

Norah Kerrivan nee  
Dawe  
Daughter of an Irish  
War Bride  
Queen Mary  
July 1946



Arrived as a babe with my Irish Mother and my older sister, Betty, to live in Montreal with my Newfoundland-born father, James "Don" Dawe. We went by train from Halifax to Montreal, and my mother told us she was very worried on the trip about what she had gotten into. She said the train went through miles of nothing but rock and trees. She was relieved to find Montreal a big "modern" city. She marveled at how the smallest children could speak French when she found it difficult to learn.

My parents met in London, England. My mother had gone there to work with her best friend, Mary Tracy. My sister and I were born in Paddington at St. Mary's. My mother remained in contact with Mary, and the daughter of fellow renters in flats on Talbot Road, in London. She met a very young British war bride (in her teens) who married a soldier from Montreal, Quebec. Her name was Buntie (a nickname?). She helped my mom get through some rough times settling in with a strange family in a strange land. They lost touch, but my mother spoke of her fondly, and often.

My brother Jim was born in Montreal - the first Canadian in our family. Years later our sister Violet joined us and my parents liked to joke that she was made in Germany, and born in Pembroke, Ontario.

My father had rejoined the forces after the war and we did a tour with him in Soest, Germany in the late fifties. I can remember him being flabbergasted when I told him I did not know what was so important about Germany and why were we going there. I was eleven. He said Germany was the reason he met Mom and how I got to be. I was very stunned at signs of destruction in Germany and England that were still very apparent a dozen years later. I could [not] understand that the war had left such a mark [and] that it was taking a long time to recover from it. I was back in both areas in the seventies and the only marks left are the ones left as deliberate reminders. I marvel at how we can rebuild and carry on.

We have kept in touch with and visited our relatives overseas, especially with the advent of e-mail. We are as exotic to them as they are to us, and we joke about how every one talks funny. My mother is 80 and frail,

and it is especially sad since her identical twin in Ireland recently passed away. My Dad is still pretty spry and he attributes it to the good care my mother gave him all these years. Until my mother could no longer go they would go for walks together, always holding hands. Of course, Dad would say it was so she couldn't hit him!

Life was not easy in the early married years, apparently, but we never noticed. Their affection for each other is still strong. My mother was a true pioneer. She left family and good friends to go to England and then again to follow my Dad to Canada. When my Dad rejoined the military we again made several moves. They get cards and letters from all over the world, especially at Christmas.