

Joan Wright  
English War Bride  
Queen Mary

CANADA'S IMMIGRATION MUSEUM  
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My name is Joan Wright and I was born in 1928 in Northampton, England. We

listened to the announcement of war by Winston Churchill, who stated we would never give in to the Germans. My dad, who was in the reserve



army, was fighting in France. He was paid so poorly while in the British army, that I was unable to finish my education to become a dietician. The army in France was retreating back to Dunkirk. My father was sick, so he was sent home and missed the battle of Dunkirk, where 90% of his friends were killed. When he was recuperated, he was posted to Royal Artillery Headquarters, and lived through the bombing in London. Back home in Northampton, we had to put an air raid shelter in our back yard, which we used quite often during the night. Believe it or not, we were expected to get up and go to school the next day.

One night in particular, the sirens came on quite late at night, and we were in the shelter, listening to the oncoming Germans. I pushed aside the heavy black curtains in the shelter and could see the planes and searchlights. I was giving Mum and sister a running commentary on what was going on outside, until my mother called me back. My mother kept telling us that everything was going to be alright, her voice getting louder as the planes got nearer. We were quite surprised that they passed nearby. The 'All Clear' came. The next morning we learned that the German air force had completely destroyed Coventry, because they were manufacturing so many things which would be used in the war. Things looked better in Northampton, and mom decided a different arrangement - we would stay in the house under the dining room table with mom sitting in a chair until the 'all clear'.

The Atlantic Merchant Navy had to stop bringing us fruit, especially bananas and oranges. Because of the shortage of materials for

garments, some people took blankets to make coats. Also for the same reason, we painted our legs a beige colour and with a black pencil put a seam down the back of our legs. We waited for our sheets to wear down the middle, then cut them in two and sewed the outsides to the middle. Because they took less coupons, we wore cloque shoes.

Things rolled along as things stayed about the same. My brother came to Canada for Air Force Training. I left school and worked at a clothing store. I was next to a fruit stand. One day I saw a crowd standing outside the fruit store. My boss allowed me to go see what was going on, and it was a shipment of bananas. I told my younger sister that we would be able to eat bananas again. She had no memory of them, and I was so anxious for her to eat them. I took some home, and she ate her first 'remembered' banana.

I met Clarence at a YMCA and we went out together, until it was time for him to go to Italy, where he served for eighteen months on the front lines. He took sick, and was sent to a hospital in England, where he recovered. He spent a leave at our home, where he asked me to marry him. My mother wanted to write to Clarence's mother, so the two women corresponded. Clarence's mother promised my mother that she would look after me. The wedding took place on October 11, 1945. Shortly afterwards, Clarence returned to Canada, and I arrived the next year on the Queen Mary.

We stayed with Clarence's parents until we got an apartment. My father-in-law owned property, and he let us buy one of the houses at cost. It was situated just outside Moncton. I had gone through the house and hadn't noticed a toilet, and asked Clarence where it was. He quietly told me that there was no toilet, only an outhouse.

We had two children. Clarence joined the Penitentiary Service. We lived for two years in Dorchester, and then Clarence got a promotion and we moved to Springhill in a big snow storm.

Clarence died in 1998, followed by our older son two years later. Glen settled in Calgary, and wants me to come visit this fall.

Because I was not working, I did a lot of volunteer work in Springhill. At church, we catered to weddings and funerals. Remembering the first months in Moncton, the IODE invited the English War Brides to tea every week. As a result I was invited to join the IODE in Springhill, which I was pleased to do. When Clarence retired, he asked me to give up all my volunteer work so we could travel, which is what I did.

