

Gord Nixon  
Irish Immigrant  
Scythia  
March 15, 1954



### The Decision

About six times a day, I passed Harry Kyle's shop on my way to and from work. Harry was an agent for emigration and he always had a few posters in his shop window advertising the Cunard Line, and emigration to Australia and Canada. These posters must have had quite an effect on me. As each day went by I began thinking more about moving to Canada. At that time there was very little work in Northern Ireland and a lot of people went to England for work. My brother Aubrey and my every good friend Stanley Moynagh did not have steady jobs. Aubrey worked for a few years in a restaurant and the brickyards in Belfast. He also worked on the new Colebrooke Road and in Crieve Quarry. Stanley worked for a couple of years in McCaffrey's butcher shop, on the new Colebrooke Road and in Crieve Quarry. However, they did not have good paying steady jobs. Like most Irish people before us, we did not have to leave Ireland. (The only forced emigration I am aware of is the transporting of criminals and political dissidents to Australia.) We had a choice: stay or emigrate. If we stayed, the future did not hold much promise for steady employment for Aubrey and Stanley. If we emigrated, the probability of a better livelihood was going to improve immensely.

I mention to both of them about the three of us emigrating to Canada. After a few weeks talking about it, we agreed we would look into it. We did not know what part of Canada we should go to. We knew that that Mrs. Bloomfield, our former schoolteacher and good friend, had a brother in Winnipeg, who was vice-president of the T. Eaton Company. We spoke with Mrs. Bloomfield about us emigrating to Canada and she said she would mention this to her brother, so that we would have to contact in Winnipeg. We then spoke with Harry Kyle, the agent. Shortly after Mrs. Kyle had filled out all the necessary papers for the passports and emigration, we went to Belfast for our medical exams. Gordon Bloomfield drove us to the big city of Belfast, a place I had only been to a few times. The only thing I remember about our physical exam was the 'short arm inspection'. The doctor lined us up in a row and told us to drop our pants. I was scared: no one before had asked me to drop my pants. He took a good look and walked around us, then told us to get dressed.

Soon after our medical exam, we received security clearance and acceptance by the Canadian Immigration officials. Harry Kyle made all the arrangements for us to travel to Halifax, Nova Scotia. We would leave on Friday, March 5th, 1954 for Liverpool, where we would board the Cunard White Star Liner the Scythia on Saturday afternoon.

The realization that we were emigrating must have affected our thinking and behaviour. For about five weeks before leaving, Stanley, Aubrey, our good friend Gordon Bloomfield and I camped out in the Blessingbourne estate. It was a real chore for Gordon and me to get ready for work. It is not fun washing and shaving in cold water in January and February. (Christmas 1954, Mrs. Bloomfield sent us a Christmas card with a picture of our campsite.)

### My Farewell

Shortly before leaving Fivemiletown, I was presented with a bible from LOL 734 in appreciation of the services I rendered to the lodge when I was secretary. Also St. John's Sunday school teachers and pupils gave me a bible. I taught Sunday school for about eight or nine years. I was also secretary and part-time player with the Fivemiletown United footballs Club. A week or so before leaving Aubrey, Stanley and I were honoured by the Club, who gave us a farewell party in Bill Hawkins's restaurant. Mr. Rainey, Northern Bank, chairman and treasurer presided and made reference to the good times we shared together as players and friends. Willie Sloan, the oldest member of the Committee, on behalf of the Club, handed each of us gifts of Irish handkerchiefs. A few words about the Club's successes, the good times we shared together and some of our misadventures were recounted by Harry Kyle, Gerry McCaffrey, George Morrow. Joe McNulty and Paddy McCaffrey. It was a wonderful and memorable night.

Many people wondered why I was quitting a good job in Ballylurgan to emigrate. After all, I was earning four pounds, 17 shillings and sixpence per week. There were times I wondered too. I was not an adventurous person. However, I felt confident that things would go well for us because we spoke English and we were going to an English speaking country. I was also going with two guys whom I thought were worldly-wise: Aubrey had worked and lived in the big city of Belfast and he knew the ropes. Stanley, too, was a very confident person and our trump card was Mrs. Bloomfield's brother in Winnipeg.

The night before we left Fivemiletown we had a farewell party in the valley Hotel. Most of our friends were there as well as my brother Christy. The party did not break up until about 4:00a.m. Christy fell

asleep and woke up about 6:00 a.m., just in time to bring in the cows for milking. After a few hours sleep we were up and dressed to go. Our cases were packed and labeled. As it was a fair day, there were a few more people to say goodbye to. That morning my mother had a difficult time keeping back the tears. My niece, Ann Carson, who was about three then, kept saying, "Are you going to Canada?" Every time she said that, my mother would start to cry more and more.

Eleven o'clock came and it was time to leave. George McCoy, Olga's husband, took the day off from his work at the creamery to drive us to Belfast. It was very difficult to say goodbye to our parents: we really did not know if we would see them again. It was a fact that many people who emigrated to distant lands never returned to Ireland. Our parents did not want us to go but they realized that we were doing the right thing. After three or four attempts to free ourselves from their embrace, we got in the car and then drove up Main Street to pick up Stanley who lived at the other end of the village. Stanley experienced the same heart-wrenching feelings saying goodbye to his parents as we did. Our first pit stop was at Jimmy Johnston's pub in Augher where we had a few drinks and signed the visitors' book. We proceeded on to Belfast where we checked in our cases at the ferry terminal and then spent the rest of the time before departure in the Capstan bar. There we met Robert Watson and Basil Haire, both from Fivemiletown, and our very good friend Johnny McCaffrey who was having his emigration medical exam that day. That was a very enjoyable afternoon.

Ferry time came. It was becoming more difficult to keep back the tears. With bravado we boarded the ferry. As we stood on deck, waving farewell to our friends, tears came to our eyes. To conceal our tears and our sadness about leaving, each one of us had a quaff from the bottle of whiskey Johnny McCaffrey had giving to Stanley. This fortified us and as the ferry left the dock, we waved and sang with gusto that traditional Irish song, "The Old Bog Road". With tears in our eyes and with heavy hearts, we bade GOODBYE TO FIVEMILETOWN AND IRELAND.

## THE JOURNEY

As the ferry left dockside in Belfast, Northern Ireland on Friday night, March 5, 1954 a nervous excitement filled my whole body. I was standing on deck alongside my brother Aubrey and close friend Stanley Moynagh, waving to our friends George McCoy, Johnny McCaffrey, Robert Watson, and Basil Haire and singing the tradition Irish song, "The Auld Bog Road". The singing was only a front to hide my feelings. As I stood there, I felt and tasted the salty liquid that slowly flowed, from my eyes. A twinge of sadness filled my heart at leaving my family, friends, and a familiar way of life for an unknown life in Winnipeg,

Canada. I did not know what I was going to work at, or if I would get a job right away, or even where I was going to stay that first night when I arrived in Winnipeg. I also thought about the countless thousands of Irish people who emigrated, never to return to their native land.

Although we did not discuss our feelings as the ferry pulled out of the harbour, I am sure that similar thoughts passed through the minds of Aubrey and Stanley. It was a comfort knowing that our fares were prepaid to Winnipeg; each of us had twenty pounds sterling for expenses, and we had a good contact for employment. Mrs. Bloomfield, our friend and former schoolteacher in Fivemiletown, told us to contact her brother, Mr. McCordack, who was a vice-president of the T. Eaton Company in Winnipeg. She said he might be able to get us employment with Eatons.

The ferry crossing to Liverpool, England went without any hitches. We discussed all the things that happened to us since our farewell party on the previous night in the Valley Hotel. We talked about our journey to Belfast, the good time we had in the Capstan bar with our friends, what we were going to do before boarding the Scythia, and with the help of a few more quaffs of McCaffrey's whiskey, we soon found ourselves in Liverpool. (Johnny McCaffrey gave Stanley a bottle of whiskey minute before we boarded the ferry.) We made our way to the place where the Cunard White Liner Scythia was docked. Fortunately, we were allowed to store our luggage right away.

Before leaving home, Stanley had promised his next door neighbour, Mrs. Carruth, he would call to see her daughter Mabel who was married to LAM small from Lisbellaw and who lived in Liverpool. We walked all the way from dockside to Mabel's house to say goodbye to her. Mabel was very glad to see us and made us very welcome with a cup of tea and a few well-chosen words to make us feel we were doing the right thing to leave Ireland. We also saw her young daughter, Pamela, who was about four or five years old.

Soon it was time to board the liner Scythia that was scheduled to leave Liverpool on Saturday evening. Although the Scythia was small compared with today's big liners, it still seemed huge to our eyes: it looked as big as a football field. Our ship was about 20,000 gross register tons. (I have read that a gross register ton refers to 100 cubic feet of enclosed space on a ship, but this is not a universally accepted measurement.) There were no flashbulbs as I went on board, or champagne corks popping, or people throwing confetti on my head to welcome me aboard. The Scythia was no "love boat".

In 1954, passenger ships were the chief means for emigrants crossing the Atlantic: about a decade later air transportation became more popular. When we booked our passages, we saw the ship only as a means of transporting us from England to Canada. However, after one day, we saw the Scythia in a different light. This was a floating hotel complete with excellent food, comfortable cabins, a huge ballroom with magnificent chandeliers, great entertainment, lots of stewards, and a medical doctor, Sunday Morning Prayer conducted by the captain, and, of course, bracing sea air. Bundoran, a popular seaside resort in County Donegal, could not offer all of this in one place for the price of our fare.

Our cabin was located on the same deck as some of the first class passengers. However, their quarters were off limits to us. As is always the case, price determines the luxuriousness of accommodation and, needless to say, we were traveling at the lowest fare. Our cabin was small but it was well designed to accommodate the three of us. There were two bunk beds and a single bed, ample closet space, a couple of chairs and a washbasin. There were shared washroom facilities located off the hallway. I thought the cabin was luxurious compared to what I was accustomed to in my humble family home on the Clabby road in Fivemiletown.

Dining was a revelation. Breakfast, lunch and dinner were eating adventures for me. The variety of food each day was amazing and the array of cutlery for each meal was mind-boggling. When I first sat down for dinner (supper) for my first meal aboard the Scythia, I was astonished at the number of knives, forks and spoons at my place setting. All my life, I was used to having only one fork, one knife, one spoon and one plate for all meals. Now I was confronted with a difficult choice: which spoon, knife and fork do I choose first? I felt embarrassed. To overcome this awkward moment, I copied what my fellow diners were using.

After a day or so, I knew some of the conventional rules for dining. Etiquette it was called. (Oh! I had come a long way from the Clabby road in a couple of days.) However, I still had another problem. I did not know what to order for dinner. What was hors d'oeuvre varies, raviolis venitienne, galantine of chicken, and Waldorf French dressings? Fortunately, there were items like ham, turkey and potatoes. I know some of our table companions saw the predicament we were in, so in a very friendly way, they interpreted the menus for us.

We had no choice of table companions. Fortunately, the roll of the dice left us sharing a table with several other very compatible companions,

whose friendships we enjoyed during or sojourn at sea. After our farewell dinner on Sunday, March 14, 1954 our fellow dining companions autographed our menus. This we greatly appreciated.

The question I had on my mind when I boarded the ship was "Will I get sick?" When I was a very young lad, I got sick when traveling on a bus. Later on in life, I traveled five days per week to school in Enniskillen without being sick. But this was different. How would I feel if there was a storm at sea? I soon found out. After a few days we sailed into a terrible storm with the waves sweeping up onto the promenade deck. The storm was so bad that, for safety reasons, we were not allowed up on deck for two days. Everything we did was affected by the ship's roll. When we attended movies, we felt the swaying of the ship backwards and forwards; when we played table tennis we lost our balance.

The one place we avoided, as much as possible, was the shared bathroom. Each time we entered, there was someone being sick: coughing their inside up and just looking as if they were dying. Watching them made us feel queasy and we felt like we were going to suffer the malady the French people call "mal de mer". To keep the dishes from rolling off the dining room tables, the collapsible table ledges were put in an upright position. This prevented the plates and cutlery from sliding onto the floor. We eventually got our sea legs and we felt a lot better. The storm certainly delayed our arrival at Halifax: we left Liverpool on Saturday evening, March 6 and we docked in Halifax on Monday morning, March 15, 1954 – more than eight full days at sea.

The entertainment offered on board was made for us. There were movies, dancing, table tennis and shuffleboard, and a library. There was never a dull moment, that is, if you were not sick. I do not remember being bored. I saw everything through the eyes of a child. This was not Fivrmiletown: for me, this was fantasyland.

Aubrey and Stanley were more outgoing than I was at that time: they really enjoyed the dancing and had no qualms about asking the lovely young ladies to dance. I enjoyed watching them and sometimes I daydreamed about being a dashing young gentleman in a tuxedo gliding with a beautiful with a beautiful young lady wearing glittering diamonds around the dance floor.

Every night of the voyage, the same character, after having consumed one too many drinks, would sing the same song as loud as possible, "That's Amore". Shuffleboard was a fun game that I had not seen before. Stanley and Aubrey entered the table tennis competition and

Aubrey won a beautiful little silver cup, which his widow, Joan, cherishes.

I remember Stanley and Aubrey telling me they met a girl from the Kesh area by the name of Johnston at one of the dances. Stanley does not remember that girl now, but he does remember that he and Aubrey met a girl from Larne called Maria Gonzalez. Maria was no her way to Toronto to marry her boyfriend. She had a terrible time with seasickness. I do not remember being told about Maria and Stanley does not remember the girl from Kesh. Odd, is it not?

Early Monday morning, March 15, 1954 the Scythia docked in Halifax at Pier21, that famous pier where millions of immigrants landed. After breakfast, immigration officers boarded the ship and spoke to all the passengers. They asked us if we had a job waiting for us in Winnipeg and if we had a place to stay. Since we had neither, they gave us a large tag to wear on our coats when we disembarked from the train in Winnipeg. These tags would identify us to the immigration officials in Winnipeg who would take care of us. There were quite a few people, mostly middle Europeans, with labels. We were like refugees. After leaving the ship, we proceeded to a large building where more immigration officials examined and stamped our passports and wished us good luck.

From there, it was a short walking distance to the train station where we boarded the train for Montreal. When we reached Montreal, we changed to the transcontinental train heading for Vancouver, via Winnipeg. Each of us had a berth. This was great for sleeping and relaxation. Many immigrants did not have berths and slept in their coach seats.

An amusing thing happened in our sleeping car during our first night. There was a young couple 'newlyweds' that each had an upper berth directly across from each other. About two o'clock in the morning I was awakened by their voices. The man was saying, "Mary, Mary! Come across, come across." She kept saying, "I can't John! Oh, I can't John." Then he said, "Mary, crawl across on this." Just then, a drunk in the bottom bunk said, "Ah Mary! That's okay! But how are you going to get back."

Sitting in the coach during the day, I was awestruck by the sheer size of the country: mile after mile of ever-changing landscape with very little population. The diversity of the landscape - vast stretches of forest, rock, farmlands, numerous lakes, little towns mile apart, isolated farmhouses with huge verandas, trappers' cabins, numerous lakes and, of course, vast amounts of snow - was overwhelming for an Irish country lad who had not traveled far from home.

There were quite a few immigrants in the day coaches: most of them were going further than Winnipeg. There was a German family with a couple of lovely looking teenage daughters who had eyes for us. Of course we had eyes for them. When we caught them looking directly at us, they would smile and lower their heads and continue with what they were doing. This was good, innocent flirtation that all of us enjoyed. We all had one thing in common: we were going to mark our homes in a strange land. I have often wondered how that family fared in Canada.

The train made several stops to take on water, supplies and passengers. There was one stop I've always remembered: Capreol, a few miles north of Sudbury. It was Wednesday morning, March 17. We had just stepped onto the platform when a very young girl approached us. We bought our first imitation shamrocks from her. The shamrocks were made of very thin wire and green thread. Just then, I thought of home - people going to church to pray, some men waiting for the pubs to open so that they could 'drown the shamrock' and dancing at nighttime. Although Aubrey and I had never before worn a shamrock, we proudly displayed them in our lapels. (Little did I know then I would revisit the Capreol station. That day occurred in the seventies when I was working for Ontario Hydro as a Municipal Accountant. I revisited the station where I had bought my first imitation shamrock many years before and I thought how good the Lord has been to me.) After three nights and two full days on the train, we reached our destination, Winnipeg.

## WINNIPEG

It was Thursday morning, March 18 when we arrived when we arrived at our planned stopping - off place, Winnipeg. We had been traveling since March 5, thirteen days since we said goodbye to our parents.

When we got off the train with our suitcases and with our labels prominently displayed on our coats, we received a warm welcome from immigration officials. They took us to the immigration Hall in the north end of the city. They explained the service they provided and what was expected from us. They showed us our bedroom, the cafeteria, and the common washroom. They gave us tickets for three meals a day and told us we could live at the Hall until we found room and board.

Our bedroom was very large: there were about eight cot-type beds with enough space left over for another dozen beds. There were a few chairs but no other furniture. We had two other roommates - an Englishman and an Irishman who arrived the same day. The dining room was set up cafeteria style, where we collected our meals on a tray at a counter and gave over our coupons. Our first meal was lunch. I do not remember what we had but we were very pleased with it. We found the cafeteria

staff, mostly older women and English speaking, to be very friendly. They told us the T. Eaton Company store was located on Portage Avenue and it was a long way to walk, especially in the winter month of March.

Immediately after lunch, we set out walking to the Eaton Store. As we walked along Main Street and Portage Avenue, I was amazed at the number of electrically powered passenger vehicles running on rails laid in the centre of the streets. They were called streetcars. There were also plenty of regular type buses that were powered by electricity from an overhead cable. The transportation system seems to be designed to move crowds of people easily and speedily from one point to another. I saw policeman walking their beat clothed in huge buffalo coats and hats. I stopped and stared at them because I had never seen overcoats made out of buffalo hides. They looked to be quite heavy to wear. I was told they were very comfortable and warm enough to keep out the very cold Manitoban winters.

I was intrigued at the number of times I saw, painted in large bold letters, the words 'c'hili con carne' on restaurant windows. I found out later that it was a very popular spicy dish of group meat, chili powder, tomatoes, beans and onions. I also found out that everyone made chili the same way. Some chili was spicier than other chili and, after eating it; your mouth seemed to be on fire.

I found it odd that, after we had walked a few miles along Main Street, we had not seen any pubs. I could not believe it: even Fivemiletown had four pubs. However, I had noticed the word parlour and I had seen men going in and out. Putting two and two together, these parlours had to be either pubs or betting shops. It turned out they were beer-only pubs.

Eaton's store was quite a distance from the immigration Hall but we were young and healthy and we could walk miles. When we first saw the building we could not believe how big it was. The main store occupied a city block - it covered all the area between Portage Avenue on the north, Hargrave Street on the east, Graham Avenue on the south, and Carlton Street on the west. The warehouse that was joined to the main building by an underground passage occupied another city block on the south side.

We entered the store from Portage Avenue. After a few minutes we stopped, looked around, and marvelled at the size of the floor space, the quantity and variety of goods for sale, and the huge number of people shopping. We approached a lovely, young, uniformed lady in front of a battery of elevators and asked her where Mr. McCordack's office was located. The elevator operator was dressed in the same colour uniform as the first lady. As we walked to Mr. McCordack's office, we saw

another lady, who was dressed in the same colour of uniform as the other two, standing at the base of an escalator. Her job was to ensure customers did not injure themselves when getting on and off the escalators.

We timidly entered Mr. McCordack's office and told the receptionist our well-rehearsed tale about wanting a job, knowing Mrs. Bloomfield, our former schoolteacher and a sister to Mr. McCordack. When she said Mr. McCordack was on vacation and would not be back for a couple of weeks, I felt a queasiness coming over me.

That feeling momentarily left me when she asked us to have a seat. She made a few phone calls and after a short time, two men in business suit arrived. One was Tommy Giles from Augher, County Tyrone, and the other was a Mr. Davidson from County down. They still had their Irish brogues and we talked about Fivemiletown, Ireland, football and things in general. After a lengthy talk, we were given jobs. Aubrey and Stanley were giving jobs working in the yard unloading trunks and delivering goods to store departments and I was giving the job of an elevator operator. We filled out forms giving all our vital statistics and we were told to report for work at 7.30 on Monday morning. Meanwhile, we could search for permanent accommodation. What a relief! We just arrived a few hours before and now we had jobs. How luck could we be!

On the long walk back from the Eaton store on Portage Avenue to the immigration Hall we had time to cover many aspects of our present and future lives. We talked about our good fortune in getting a job and temporary accommodation soon after our arrival, and wondered whether Mrs. Bloomfield had contacted her brother and told him to expect us. His secretary did not hesitate to call Mr. Giles and Mr. Davidson. I was greatly concerned about getting the elevator job. I thought I got it because I was not as strong looking as Aubrey and Stanley. However, it was a shock to my system knowing that I had my first elevator ride only a few hours before, and that on Monday I would be operating one.

The weekend went fast. On Saturday we went to a movie in the Bijou cinema on North Main Street. It was a western movie shown in 3D. Months later, I thought I should have kept the 3D glasses because the 3D format for viewing movies was soon replaced by newer technology.

We had our first Canadian alcoholic drink in the Occidental beer parlour on Main Street, Winnipeg. We were nicely seated at a circular table enjoying a pint of ale when a big fight broke out. At a nearby table there were a few amiable young fellows quietly chatting when an acquaintance of theirs came in and exchanged a few words. The newcomer lifted a glass of beer and dropped the glass and contents onto the table.

Suddenly, the fellows upended the table: chairs and broken glass went flying across the Room. It did not take us long to vacate the premises. Was this an omen of things to come?

On Sunday we attended church: Aubrey and I went to the Anglican Church beside the Eaton store and Stanley went to the Roma Catholic Chapel a couple of blocks away. Our parents would have been proud of us attending church on our first Sunday in a new land: each of us wore a large halo, we felt so saintly. What a contrast to the Occidental beer parlour!

Monday morning came and with it the nerves. After a good breakfast, we walked to work and arrived about ten minute before starting time. I was shown to an employee elevator on which I would be trained. For the first two hours I just watched the procedure. This elevator was a special one. It served the employees, Brink's Security (money delivered and picked up for bank deposit), and in-store hospital. There were distinctive bell rings for employees, Brink's and the hospital. My instructor was very patient with me. It seemed a very simple thing to operate an elevator and it was. However, there was one slight problem in that these elevators were manually operated and were not self-leveling. This gave the lad from Fivemiletown a nightmare. I would stop the elevator two or more inches above or below floor level. When I tried to adjust the level, the elevator would jump about the original distance from floor level in the opposite direction. After two days training I was on my own. For several weeks, I had to remind passengers to step up or step down. I should have had a record of me saying, "Watch your step, please. Step up step down!"

Needless to say, I got quite a few good-natured comments from the passengers. I was well liked and I could take a lot of ribbing. The elevator and escalator serviceman always liked to have fun with me especially when the elevator was crowded. One would say, "I hear there is another boatload over from Ireland". The reply would be, "A boat load of what?" Then with a little laugh, the first person would say, "Fertilizer", On a few occasions they asked me if I was going to the "gonorrhea racetrack" this weekend. I always said no because I did not know what they were talking about. I found out a little later that they were referring to the Rainbow Dance Gardens, which was frequented by a lot of undesirable clientele.

I had to be careful a number of people I allowed onto the elevator at one time and I also had to remember to show the elevator at a certain distance from the top and bottom floors. On many occasion I went over the top and got stuck in the basement. To start the elevator again I had to climb to the mechanical apparatus located above the top floor. There was one little level the serviceman referred to as 'governor' that had to be

put in its proper place. When the elevator was struck in the basement, it took a long time to get to where the 'governor' was located and again to the basement.

I never liked answering Brink's bell because they presented me with the most difficulty. Sometimes they had so much money to deliver that the passengers had to get off and wait for another elevator. On a few occasions when I had Brink's aboard, the elevator got stuck in the basement. The elevator was about eight inches below floor level. Rather than wait for me to get to the top of the building to put the 'governor' back in place, they unloaded the money from the trolley onto the floor, lifted the trolley off the elevator and reloaded. They were furious with me and made some nasty remarks. This delayed them by about 20 minutes.

The hospital bell was easy to answer: it usually meant that a customer had fainted or was not feeling well. During my time as an elevator operator I had only a few of these calls. One of the floorwalkers always accompanied the patient to the hospital, which was really a first-aid room with a nurse in full-time attendance.

During our first couple of weeks in Winnipeg, we met Irish people who worked for Eatons. They were all eager to give us a little history lesson called, "Do You Know?" They told us that the name Winnipeg came from Cree 'Winnipeg' meaning muddy water, and that the Golden Boy on top of the Manitoba Legislature Building was a gold-plated statue of Mercury holding a sheaf of wheat that symbolized the bountiful promise of perpetual golden harvests. We were also told that the corner of the two principal Streets, Portage Avenue and Main Street, is the windiest, coldest spot in Canada during winter. Last but not least, we were told that Timothy Eaton, a Country Antrim born haberdasher, turned the selling of mundane buttons and pants into one of North America's largest retail empires. Timothy's descendants still ran the business and they continued the tradition of being a benevolent employer of a great number of Irish immigrants, including s. The Eaton Irish contingent told us we missed a great St. Patrick's Day celebration a few days before: the two Irish organizations, The Sons of Ireland and The Ulster Protestant Association, each had banquets on St. Patrick's Day.

We soon learned the layout of the city: that streets ran north and south and avenues ran east and west. We were even told that green grass was a precious commodity. Of more importance, our new friends gave us a contact for accommodation: a Mr. And Mrs. James Lockart, who lived at 368 Simcoe Street, Winnipeg.

The lockarts were a retired couple from Country Down. James (Jim) had worked for Eatons before retiring a few years earlier. They already had

one lodger but they agreed to take the three of us. Aubrey and Stanley shared one room and I had a little room by myself. We moved out of the immigration Hall after one full week. A week later, we each got bill form immigration for \$15.00. The next Wednesday, I walked down to the Hall and gladly paid it. I was very thankful for the kindness shown to me upon my arrival: I have never forgotten how fortunate we were to have food and accommodation a few hours after stepping off train in a new land.

"The Lockarts charged \$12.50 per week. There gave us three good meals each day, good beds and clean linen. It was really a home away from home. I do not know how Mrs. Lockart, at her age, cooked and cleaned for four lodgers." However, there was one problem: the generation gap was too wide and they were set in ways that smacked of old Irish. It only took a few weeks for them to say something about the hours we were keeping, or should I say, the hours Aubrey and Stanley were keeping. Remember I still had my halo and it had not yet been tarnished. It was very difficult for them to have three extra lodgers who were quite different from the gentle young lodger they already had.

The fourth lodger was called Nick and Nick was a model for all lodgers. He was polite, gentle, did not drink much and he kept good hours. Nick's behaviour was in stark contrast to the three Irish fellows who were lacking in decorum. This placed a heavy burden on the Lockarts who were a staid old-Irish couple. I knew my mother would have felt the same way as the Lockarts did about our shenanigans.

When Mr. McCordack came back from vacation, he invited us to his house. On our way over, we wondered what Mr. McCordack was like. We were nervous about meeting a vice-president of the Eaton merchandising empire. His house was a magnificent structure in an elite district, and the lawn in front of his house was well groomed.

We were warmly received. Mr. McCordack was a well-built man, impeccably dressed, and he had a kind face topped by beautiful head of gray hair. He was soft-spoken, very easy to talk with and he understood our situation quite well. Over a cup of coffee, he told us about his early days in Canada. He came to Canada a short time before Christmas during the depression. He was a chemist (pharmacist) by profession and the only job he could get was wrapping Christmas presents for Eatons. After some time, things began to change for the better and eventually Mr. McCordack became a vice-president of Eatons. He gave us good advice when he told us that since we had steady jobs, it was up to us to make the best of it. We were now on our own. I have never forgotten his advice: it served me well during my 35 years of work in Canada.

## EXCERPT FROM IN RETROSPECT

Have I been successful in Canada? The answer depends on how one measures success. I have read that, in 1923, some of the world's most successful men who had found the secret of making bundles of money had unhappy lives. Charles Schwab, president of the largest steel company, died a pauper. Edward Hopson, president of the largest gas company, went insane. Richard Whitney, president of the NYSE, was released from prison to die at home. Arthur Cooper, the great wheat speculator, died aboard, penniless. Cosabee Livermore, known as The Bear of Wall Street, committed suicide.

On the other hand, I have never found the secret of making bundles of money or achieving a high- ranking job. Yet, I consider myself to have been a success. I have 42 happy years of marriage with Marg. We have raised four sons and four daughters who never gave us any difficult problems; we have six grandchildren, a few true friends, and last but not least, I had 35 years of work without one day of unemployment, and I am now entering my fifteenth year of wonderful retirement.

Some people, after reading this memoir, might think that I am showing signs of senility: they may see signs of old age creeping in. It is true that sometimes I forget things that happened only a few weeks ago and yet remember things from ages past. It may also be true that some of the events I have described have been embellished, or that they did not happen. Recently, I came across a wag's prayer for senility that I highly recommend to seniors.

What I have written is a brief account of my life in Canada. Regardless of how dull it may seem, it is a history of events and people (strangers and friends) that have shaped my life in some way. Each day I give thanks for all the blessings I have received from God: life, good health, and happiness; food, shelter and clothing; sons, daughters, and grandchildren; Marg, my wife and mother of our eight children; retirement, income, peace, and freedom. Yes, God has blessed me! Yes, I have been successful.

THANK YOU, GOD! THANK YOU, CANADA!

