

Joyce D. Hassard
English War Bride
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War Bride - Saskatchewan
Personal Story and Speech
given to Rotary Club

I was washing the lunch dishes at the sink in the scullery, when a soldier



walked by the window. We had only said our goodbyes to our Canadian soldier the week before and from the build and stature, it looked like he was back again. I flung open the back door, saying, "Hi Bud, what are you doing back again?" and my mouth fell open at this stranger who said, "No, it's not Bud, it's Lorne." That's how I came to meet my future husband Roger William Lorne

Hassard. Because my story has a different twist, I have to fill in some background.

My father came to Canada in 1912 at the tender age of 15. He traveled alone to a strange land because after finally getting his parents permission to travel with his three buddies, and hurrying to Liverpool to catch up with them, found they had already left. He came alone on the next ship. When W.W. I broke out, he joined the Winnipeg Grenadiers, came to England and fought in France. He was wounded in France and convalesced in England, where he met and married my mother. In 1919 they came to Canada with Mum as a WWI war bride. She had a little girl, my older sister Phyllis and came to Alameda Saskatchewan. Subsequently, three more children were born. My sister Win, my brother Freddie, or Bun as he was affectionately called, and me. We lived in Alameda until I was four, then moved to the Briquette Plant and then to the M&S Mine, a community of about 200 souls. We had two uncles also in Canada in the area, Uncle Owen, who moved to New Zealand with his family about 1937, and Uncle Bert, a bachelor. The third who had preceded Dad's coming to Canada, was killed at Vimy Ridge in 1917.

My earliest recollections were of a carefree life. Hot summers and cold winters. Ball games and mosquitoes. Learning to swim in the Souris River, holidays camping at Carlyle Lake. As a child, life was idyllic. Then in March 1932, disaster struck our family and our beloved mother died. She had an enlarged heart, a souvenir of rheumatic fever. I can still remember us kids quietly trooping in to the bedroom to kiss her goodbye and huddling around the furnace in the front room after her death. I was only seven but that night will never be forgotten. We survived the months following with several different housekeepers, one of whom was Mary Hassard, my future husband's sister. Another of his sisters lived next door but one to us, Mrs. Muriel Clark. Bud, his brother, boarded with her. Coincidence you say, I just believe it was meant to be.

When the Great Depression started, many of the miners were laid off or on short hours. Dad decided to take his brood back to England and on August 31, 1933 we left Saskatchewan for a new adventure. We were split up at first. My two sisters lived with Auntie Edie, Mum's sister in London. Dad stayed with his parents in a village called Glington. Bun was with Dad's sister and family in a house opposite to grandma's and I was up the road with Auntie Min and Uncle Arthur. We were separated for a year. By that time Dad had rented a house for us in Peterborough and we were all together again.

Phyl by this time was 15 and on her young shoulders fell the task of keeping house for us. Cleaning, cooking, and washing for a father and three younger children. Life was hard for her and although I didn't appreciate her at the time, now with the years comes a little more wisdom and I realize the sacrifice she made for us and love her and appreciate all she did for us.

When WWII started in 1939 we still had Uncle Bert in Canada and he was still a bachelor. He gave our address in England to all the boys coming over who remembered us and as Bud came in December 1939, he was our first Canadian visitor. We had many come on their leaves and it was great for Dad to get first hand news of all his old friends. With them too, came extra rations. Spam, corned beef, tea, butter and sugar. We welcomed them with open arms. Bud even brought a turkey and as he was an Army cook, he was given the task of preparing the feast, even to the delicious pies. In those days I was attending the Peterborough County School for Girls and was hauled into the office of the Head Mistress because I had been seen in town with a couple of Canadian soldiers. In those days, it was a reason to be expelled. However, after a full explanation that they were spending their leave with us, I was excused.

In 1941 my husband joined the South Saskatchewan Regiment and came overseas to England, armed, as were all the others with our address. On his first leave in 1942, he made his way to our back door. He was very smartly dressed. Knife pressed trousers and a nice clean smell, which I later found out was Noxema. Curly black hair and warm brown eyes and he played cribbage! My Dad, a crib fanatic, took to him like a duck to water. Every leave thereafter we had him for a visitor. He had introduced himself as Lorne and to me and my family, he has and always will be Lorne. I didn't know until much later that his mother and I were the only ones in Canada who called him that. To everyone else he was Roger. On his leave before he sailed for North Africa, Sicily and the Italian campaign, we became engaged. He had his sister Muriel send me the ring from Canada. He was gone for over a year. Letters were a long time coming and then several would come in a batch. Then he returned and we knew he had been through hell. We tried to get married, but because he did not have his Company Commander's written permission, we could not be married in church. On his next leave we obtained a Special Licence and were married in the Registry Office in Nottingham, where I was working.

By this time, he was fighting in the Belgium/Holland area and chasing Germans to the Zuyder Zee. He signed on for the Army of Occupation and was stationed in Vianen in Holland. While in Italy, he had transferred to the Westminster Regiment, but with the Occupation was transferred to the Regina Rifle Regiment. He came on leave every three months or so until his final leave in April 1946. I remember it so well. I had cooked his breakfast, my week's ration of bacon, my month's ration of eggs, my week's ration of butter for his toast and it sat on the kitchen table congealing and getting cold while we said our tearful goodbyes. Neither of us could eat.

With his return to Canada, I waited for notification of my impending passage. Another war bride and I regularly travelled to Canada House in London to shake them up and keep our names to the forefront. Eventually, my friend Vickie was advised she would sail in July. I had to wait until later. Finally, I was notified I would sail from Southampton September 14, 1946 on the beautiful ship MHS Queen Mary.

It was the end of my life in England. I was leaving a war torn country of rations, hardships, bombings and death, a country I had come to love; everything familiar and loved ones who were so dear to me. What would lie ahead? I was filled with apprehension but overriding all was the fact I was going to be reunited with my darling husband, and I was returning to the land of my birth. I was coming home. Twenty seven years after my mother had travelled the same path, coming to a new country with a baby girl, I followed in her footsteps, also with our baby girl Lorna.

We landed on September 18, 1946 as did the majority of us at Halifax, Nova Scotia and boarded trains for our long journey's across this vast country. I remember a train stop somewhere in Ontario and there were ladies who met the train and passed around baskets of delicious peaches. What a treat! Lorne met us in Winnipeg and we stayed for a few days in a rooming house. The landlady was very kind and looked after Lorna for us while we shopped. I bought a lovely red suit and black suede shoes. The joy of shopping with no clothes coupons. We bought Lorna a pink snowsuit and a parka for me. After all, this was Saskatchewan; winter was coming on and winter meant snow and cold weather.

We finally set out for Frobisher on the train from Winnipeg and arrived first at Alameda. A very dear lady came on the train to meet me. It was Mrs. Art Best. She said she had come to meet my mother and she wanted to do the same for me. It was so good to be welcomed back. We were met at Frobisher by Bud, who drove us in his truck to his farm where we met his wife Edna, their son Lorne and baby Glen. Also his parents Charlie Poston and his wife Leona. Bud and Charlie farmed together and all lived together on the farm.

The next day we drove over to meet Lorne's parents on a farm close by. I was dolled up like a toff in my new suit, hat, shoes, gloves, the lot. Looking back on it I have to laugh. I must have looked like a real city slicker. I remember getting out of the car and seeing my nephew in bib overalls, no shirt and no shoes and thinking, "My God, what have I got into". But the welcome was warm. It was good to see Muriel again and we became good friends. Lorne's dad was a dear and although his mother was somewhat reserved, after all, I had married her "fair-haired boy", we did become friends and we both learned to accept each other.

In November, we moved into a two room apartment over a bank in Bienfait. Our toilet was outside, down a long flight of stairs at the end of the yard. We had no bathroom and the wash tub bath became a nightly routine for Lorna in the middle of the kitchen. Water was drawn and carried from the town well and the stove - oh yes the stove - was black which Lorne, with good intentions painted with aluminum paint. It looked goof but when we lit it, it stunk the place out until the paint burnt off. We called it "The Old Black Bastard."

Our first Christmas we spent together we didn't have much; \$90 a month didn't go far even that long ago and we decided, as we had to buy so many winter clothes, we wouldn't buy each other anything. But on a nail behind the tree on Christmas morning, was a chenille dressing gown for me and a cribbage board for Lorne. We had both disobeyed orders.

