

Ivy Kellam
English War Bride
Queen Mary
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On Sept. 13th five War Brides boarded a train in Lancaster England. We were on the first lap of our journey to Canada. On the journey down to Southampton we were quiet, each concealing the sadness we felt at leaving our home town, friends and family. In my mind I imagined the wheels were saying, "for ever, for ever". Fortunately I had the money to return if I wished, I had saved the money whilst working for Cdn. Treasury Overseas. I don't remember very much about that last night in England, a friend remembered much more, but even her recounting did not bring back the memories , so I have to presume that I blocked that night out, because it was too painful.

My Mother having died the year before I felt guilty regarding leaving my Father and two brothers, newly arrived home from the forces. The trip over was uneventful, I felt sorry for the women travelling with children, they were fretful and missed their daily routines, at night they slept in hammocks attached to the bunk beds. Like others I remember the amazing sight of white bread, peach pie and other luxuries, almost too rich for our stomachs. Our emotions were mixed, sadness, apprehension, excitement. Each day as we ate our meals first class passengers would stand and stare at us through the glass dining room doors. We were the final group of brides to travel on the Queen Mary. As we sailed into Halifax harbour we heard a band playing "Here comes the Bride" I thought this gesture quite touching, but some of the women who had children laughed.

Pier 21 made no lasting impression on me. All I remember is the sense of loss when the five of us separated to head to different parts of Canada. We had no idea of the distances we had to travel, after living in a country as small as Great Britain. The size of the trains was awesome and that lonely sound they made as we travelled through the night will always remain with me. The trains were hot and we were overdressed in our English woolen clothing, babies suffered from heat rash and fussed, no wonder! As we attempted to get some air and opened windows the soot blew in and landed on our clothing. Naturally, we wanted to look our best when we arrived. The train stopped frequently at small stations surrounded by houses and trees, husbands, parents, friends and relatives usually awaited these

young girls, bearing flowers and toys. As we saw the welcome we felt relieved.

As we approached Toronto we saw more habitation and I must say I felt a sense of relief. Yet, today I love the wild places. As we disembarked from the train we were lead into a large room where our documents were examined and stamped . We were told to exit the room via a pair of doors across the room and informed that our husbands were outside the doors. We were not aware that that same morning the radio had advised people of our arrival, as a result as we opened the door we to our surprise saw hundreds of people cordoned off to our right and our left, leaving a corridor down which came our husbands, one at a time.

How did we feel, stupefied, bedraggled after the journey, amazed, plus which, was that man our husband, wearing those weird clothes, the likes of which we had never seen before. Husbands carried flowers, toys, gifts. The crowd cheered, especially when the children appeared. My husband carried roses and had a friend waiting outside Union Station to whisk us to a hotel, where there were more roses. He was from The Flower Town. I was asked if I wanted anything, yes, I said, " some of that wonderful fruit I saw in the stores". My wishes were quickly fulfilled. To this day the sight of the fruit markets and stalls in Ontario fill me with pleasure. All our visitors from England have to go to the Farmers Markets. Later on that day my husband's friend and fiancé joined us for dinner at a small French Restaurant.

Those memories of my arrival helped me through many tough times. The next day my husband's sister arrived with her fiancé, she was so lovely and understanding, I liked her immediately. They drove us to Brampton , the car seemed enormous to me, as did the large old house, on the front lawn marvellous chestnut trees, in the back garden fruit trees with the fruit not picked, so that I could see it and sample some. The family were gathered to meet and welcome me, the vicar, or Minister as they called him, gave me a bouquet of gladioli, plus a blessing. How could I be so fortunate when I read about some of the other war brides and their difficulties when they arrived. Later that week we left for Stratford where my husband had chosen to resume his service with the Bank. Though I felt homesickness, often loneliness and boredom ,I obtained a part- time job and made my first Cdn. friend. The local IODE gave a dinner and dance for the local War Brides and I was surprised how many there were. From then on a group of us met and helped each other over rough times, misunderstandings, adjustments and that most painful experience homesickness.

When my son was born I felt I had roots, he was Cdn. but he was also part of me. A year later I took him to England so that his English

relatives could admire him, which they did. On our return I felt more settled. Selfishly I have to admit that England was not having an easy time during the 50s, we were so fortunate in comparison, no wonder so many families emigrated to Canada and Australia.. I never stopped missing those I loved, or the countryside, but, I grew to love the Cdn. countryside, so different, so immense. With two more children added to our family we camped in many Provinces, all of them beautiful in a different way. I have been fortunate to visit England often , I still love the land of my birth and the people there. Canada gave me a chance to grow and widen my experiences, for that I am thankful.