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English Immigrant
Aquitania
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MY BIOGRAPHY

My Canadian Adventure started on November 20th, 1947, when we went to London as a family to get our passports, prior to emigrating from England. We also went to Canada House, the Canadian embassy, in Cockspur Street, where Dad got all our necessary documentation to come to this great land that eventually became my adopted homeland.

We sailed from Southampton on the afternoon on January 5th, 1947, and sailed in to Halifax harbor at 10 am. On January 9th in the middle of a heavy winter snowstorm. We disembarked at Pier 21, where our ship, the Cunard White Star liner RMS Aquitania tied up.

All our hold baggage was landed for us by the stevedores, and placed inside the Pier in different sections identified by the initial of our last names. I suppose that this in itself was a large undertaking, but by the time we had cleared Canada customs and immigration, which took about to three hours to complete, it was all neatly arranged for our parents to claim. It was being closely supervised by volunteers, under the direction of customs officials, so that nothing was stolen or misplaced. Dad had given me the responsibility of taking care of my next two younger brothers, being almost eighteen, John was almost sixteen and Michael ten. We had to take care of our own cabin luggage, now known as 'Carry on' by the air lines, while mom and dad then took care for my sister, Cindy, who was almost four, and my youngest brother was, Leonard, just turn a year old. I think that both of my parents were extremely brave to take on such a large undertaking, to uproot themselves from the comfort of a settled home, sell off most of their worldly belongings and head for a large unknown country. Canada the name sounded beautiful then, and sounds more beautiful now as I look back on practically a lifetime of adventures.

We were being sponsored by Mom's oldest sister, who had come here in 1926 to enter into 'service' (house keeping). She had met her husband in 1927, and married in 1928, and they had established the home in London, Ontario.

After clearing both customs and immigration, our luggage was taken over by the redcaps and put aboard the train, which were to take us through

to Toronto. This was late in the afternoon, and having cleared the ship, and being told that the train would not be ready to embark until 6:30. We started up from the C.N. station to Barrington Street in search of a place to eat. By now it was snowing really heavy, and much deeper than we had ever seen in England. We were not wearing snow boots, but just ordinary street shoes. Also our clothing was not really suitable for this type of weather, so it was not long before we started to feel cold. We found the Green Lantern restaurant beside the paramount theater, and that was where we had our first meal in Canada after landing from Aquitania. After we had finished the meal, and there being some time before we could board the train. Mom and dad decided to window shop for while, heading back to the C.N. station. We arrived back just in time to board the train, and this was another new experience. All the bunks in the sleeping car had been made up by the porter, and it was an impressive sight, having never been in the 'sleeper' before. Also the fact that, it was going to take almost two days to get to London. The longest train ride in England was only just over eight hours. This started to impress upon me how vast Canada really was.

We finally arrived London at about 7:00pm, January, where we were met by my aunt and uncle, and we arrived at their home at eight. We then all set around the table, and had our first turkey dinner. We had been eating for about twenty minutes when a reporter from the London free press arrived and took our family portrait, a copy of which I still have to this day. The next day I went down to the C.N. roundhouse to see about getting work. I had been a spare fireman for the London northeastern railways when we left England, but unfortunately, in Canada one had to be twenty-one to be fireman. So got I work as an ashpitman, cleaning the fires on the locomotives as they came in off the road and I started work on January 13th. I really enjoyed the job, and got along really well with my new workmates, who teased me tremendously about the funny way I talked. So right there and then, and I decided to try and lose my accent, which is something that one can not completely do, but I tried hard. In April, dad managed to get this savings over from England through the company he had worked for, and he purchased a house. In March of 1949, the union had negotiated a substantial increase in pay. Consequently the C.N. had numerous lay offs, and I was one of the victims. After working at a few jobs that I did not really care for, I decided to enlist in the royal Canadian navy. I signed a statement for the railway union, which stated that my seniority was secure until I returned from the service. When I brought the enrolment papers home, mom said that Dad would not sign them, as his family had had a traditionally army background, dad having served in the royal army medical corps, and was one of the last troops rescued from Dunkirk. I told Mom that that was all right, she could sign them, and God bless her she did. Another milestone. I found myself back on a train headed for the Maritimes and

basic training in HMCS Cornwallis. In mid June, I was doing drilling on the parade square, when I was summoned to report to the executive officer. Wow! What have I done now? Was my first reaction. When I reached his office, he said, "I have a question I want you to answer. How do you like the Navy?" Wow!! Again. What does he want me to say? So I replied, "I don't know about the navy, sir, as I do not feel that I am part of it. But I am anxiously waiting to complete my basic so I can get down to Halifax and feel that I belong". "Very good, then" he said, "I will inform your father that you cannot be released." Apparently Mom and Dad could not get used to the great extremes in the weather, and were returning to England, and wanted to take me with them. Another milestone.

For the next five years, I led a fairly normal service life. I went to Esquimalt, B.C for basic stoker's course in January 1950. Upon I returned to Halifax, I was drafted to HMCS Haida as part of the decommissioning crew. My first ship, and it was paying off already. My job there was cleaning all bunker 'C' oil tanks with steam hoses, along with a few other stokers. This was because she was going to war assets, and she finally ended up in Toronto as a museum. I then served in HMCS la Hullose, and then in 1952, I found myself on my way to Esquimalt again. This time to commission HMCS Quebec, which was formally the HMS Uganda and had been mothballed because WW2 had ended before she could be put into service. Here, I met up with Patrick David Budge again, only now he had been promoted to a four-ring captain, and assigned to captain the Quebec. We brought her back to Halifax by way of the Panama Canal, which was really a great tip. Then, I was drafted to HMCS Swansea, a sister ship to the LA Hullose, and went off to take part in the naval review by her Royal Majesty Queen Elizabeth as part of her coronation ceremonies at Spithead just off from Portsmouth, England. In 1953, I was promoted to leading Seaman, and drafted to HMCS Iroquois, and in January 1954, was stationed in Ottawa as a shore patrolman, doing train patrols, checking servicemen for their official leave documents. And in May I took my release, expecting to go back on the railway.

Unfortunately, during my time in the Navy, the union had changed the rules about protecting the seniority of men serving in the forces. Thus, I had no seniority, and thus no I had job. I then decided to give the army a try, and made my way to the recruiting office, where I was informed that they would take me on, and give me a rank equivalent to my naval rating. On the train again, only this times to Chilliwak, B.C. to the Royal Canadian School of Engineering, it was here that I learned bridge building, Laying and clearing minefields booby-trapping with explosives and demolitions. In the summer of 1995, my platoon, along with the seargent, was developed to camp Gage town, at Ormocto, N.B., to

eliminate a number of surplus covered bridges. You should have seen the dust when those old bridges went up. We also laid mock minefields with 1/4lb. Charges connected electrically to a master panel, which the sergeant detonated when infantry on maneuvers came close to them to add some realism to the exercise. That fall, when we returned back to Camp Chilliwak, I felt that I had waited long enough for my corporal's stripes, and enquired about them. I was then informed that I had been misinformed and told "you didn't believe the Recruiter", I answered, "why not?" He was wearing the uniform of captain, and I supposed that he was a gentleman, and a man of his word" the adjutant the told me that it would be at least two years before could possibly get them, so I demanded to be transferred back to HMCS Cornwallis, back to the Navy, labeled as a malcontent. This was late August 1995. As I was a reentry, I was posted to the base ship's staff until the rest of my intake finished their basic.

On the labor day weekend, I loaned my car on the Friday to a couple mates to go to Halifax for the weekend, on the promise that they would get it back to me on Monday 2:00pm in Digby. Needless to say they never showed up while was waiting for them. I went in to a restaurant, and got talking to a girl who was waiting for them. I went in to a restaurant, and got talking to a girl who was waiting for the ferry to St. John. It appeared that she lived in Doaktown, and was on her way home for a few weeks to see her broth that had recently got, and was also home on his honeymoon. So I told her that I would be up on the next weekend. She just thought that this was just an old navy line, and said OK. Consequently, did show up, which completely threw her. I found out she worked at the IGA commissary at RCAF Greenwood. So after she returned from her vacation, we started to date regularly.

When I left Cornwallis in December 1995 I was drafted to HMCS Wallaceburg, in the summer of 1956. The ship went to the Irving shipyard in Liverpool for refit. In October, I was drafted back to Stadacona in operation to commission HMCS Bonaventure in Belfast the following January. So I asked my girl friend to marry me, and she accepted, and on december 11th, while on leave at Dolores' home, we became engaged. Another milestone.

The Bonaventure, aka 'the Bonnie', commissioned at Harland & Wolfe's shipyard in Belfast, N.I. January 17th, 1957. We made several small trips with her while working her up to a functional unit of the fleet. Places like Plymouth, Poland head and a couple of stops at Portsmouth. It was while we were visiting Portsmouth, and visiting my brother, who was while we were visiting Portsmouth, and visiting my brother, who was flight deck officer on the Ark Royal, that I had another milestone. His church was holding Revival meeting and he asked me to go with them

that night. I said O.K. After all I had been to church before. But these services were not like the ones that I had been used to. On the way back to the ship, Mike asked me if I would go to the next night. Now, this was something totally different to me, two services in midweek, on a Thursday and Friday. I said O.K. again. This night I felt more uncomfortable than before. The Mike asked me to go to again on Saturday night. This time it was really different. I felt that the Pastor was talking directly to me about my sinful life, and how I needed the Lord Jesus in my life. That night I could not resist the call, and gave myself to Jesus. This was March 31st. when we return t Belfast; I worshiped at the iron man's mission hall. On June 17th we sailed out of Belfast, heading for home. We arrived back in Halifax on June 27th, in a very dense fog at 10am. I was supposed to get the 2pm bus to Greenwood, where Dolores was working. You can imagine my concern when the captain said over the p/a system, that he would make one more attempt to get alongside, otherwise we would anchor until the fog lifted. Praise the Lord, we made it, and I kept that date with Dolores, and we were married at the Chapel in RCAF greenwood. Another milestone.

After we were married, we lived in Maritime Apartments, a form of married quarters just behind the Dartmouth shopping center. In early March, 1970, I attended a meeting on co-op housing in Sackville, and came home a member of a Co-op shortly after that, we were assigned a building lot, allocated \$14,000, and we were on our own. I got the hole dug for the foundation, stepped back and looked at it, and wondered what I had done. In the meantime, we had picked out our house design, so I I ordered all the building materials, and with the help of a couple of friends, Dolores got our first house built. We were on our own because the rest of the group felt that as I had to go to sea once in a while, I would not be able to with the true concept of working on each others house, to bring them all up together. As it turned out, we were the first house finished, and as we wanted to go on mortgage, the pressure was on the rest of the group to complete theirs. And we moved in July. Another Milestone.

While doing are fit on HMCS Wallace burg in the Pictou Shipyard, I enjoyed the surrounding area so much, that I decided that I would like to live here after the navy. When my release came up, I had two job offers, one at the diesel locomotive roundhouse in Fairview, the other as the engineering Supt In the Pictou shipyard where I started in December 1947. Another milestone.

In early August of 1976, I had started to build our present, and it was coming along fairly well, when the shipyard ran out of contracts. So I applied and was accepted at the Michelin plant in Granton, and started there on September 26th, 1976. I retired from there September 30th,

1991, before I was actually read to retire, but the package offered was too good to refuse. After that I worked as a commissionaire, first at Victoria Park, Truro in the summer of 1992, then I was transferred to the Aberdeen hospital, retiring in 2000. Another milestone.

While leading this busy life, I found time to coach, and umpire little league of baseball for a few years in Dartmouth region. I was always ready to work with the youth in my church. When we came to Pictou country, I was a charter member of the Pictou county Big brothers, organized the first 'Bowl for Millions', the fund raiser to support the organization. That year we raised the princely sum of \$16,000. I was also one of the big brothers in the area. I was an active member of the Salvation Army in New Glasgow until it closed, when we went back to the Church of the Nazarene in Trenton. I coached the teen Bible Quiz team, which won the Atlantic division competition for the church. Last year, I also coached the quiz team again, but this year it fizzled out because of lack of interest from any of the other churches on the district. But we did not fold, as the kids were so interested, and wanted to complete the study, I have formed a 'Curl for cancer' for the last few years, and while I worked for Michelin, I was active in the company's Special Olympics program for ten years. I have also been an active member of Gideons international (Canada), where each year I helped to distribute the little red testaments to the grade 5's. I also help the Gideons to do presentations in the local churches. And this year I have had a special project presenting the local police departments with new testaments, as well as the local hospital. And every Wednesday morning I volunteer at the odd fellows home in Pictou, leading the singing at their weekly sing a long', where Dolores and a couple of her friends also come along to help give the group more body and volume.

As you can see, wherever I have been, I have tried to leave the world a little better for having there.