

Reino Tholen
Dutch War Bride
Queen Mary
June 1946



The Story of a Dutch War
Bride

On the 22nd of April I met Ross in Holland. The city I lived in had been liberated on the 13th of April. The War was not over until the 5th of May, 1945. My girlfriend and I met these two Canadian soldiers when we were taking a walk downtown. Ross took me home that evening, and I asked him in to meet my parents. After that he kept coming back to visit us. I wasn't that interested in a relationship. I wanted to start a new life; the War had just ended. Every chance he had, Ross came to see me. He was charming and good looking. I saw him as a hero who had helped to liberate my country. When he asked me to become engaged in July 1945, I said "Yes." Just the same I kept doubting if we were meant for each other. Once I broke the engagement, but after a few weeks we were



together again. On the 29th of November we were married and on Dec. 5th Ross went to England. In Feb. 1946 he came back to Holland on a three week leave. I became pregnant. Ross went back to Canada and I followed him in June 1946.

I panicked when the day came that I had to leave my

country. I had a feeling something awful was waiting for me in Canada. My mother said it was the pregnancy that made me feel that way. After staying four days in an old Red Cross Hotel in Holland, we went with the boat to England. From there with the train to London, where we stayed in a big old house which was fixed up to host the War brides that were going to Canada. War brides from all different countries came together there. From there we were driven to Southampton where we boarded the

Queen Mary, which was used to transport troops. There were 12 girls in a small cabin, three beds above each other. There was lots of seasickness.

The first week in July we arrived in Halifax at Pier 21. The band was playing: "Here Comes the Bride." The Red Cross ladies came around with coffee and doughnuts. This welcome made me feel better: it renewed my spirits. After a long and tiresome train ride, I was anxious to see my husband. When the train arrived in Cornwall, where he was to pick me up, I stepped out of the train with my luggage and waited. Ross wasn't there. Just as the Red Cross lady was telling me to get back into the train, a woman came running up the platform towards me, calling my name. She told me that her husband was waiting in the car and that they would drive me to Ross. Tired, frustrated and 5 months pregnant, I was ready to scream, but I didn't. The woman was driving and her husband was singing, they were both intoxicated.

I was so scared that I didn't want to ask questions, so I sat quietly in the back seat. It was in the middle of the night when the car stopped. The man went out and called, "Ross, look who is here." Ross was sleeping in his car and I went over to him and wanted to put my arms around him. He backed up and said "Just a minute." We drove to a big old house on the border of a small town. We were met by an elderly couple. They were the parents of the man who had been driving the car. Ross was also living in that house.

Four days after I had arrived in Canada I found my husband in bed with the woman who had picked me up from the station. In desperation I ran out of the house, Ross came behind me, he grabbed me and pulled me into the car. He drove and drove and didn't say a word. Finally he stopped on a parking lot. I said to him, "Don't you think you have some explaining to do?" His answer was, "I am sorry I married you, I don't love you anymore." I was frantic and beside myself with anger and disgust. Ross did not talk to me anymore until after our daughter was born on Oct. 28, 1946. While I was in the hospital with my baby, I had no visitors at all. Ross rented a part of a house and that is where we lived with our baby daughter. We didn't have a relationship anymore, but I was determined to try and make a go of our marriage. I was willing to forgive Ross and make a new start. I couldn't go back to Holland with my baby!!

My mother sent me a letter, telling me that she was coming to visit us and see her grandchild. Ross started to change and I really believed that our life would be better now. We were beginning to be a normal family. I became pregnant again and our second daughter was born in 1949. After her birth, things took a turn for the worse again. I knew then, that

I had to leave him with my children. I couldn't live with him anymore, I had given our marriage a good try, but this was it. I wrote to my parents and they sent me the tickets. Ross did not want me to leave and was watching me every minute of the day and night, he made my life a Hell. I had to find a way to get out of the house with my children. With the help of another Dutch War bride and her husband we found a way.

Looking back now, I don't understand how I ever came through all the difficult times I had to face with my Canadian husband. He never did anything financially or in any other way for his two daughters. Back in Holland I raised the two girls all by myself and today I am very proud to say "I did it all by myself." I enjoy my daughters, my grandchildren and great grandchild.

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