

Doug Seymour
Son of an English War
Bride
Aquitania
April of 1946



While I have no memories of the time I spent at Pier 21, I do have a few memories of the trip over on the Aquitania.

The most vivid is being in a cabin with my mother and I believe 2 other women. The cabin had 2 triple decker bunks and I believe my mother was in the upper, while I was in the lower (I was only 5 at the time.)

My father had returned to Canada in the fall of 1945 and had settled down on a farm south of Regina. My mother tells of an incident on the train out to meet him.

Somewhere on that trip, while the train was being serviced, some volunteer ladies got on offering fresh fruit to us. The lady offered me a banana, but I would have nothing to do with it, never having seen one before. My mother of course was delighted to have it, not having seen one since the beginning of the war.

My father was discharged the fall before my mother and I came over and went back to work for a farmer whom he had worked for before the war. The farmer agreed to let him live in the old farm house which had stood empty all during the war. During this time, a family of skunks had taken up residence in the cellar of the house. As I'm sure you are aware, many houses on the prairies at that time were built without a true basement, but they did have a large area dug out of the ground under the house. This was accessed by means of a trap-door set in the floor (usually somewhere in the kitchen). This dug-out pit didn't go all the way to the outside of the house - typically it ended about 2 feet back from the edge all the way around so that a 24' x 24' house would have a 20'x20' cellar. It was on this 2' wide ledge that the skunks were making their home.

My father and his boss tried unsuccessfully for several days to gently convince the skunk family to leave, without success. Finally, they decided that the only way to get rid of them was to kill them, which they did, unfortunately, as you can guess, the skunk's last action was to leave the tell-tale skunk calling card of a dose of spray. Obviously no one was going to be able to use that cellar for some time, so they nailed the trap-door shut. My mother couldn't understand why she couldn't get it open.

Prior to my birth, my mother, who had trained as a lab technician, worked in one of the well known hospitals in London. She had never lived anywhere but within the confines of metropolitan London, and had what would have been called a "genteel" lifestyle. The house that she lived in with her parents, of course had running water and indoor plumbing. She was a reasonably talented violinist and played in an amateur symphony orchestra. She left that to come to a farmhouse in southern Saskatchewan where the toilet was a "honey bucket" in a closet, where water was hauled from town about 10 miles away and stored in an underground cistern, where "refrigerated" storage consisted of a wooden box which was let down into the underground water tank, and where the nearest neighbour was about a mile away. I often wonder what her thoughts were, if she had second thoughts about what she had gotten herself into.