

Julia McCallum Winning  
Connelly  
By Daughter Leona  
Connelly Howard  
English War Bride  
Queen Mary  
August of 1946



I've written this story on behalf of my mother Julia McCallum Winning Connelly. The content is her story and memories of coming to Canada. I hope I can capture her determination and enthusiasm for life.

Ben, as she called him, was really John Bernard Connelly in the Queens Own Rifles, out of Toronto. He had been wounded and was recovering in Glasgow when we met. We were married New Year's Eve 1945. Ben already returned to Canada in July and I was in cue waiting for my turn to be sent. It came in August 1946. So much was happening, all too fast. I had to buy a few things, pack, say good bye to friends and relatives. I didn't know if I was coming or going. We weren't given much time to get ready. One minute I wanted to go, the next minute not. What was I doing? I said my good-byes to my father. He was not much for words. He was not much in favor of this marriage either. He did give me some advice for the trip though "Keep eating on the boat, that way you won't be sea sick" he said. I didn't always take his advice but I kept this in mind. Oh, having to say goodbye to all the wee'an's. Oh brothers and sisters my heart is breaking. Would I ever see you again? Would you remember me? Time passed so quickly. I had to rush, I couldn't be late. Oh Mother, My dearest mother. I never thought the time would come when I would leave you. If I had thought of the pain I'm feeling now maybe I wouldn't have married. Auch, you know me better than I know myself. You knew how much love I had for this Canadian boy and how much he loved me. You knew my stubborn nature and sense of adventure would take me away. We didn't know the anticipation, anxiety and excitement that would consume us all. We certainly didn't know the heart wrenching pain that we both were feeling as the train pulled out of the Glasgow station and my last memory of you is running long side it, both of us crying. That's the last time I saw you dear mother.

The "Queen Mary" was my sailing ship. We all boarded, with ships crew barking out orders. My God, this boat was practically all war brides. Most alone, some with one or two children in tow, some pregnant. Most were from Scotland and England, some from France and Holland. Here I was, leaving my family, about to cross the Atlantic Ocean on a boat full

of strangers, heading for a country I knew very little about and with very little money in my pocket, all for a man. All for this soft-spoken kind hearted, adventurous Canadian soldier. What am I doing, I still must be crazy. Some girls never got on the ship. They stopped at the gangway and cried uncontrollably not knowing what to do. As the band started to play Olde Lang Syne, we knew the decision was made. Those on shore cried because they were staying and all of us onboard cried because we were leaving , we were scared, and we were already homesick.

I, a Scottish Lass was bunked with a young pretty Dutch girl. Ben had served in Holland. We tried to communicate as best we could, as she couldn't speak English. So many were sea sick. I really felt bad for the children and the pregnant ones. For once, I listened to my father and kept eating, hoping to ward off the illness. I was successful until the last day of the trip. There was so much food. I cried at the amount of food available to us, knowing the wee'an's at home were still on food rations hungry, and here I was eating like a queen.

I suppose it was a good crossing. I didn't know the difference. But oh, God help us, as we pulled into Halifax Harbour the smell of rotting fish was overwhelming. The girls getting off to stay in Halifax were crying, thinking of living in a place with such a smell. A band greeted us and it must have been a special occasion as I think it was MacKenzie King that gave a welcome speech upon our arrival. He commented on being a bachelor, when one Lass yelled out "You're a wee bit late chum, we're all spoken for." That made us all laugh and took some of the tension out of the air. We exchanged names and what addresses we had, promising to write as people do. Then we went on our own ways, with Red Cross staff pointing us in the right direction. One more separation from our past life left behind. I went by war bride train to Toronto. We unloaded at the Exhibition grounds. Ben met me there. This was where he did his training for overseas. He showed me the stall in the horse place that was his bunk. After a couple of days in Toronto we headed to his folks place outside Peterborough. We stayed in Havelock about six weeks. We got the travel bug and put our plans into action heading to Northern Ontario. Looking back, we were both adventurous. We raised our five children, traveled, worked and lived all across the grand country Canada. From Gaspé Bay, to Thunder Bay from Pine Falls Manitoba to Mississauga Ontario and points in between, finally to Parksville BC. I'm proud of my Scottish roots but Canada's my home. It didn't matter where we were I was with him, feeling safe and loved and yes sometimes homesick, but still excited about the path to unfold before us. No regrets, never.

In Loving Memory of: Julia McCallum Connelly  
May 28, 1926 to Jan 27, 1998

