUM  
**PIER 21**



Leaving Home by Sheila  
Laird

I was an English War Bride. My husband was wounded and sent back to Canada to be discharged. I was pregnant with our second child and could not join him until the baby was five months old.



In May 1946 word came that he had found an apartment and I was to report to a hostel in London, England. We were not allowed to communicate with anyone. Sailing orders came and we were sent by train to Southampton.

I arrived at the docks holding a two year old by the hand, a baby in a carry-cot, diapers, formula and all the things you need when travelling with a baby. I looked up at the Queen Mary, it was enormous and there was a gangplank leading up to it. There was no way I could make it up the gangplank and I knew it. I don't usually cry, but I did that day. I just stood there

and wept. Two soldiers came and helped me aboard.

The ship started to inch out of the dock, the band began to play "Will Ye No Come Back Again". The streamers began to snap. I wondered if I had done the right thing. The baby slept in a hammock attached to my bunk. There was no door on the cabin. Everytime I fed the baby the two year old would take off, I would find him shinnying up the deck rails and gazing at the sea far below.

Halfway across the ocean I wondered if my husband still loved me. He had been home in Canada for ten months and had not seen our second son. It was a horrible feeling. I didn't know what to expect. The great day arrived when we docked in Halifax. It was a dismal wet day, but I thought "well this is Canada and here I am". I expected my husband

would be there to meet me. Little did I know it would take us another two days to reach Toronto. I had no idea the country was so enormous.

Everybody had one or two babies. I got up in the middle of the night to make a bottle for my son. I found my way to the dining car in the dark and was tripping over sleeping bodies. I did not know that the cooks slept on the floor. One was kind enough to get up to help me. He gave me an enamel pitcher with a huge lip to mix the formula. I tried to pour it into an English feeding bottle shaped like a boat, on a moving train in the dark, without a funnel. A hopeless task.

When the train pulled into Toronto Union Station, I saw my husband before the train stopped. I couldn't believe my eyes. He was in civilian clothes and I had never seen him in them before. He wore a double breasted suit with padded shoulders and I thought he looked like Al Capone. He hugged me and the children, but I still worried about whether we still loved each other.

Our apartment was on the east side of the Don River. On one side was the city dump and on the other the gas works. It was pretty run down area, but it was the only accommodation he could find. He showed me the beautiful Hope Chest full of lingerie he had for me. My husband worked for the head office of a grocery chain and was being rehabilitated after serving six years in the Army. He would work until midnight. I spent the day by myself, looking after the children. At 5 PM I would dress the children, make dinner and go to the street car stop to meet my husband, hoping he wouldn't be working late. I would wait and wait for him to step off the street car but he wouldn't be there. Finally I would return to the apartment. And put the children to bed. I've never felt more lonely. I think if I could have run back to mother then, I would have.



It was many years before I really felt like a Canadian. Now fifty six years later, two sons and one daughter, seven grandchildren and five great grandchildren my roots are firmly Canadian. I have a wonderful and supportive husband. He says being married to me is like hanging onto

the tail of a comet. What a joy it was to celebrate our Fifieth wedding anniversary with some hundred Canadian friends.

We have indeed been blessed.