

Isabelle Ross Horvath
 nee Wilcox
 Scottish War Bride
 Ile de France
 April 4, 1946



War Bride, Isabelle Ross Horvath nee Wilcox

Ben Wicks wrote a book with the above title. I met Ben Wicks at a War Brides Reunion in Kingston, Ont., and have an autographed copy of his book. In 1945-1946 the brides arrived in Canada. I was one of them and

it is fitting that I should relate my story in the year of the 60th anniversary of VE Day.

I was born in Kilmarnock, Scotland 8 miles from Prestwick Airport. The airport was taken over by the R.A.F., R.C.A.F., and then the Yanks arrived.

I met my Canadian husband when he came on leave to Scotland, We saw each other for three leaves, 21 days total and got married on April 20, 1945, he was 21, I was 20! We had a 2 day honeymoon in Blackpool, England. I organized a War Bride Club in Kilmarnock and with help from the Canadian Wives Bureau in London, we received

history books about Canada and oh how lovely, an Eaton's Catalogue! We devoured this! With the war time rationing we ogled the clothes within its pages! On arriving in Canada we were going to buy a pair of shoes!



The day came....papers arrived about my departure to Canada. I left Southampton March 30, 1945, on board, 5,000 troops and 900 war brides!

Having a surname beginning with "W" I was assigned to the ballroom of the Ile De France and slept five bunks up! There were so many on board that we had two sittings for meals - my sitting 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. We arrived in Halifax on April 4, 1946, boarded the train which stopped enroute to drop off the various brides. When the train would stop we would all hang out of the windows to get a glimpse of the reunion with the husbands and to have a look at the in-laws! I finally arrived at Union Station, Toronto, Ont. We were met by the Red Cross and our names were called out. This tall handsome civilian with a hat on came to claim me, I was in shock, who is this person?! When you have only seen a person in uniform they look quite different in civilian clothes! However, after the initial shock and hugs and kisses, everything was O.K. We had a second honeymoon in Toronto. Quite a second honeymoon!!



I arrived by train to Smithville and then by car four miles to Caistor Centre!

My in-laws were building a new home and with building supplies being in short supply since the war...here we are...we have electricity, fridge, stove, BUT NO RUNNING WATER as yet indoors so the toilet is outdoors!

"Romance to Reality". My father-in-law had a great sense of humour and named the outhouse in my honour "The Parliament Building". Second day I arrived he locked me in for a joke and I was there for hours as I was too shy (hard to believe today) to call out for quite along time. Quite a shock for a city girl! Next day my husband went off to work and as usual I got up, dressed, make-up on, high heels (still wearing them). My

mother-in-law said "where are you going?" I replied "to see the shops". She began to laugh hysterically and told me the one and only store was Sammy Magder's store in Smithville, four miles away! My in-laws at that



time had a party line and immediately my mother-in-law got on the line to relay what I had said and daily after that my escapades were told to all and sundry. It kept the community going for quite a long time. I lived in the country for a year. What a year! I had never been near farm animals and my in-laws had one cow, an Ayrshire which they said they got in my honour since I was from Ayrshire! One night I was awakened in the middle of the night...the sow had given birth and could not feed all the piglets. Picture this, I am sitting in my sexy satin robe, I am handed a squirming piglet, a ketchup bottle filled with milk with a nipple on it and told to feed it!! This episode kept the party line in hysterics for a week! When I wrote of this to my parents in Scotland my poor Mum was ready to fly over and rescue me.

Chivaree, oh yes! I even had one of those. An old custom I think they revived just for me! All the male neighbours arrive in the middle of the night banging pots and pans and whatever else they could find to waken up the new bride and groom, who must then invite them in for food and drink.

I lived there for one year and always said it was one whole year of my life wasted. However, as you mature and look back, my husband was in the army at 17 years 6 mos. and when he returned nearly five years later, he was married and brought a wife from another country! Quite a shock for his mother.

My husband's war injuries became worse and his doctor advised him to go north, which we did, to North Bay. I lived there for a year and that was certainly another experience and most certainly another story! We returned to the south the following year. He spent many months on a

yearly basis in Sunnybrook Veterans Hospital and getting back and forth to Toronto with two small sons on a weekly basis with no car and no relatives nearby.....well that is another story. My husband succumbed to his war injuries in 1984.

I was homesick for forty years. Would I do it again? Probably, sure builds character. Of course, now things are so different, family in Scotland gone. I had three older brothers, one a Spitfire Pilot shot down in Malta, one in the army and the other an engineer and I was the youngest and the only daughter when I left Scotland. A shock for my parents also.

The last 20 years I have finally realized that we live in the best country in the world and with my younger husband by my side, meeting him, well that is another story! We dance and I hope to keep dancing my way through the rest of my life.

ISABELLA ROSS WALLCE, ...WILCOX...NOW HORVATH!



