

Margaret 'Maggie'  
Smolenski nee Beal  
British Evacuee Child  
Antonia  
August 19, 1940



### The Northern Lights

Our world is never free of political, economic, religious, natural or personal upheavals and likely never will be. Many people leave their homes, at times, not of their own will, to seek shelter or asylum. Their numbers were certainly high in the middle of the twentieth century, as a result of the Second World War.



The new home is not always a paradise, but some emigrants are very fortunate to find a new country they love more than any other place on this planet. In 1950, a young Czech refugee was so lucky when he landed in the New World and within days got an unexpected reception by spectacular displays of colourful northern lights in the sub-arctic. It was only an introduction to lasting love and adoration of his new country, Canada, the best in the world – a place where he found his dear wife and raised his two sweet daughters.

### DIARY OF MARGARET BEAL

August 4th, 1940, Sunday

Set off from Scarborough at 10:55 a.m. Mummy and Daddy were very brave. We were in York and changed there. In my carriage were Olga Burrows, Jeanne Gaunt, Teddy & Maurice Hayes (I knew all these beforehand) & some small children. We had a fairly long wait [in] York Station, but finally we got our small luggage into a carriage, and started for Liverpool. We ate our dinner, but [I] didn't want much, because it was so hot. We were boiling] on the journey, and bored stiff. When we went through the Perrine Chain we kept passing through tunnels, which were miles long, it was annoying, being kept in the dark.

Finally, we reached Liverpool, about 4:45 p.m. and waited on the platform while our luggage was taken out of the train, and put into vans. We were bundled into buses & taken to a boys' school, where the boys were left. Our luggage was checked, and a bus took us to the corresponding girls' school. We were taken into a classroom, which had been converted into a dorm, and given beds. Olga and Jeanne are on either side of me. The beds are about 4' long. We went and had tea, & then we were sent out into the quad, to play. Then we had prayers and went to bed, after washing the little ones. The beds were awful. Jeanne and I didn't get to sleep till about 12 o'clock.

August 5th, 1940, Monday

Were very tired in morning, after being up nearly all night, had a nice breakfast after which we were examined by a nurse. I and the others were O.K. Then we had our luggage checked. In the afternoon we three had a sleep, and then after a long, long wait we were examined by two doctors, one doctor English, & one Canadian. We were all passed. Then we had tea, and went to bed early after pulling our beds together, and placing another along the bottom of them to make room for own feet. We all slept well.

August 6th, 1940, Tuesday

Got up this morning at 8:25; this was because Jeanne's watch went 1 hr. slow. Never have we washed & dressed so quickly, but we were in time; Breakfast wasn't very nice. The Childwall Valley girls gave us two plays. One a fairy one and the other, Chinese. They were quite good. Dinner was fairly nice. In the afternoon, all those over twelve went to a cinema show in the physics lab. There were four short films. The first 'letters to liners', showed us how letters got to ships. The second was 'the life of a house fly'. The third was 'Climbing Mt. Tupper', and the fourth & last, 'Animals of the Sea'. We had a big tea and then we all went for a walk, a saw an old church which is very beautiful. At night we went and played ping-pong, and then went and had supper with the other older girls. Went back to dorm expected kids to be asleep, but no such luck. We tried to sing them to sleep with lullabies, but instead of making them sleep, they only asked for more. Slept solid all night. When at last I got off, one of the children was very naughty and kept us awake.

August 7th, 1940, Wednesday

Got up and had a hot shower, we soaped ourselves & got very clean. Had breakfast, quite decent. Then we tidied our beds and then went into the quad and finished writing a letter to Mummy and Daddy, which I had begun in bed. We had to run around after our helper a bit; she won't do

darned thing for herself. We had dinner, and kept asking our helper to take us out, we meant town, but she thought otherwise, and lugged us out for a walk. Jeanne bought some chocolate biscuits at an Inn. Came home and had tea. After tea, a helper asked we three to clean the tables, which we did, setting them for breakfast afterwards. Then we went and mucked about in the ping-pong room, and then went and had some supper which was only cold Ovaltine, because every one else had guzzled everything, and then we went to bed. This morning, they took every cent we had away from us, and put it in an envelope with our names on [it], and if we want any, you must ask the helper for it. They wouldn't even leave us a copper or two. We had an air-raid warning.

August 8th, 1940, Thursday

This morning, we knew definitely that we were leaving, though we had had a jolly good idea before. But nobody seemed to know where, though they said that it would be a long journey. We got up fairly early and washed and dressed. After breakfast, we folded our beds and blanket up and packed our cases. Then we waited for ages in the corridor and finally got into buses, which carried us to the station. There, we were put into dining cars, the boys were a couple of coaches along, but we were not allowed to see one another. Anyways, the boys trotted along to see us. We have got to know some other boys as well.

For dinner, they gave us bottles of milk and L.M.S. luncheon boxes. These were lovely and contained two meat sandwiches, a pork pie, a bun, a banana, and a packet of chocolate. In the afternoon we three all had a little sleep and then we read, and talked until the train drew in at a rather small station. There we were met by officials and were put into lovely buses, which carried us to a tremendous school. We were put in one half and the boys in the other half. When we had got our outdoor clothes off, they [served] us a most marvelous tea, soup, salad, and meat and plenty of bread and jam. After tea, we wandered around the school a bit, and then went to bed.

The beds were simply marvelous. They were very low, but had springs – Gosh! What a difference from before. Over us, we had three very soft warm blankets, and glorious, a pillow. But best of all, they were about 6' long. At 8:30 p.m. we went to the dining room and were given a box of milk and biscuits.

Finally we turned in, and spent an extremely conformable night.

August 9th, 1940, Friday

Woke and got up very early in morning. Got dressed as best we could, because all the small children were very interested, had a wash, and then went into breakfast, which was delicious. Went back, and folded our blankets up, and put all our clothes [out so as they were] ready to [be] put on. When we finally got the word to set off, we got ready and had new labels tied on, then we waited for quite a long time in the passage and moved on a bit, only to have another long wait. During the second wait, the Provost of Glasgow and Mr. Geoffrey Shakespeare came up to see us. We were singing songs, and finally we got into buses and were taken to Glasgow station and were put onto the boat train, everybody looked at us as we went along the street and we waved to everybody.

The boat train took us to Grenock and we went past some men; one of them pulled half of our new labels off and read out our sin name and another ticked us off on a bit of paper. We then went aboard the tender. It was cloudy weather, but we stood on deck and watched the land get further and further away. Finally we pulled alongside the liner, which is called Antonia.

I am in a teeny-weeny cabin, with Jeanne and two very tiny girls. It is not a very big ship, but a very nice one. There are a lot of nice boys aboard.

They feed us marvelously and our waiter is very nice. Four of the girls in our group sit at table one. The bunk is very comfy and I had a good night's rest. We have lifeboat drills and must not move with our gas masks.

August 10th, 1940, Saturday

Micky, the man who cleans our cabins, knocked us up at 6:30 a.m. We had asked him to do this the previous night and he made such a row, he woke the whole corridor up.

We got dressed and had a nice breakfast after which we tidied our cabin and then had a practice of 'action station'. We walked about the ship, and talked to people until 19 o'clock, when we had a delicious lunch. After lunch we all came to the ladies rest room, where I wrote a letter to Mummy & Daddy. We had dinner, and after that, we went around and got a lot of autographs, then went to bed.

August 11th, 1940, Sunday

Got up about 6:30 and went to Communion with Olga; it was a nice service because the padre is very nice. Then we went up on deck and to our surprise the ship started moving. We sat up on deck most of the

day, Olga was sick and Jeanne played around with some boys, to my great amusement.

August 12th, 1940, Monday

Got up and went on deck, it was raining. Divided my attention all day between the deck, the lounge and the square. I felt a bit woggly and spent a bad night - had a sore throat.

August 13th, 1940, Tuesday

Woke up in morning and [the] nurse came in. Told her my throat was sore, where upon she made a face and took my temperature, telling me to go to surgery at ten o'clock. Anyways, when the time came, I was fast asleep, and they didn't bother me. About 2 o'clock I woke up and came up on deck, where I stayed until bedtime. It rained most of the afternoon, but I was fairly warm. Had a good night.

August 14th, 1940, Wednesday

Got up and felt rotten. Didn't want to move but they made me go up on deck. Felt a bit better up there and had a sleep; had half an apple and luckily didn't bring it up straight away. Spent all day up on deck, it was bedtime when we came in.

August 15th, 1940, Thursday

Stayed on deck all day, very hot, went to bed early. Got out of physical jerks.

August 16th, 1940, Friday

Washed children in morning because Jeanne didn't feel well. Didn't have any breakfast but had a bit of lunch and dinner. Stayed on deck all day and got out of physical jerks.

August 17th, 1940, Saturday

Got up and did a lot of ironing for all our section. Then darned a sock for a boy. Stayed on deck and lazed about all day. At dinner we were given paper hats and marvelous good turkey and two and a half puddings and 2 ice creams. We get a lot of ice cream here. Everybody got sort of silly because they had silly hats on and we had some grand fun. Went to a cinema show but it was awfully hot and the pictures weren't very good - being silent and very old fashioned. Went on deck

after to get cooled down. It was very nice and the moon was over the water.

August 18th, 1940, Sunday

Got up at 6:30 and went to Communion with Olga. Stayed up on deck most of day; got out of P.T. We three washed our hair in afternoon; it was a great relief to do it, as our hair was very salty and sticky. It was absolutely boiling hot all day. We also went to the children's service in the afternoon. Later in the afternoon, a

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Continues on August 19th, 1940, Monday

...to get off. Some of us hadn't had dinner and we dashed down to get it. We had to put half-dry clothes into our cases and all other odds and ends. What a rush. Then we disembarked and went into the customs house, where we stayed until about 12 p.m. having some milk and biscuits to keep us going. We were very tired when we finally got onto the train and undressed and went to bed; two seats facing one another and then left down. Jeanne slept with me and we had a very comfy night. The train set off about 1:30 a.m. The cars are very big and there are bunks above our heads which let down.

August 20th, 1940, Tuesday

Woke up this morning and got dressed. We think that we are staying at Winnipeg, anyways, we do know that we are going there. Some are going to Vancouver and some to Montreal. They put up little tables between the seats and we had breakfast of bacon, cereals, bread and marmalade and about  $\frac{3}{4}$  pl. of milk. Everybody waves to us as we go past and when we stop in the stations, people come and talk to us and give us presents and sweets galore. We are passing a lot of water and we have just seen a lot of wood logs in a lake. There is wood, wood, everywhere and all the houses are made of it. Over the other side of the water, there are big pine woods, with a few deciduous trees. All the people over there talk so nicely. A lady has just come along asking about names and I am pretty sure we are going to Winnipeg. We were talking to some men in a dining car of a train which was drawn along besides us and they threw about six peaches in to us. We are always seeing soldiers and sometimes their trains draw alongside ours, where upon we talk to them. Lots of them give us sweets and things and when we move away, they all wave and stick their thumbs up and we do the same.

We have nice meals in enamel dishes and they fix little tables up between the seats. We went though Quebec and saw all the lights twinkling across the water. It all looked very beautiful. We have passed through towns in which French is spoken and some little boys passed the carriage in one place and Jeanne said "Do you speak English?" and they laughed and said "Non". Then some girls passed and I said "Parlez-vous Français?" and they laughed and shouted "Oui". In Quebec, we talked to two nice Frenchmen. A lady also came along with a whole box of chocolate, and doled it out; a little boy brought a lot of lollipops. Then we went on to Montreal. We wanted to keep awake and see it, but we couldn't. Some children got out there though, poor things; it was about midnight when we got there.

August 21st, 1940, Wednesday

Woke up this morning to be told by Jeanne that I had been talking in my sleep. Got up and had a nice breakfast. It is a sunny day contrary to yesterday's rain. We are passing a great lot for water and the trees, which come right down to the water's edge, making it very beautiful. This morning we came through Ottawa, we make a lot of stops in this journey, which is a nuisance because it takes us longer to get there. Just read and talked all day. In the morning, I had a sleep, because I was very tired. I had a toothache and the nurse put some oil of cloves on it, ugh, it did taste awful. I slept on the other side of the bed and didn't spend a very good night.

August 22nd, 1940, Thursday

Woke up fairly early this morning, and tried to kill time, only to be put back again earlier than ever, because of changing the time. Had a nice breakfast and then read and tidied my small case up a bit. We expect to reach Winnipeg about 3 p.m. I rather hope we stay there, because people say it is a nice place, and I am rather tired of travelling. It was very very hot in the carriage, and we were bored stiff and couldn't find much to do. Finally we reached Winnipeg. There were people on the platform to see us, of committees and things, and there were newspaper men who took our pictures. A man came into our carriage and read out our names. Jeanne's and Olga's came together and then a boy's name and I was frightened that mine wouldn't be read out, but it was, just after the boy's name. Then we waited on the platform a bit and talked to some of the people. After that, waving the boys and girls off who were going to Edmonton and Vancouver. Then we went out of the station, and had our pictures taken and then got into motor buses, which took us to a beautiful school, which is for deaf and dumb people. We were given beds and we hung our coats up. Then for a while until supper we played

about in the grounds after supper, we read magazines, then had a bath and went to bed. My tooth ached and I went to the nurse, who put some oil of cloves on it. It did taste nasty. The same thing occurred yesterday in the train. We don't quite know how long we will be parked here. By the way, it seems that the people were told that we were passing through all the stations, and that's why they were all there to see us. Then we got into the beds, which are lovely and all had a very good night's rest.

August 23rd, 1940, Friday

Got up, washed and dressed, then had breakfast, at which I served. Went for a walk round the grounds and then all of us went over to the park. It is very beautiful. There is a zoo, with lions, bears, monkeys, wolves and other things. There is also an English garden. We saw a humming bird moth. Then we went to the pavilion, and bought fruit ices for a nickel. They were lovely. Then back home for dinner and after that in the afternoon, we went aboard buses, which took us to the children's hospital for another medical exam. It is funny, all the traffic and steering wheels are on the different side of the roads from those in England. We took all our clothes off, except our 'bloomers', as the nurse called them, and put on little white coats. We were weighed and measured and then went in one by one to a doctor and a nurse. There were two or three couples doing us. I went into the doctor, who was very nice. He asked me all about everything and examined me and then said, "she seems to be disgustingly healthy". When he came to mental condition, he said, "What shall I put" and I said "Oh, weak", and he laughed and put "bright". There was nothing wrong with me. Most of the girls were inoculated for diphtheria, even those who had been done before, but I wasn't; but we were all done for T.B. In fact it was a very rigorous exam. Then back we came in the buses, to the school. It was fun driving through the city and seeing all the shops. By the way, as we entered the bus, we were all given new hankies. Coming back, we were given newspapers with our photos in [them], they are very good. It was funny, on the platform, I said to somebody that Peter Parsons was a brat. Evidently the person to whom I said this was a reporter, because in the Winnipeg Free Press, it said "Little Margaret Beal, who had taken Peter Parsons, aged 6 (he is 11) under her wing during the journey, said she would rather stand five million bombs, than Peter for 1 hr. but there was a smile on her face as she said it". I never said any such thing, gosh! Wouldn't I like to know where he got it from.

At night, we had a big bonfire in a field, and we toasted marshmallows. They were delicious!

August 24th, 1940, Saturday

Stayed in grounds all morning, in afternoon, about fifteen of us went to the park in Beth's car. Saw the greenhouse. Had a chocolate ice cream and brought one back for Jeanne who was waiting to see the dentist. It was an awful squash in the car; I had about two girls sitting on top of me. Had films at night.

August 25th, 1940, Sunday

Wrote a letter and in the...

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