

May Ella Comrie
Scottish War Bride
Aquitania
June 27, 1946

CANADA'S IMMIGRATION MUSEUM
PIER 21



Memories and Impressions of War Bride, May Ella Comrie

My story begins September 1943, when my sister Cathie and I took two young teenagers (friends of the family) out to see the sights of Glasgow. Little did I know that on that fateful night, I would meet the man I would marry three years later. We took the two girls out dancing at the Lacarno, a famous dance spot popular with many servicemen from overseas. Expecting just to be a chaperone to these two girls, I ended up having a wonderful time dancing with my future husband, Gordon (Joe) Comrie, a member of the

Queen's Own Rifles based out of Toronto, who insisted at the end of the evening that I take his army address and write to him.

It took me about three weeks, and many dares from the girls I worked with at Babcock and Wilcox, before I finally took a chance and wrote to him. This began a correspondence that lasted right up until 1946. We would meet every three months when Gordon was on leave right up until D-Day.

I woke up one morning to her the news that the Americans, British and Canadians had landed in France, with Gordon as one of those troops. A week later, I received an official military card from Gordon stating, "I am well".

In January following the invasion, Gordon



was one of the first Canadians to receive a two week leave in Britain. It was during this leave that we became engaged.

Thankfully, Gordon survived the European campaign and he arrived back in Scotland in July 1945. We were married on July 18th and a month later Gordon returned to Canada. It seemed that I waited an eternity for my opportunity to leave for Canada, and finally in mid June I received word that I was to proceed to Southampton to board the Aquitania for passage to Pier 21 in Halifax.

A memory of the train journey to Southampton was being locked in our coaches by the military because on previous trips some young war brides had thrown themselves from the train, having a last minute change of heart.

On board the Aquitania life was busy. All of our needs were met by Canadian military officers assigned for our protection along with a large contingency of Red Cross nurses who looked after all of our physical needs. The weather was beautiful and we could sit out on deck for the entire voyage.

We arrived at Pier 21 at five in the evening the 27th of June 1946. It took two days for me to finally be processed and allowed off the Aquitania. I went straight onto a train and left for Toronto.



On July 1st, the train arrived at Union Station in Toronto. One by one war brides scared out of our wits, walked up a red carpet on the station platform as our names were being announced over a loudspeaker. At the end of the carpet, there was Gordon standing with a big bouquet of pink roses. He was accompanied by his best friend and Gordon's family. I was made to feel very much at home and welcomed with open arms.

Gordon and I made our home in Toronto. I enjoyed my life in Canada, although at first the thought of being so far away from my home in Scotland was hard to live with.

Our first daughter arrived July 1947. Having a baby to look after was wonderful and I was able to finally settle into my new home. Our second daughter arrived four years later to complete our family. In no time, the girls were grown and married and we have four wonderful grandchildren.

Gordon and I traveled quite a bit, including Holland to join in the celebration of their liberation. We had a great time, full of laughter and tears. Four years later, we attended the D-Day anniversary celebration, visiting so many graves of so many fallen Canadians in Holland, Belgium and France. We also visited Vimy Ridge. Gordon and several of his war time comrades were awarded a special medal by the mayor of Bernieres Sur Mer, the town where Gordon's regiment had landed on D-Day.



We also spent holidays in Alaska, British Columbia, Cuba and the Maritimes, all with wonderful memories.

Gordon died in 1992. I am thankful that we had the opportunity to enjoy all of these years together.

My two daughters and I enjoyed a trip to Pier 21 on July 1st, 2006.

Returning to the place in Canada where it had all started was a sentimental journey for me, one that I will treasure for the rest of my days. I was so happy to have been present for the official opening of the war brides' exhibit, sixty years since my arrival.

My first grandchild was born on July 19th, 2006

May Ella Comrie



War Bride's Journey

60 years ago on the 27th of June 1946.

Ella Comrie, wife of Gordon
Comrie, Queen's own Rifles arrived from
Scotland at Pier 21 on the
"Aquitania." On June 29th 2006 Ella and
her two daughters from Ontario arrived
back in Halifax to celebrate the 60th

Anniversary.

Submitted By: Ella Comrie

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