

Donald Lovett
by Son Gary Lovett
Pier 21 Customs
Officer



During the 50's my father, Donald Lovett, was a Canada Customs Officer and worked at Pier 21 very often. Since my father passed away many year ago I can't know the circumstances surrounding my presence there, but as I do remember visiting many places with my father, I can only assume that he would have taken me with him when he was called out unexpectedly. At that time there were a lot of Italian immigrants and the elusive imager of women in dark clothing, with many children milling around, and multi-lingual signs painted on walls designating Men's and Women's washrooms have never really become focused in my mind. It is one of those childhood memories that you can almost touch, but not define.

During the early 80's a worked in a small mining town in Manitoba called Bissett, where the company graciously gave me a cabin where I and two co-workers could jam during the evenings. I played drums but has an electric piano that I used for writing melodies to accompany the lyrics I was churning out at the time, mainly to satisfy that creativity that often blooms during isolation, but also because the trio I played with had as diverse musical interests as three people could throw into the mix and the fun of combining those interests often resulted in a fresh, new sound. One song that never made it out of the cabin was one I wrote about Pier 21. "What's that?" my friends asked. "Never heard of it." Well I guess now everyone has!

I am sure that the memories of children who passed through Pier 21 are as vague as my own and I have often wondered if life, so full of promise on that day, was as rewarding as it could have, should have been. The lyrics I wrote were a bit too sentimental for the rock/country genre of that cabin, but seen very timely now. So here is my child's recollection of Pier 21.

Pier 21

On a cold and windy morning,
With the salt air in her hair,
And the Angus L. MacDonald Bridge-
It seemed to disappear
Into the harbour's mist,

As the ship's bow kissed
A new land for everyone
She breathed a sigh of deep relief,
Took us children by the hand
And went searching for her man,
Who said that he'd be waiting down on Pier 21.

I know they spent a lifetime planning
To step out into the world,
But they'd heard a man
Who knew his trade could find a good life.
And though there seemed a lot to learn
You always get what you earn,
The same for everyone.
Yes, I still remember that cold, grey day
Mama turned to me-I can hear her say

Our new life has begun
And I held on tightly to her hand
As we stepped onto Pier 21.