

Berthe Wyss Morris
by Daughter RoseMarie
Morris
English War Bride
Andes
November 1944



My mother, Berthe Wyss Morris, was a war bride who arrived in Halifax



on the Andes in November 1944. There is not much information about her arrival since military security prevailed during wartime. Mother was a young Swiss nurse,

providing specialized care for two sickly infants of a psychologist and his wife in rural England when war broke out. In September, 1940, she met and married my father, Harold Morris, a sergeant with the Canadian Armed Forces, in Crawley, Sussex. I was born in March, 1943 in Dorking, Surrey, and we moved to Great Bookham, Surrey, near where my father was stationed. Later, while my father was serving in Europe, Mother was anxious due to German bombardment of the area where we lived outside London. My grandfather wrote frequently, urging Mother to come to Canada.

My mother died in 1986, but I recall her saying that she was seasick throughout the voyage. Mother was afraid of the ocean, but she left England because of an increase in the bombs falling in our neighbourhood in Great Bookham. Apparently, the Andes took a longer route to avoid the ever-present danger of German u-boats. I have Mother's berthing card issued by the purser's office (with our deck, cabin and berth information) for the Andes and her immigration card indicating that we embarked at Liverpool on November 8, 1944. I learned at the Pier 21 Research Centre that we probably arrived in Halifax on November 17, 1944. A letter from my mother to my father indicates that she and I arrived by train in Welland, Ontario very late in

the evening on November 19. My grandfather and aunt welcomed us at the train station.

The Pier 21 staff were very helpful, showing us some of the displays and the deck where troops left for Europe or immigrants arrived. Since there was a fire at Pier 21 in 1944, I assume that my mother and I must have passed through immigration in the temporary sheds. A staff member gave me an ``alumnus`` badge to wear although I do not remember our arrival - I was twenty months old at the time.

My mother spoke about the exceptional kindness of the Canadian Red Cross nurses. One of Mother`s trunks containing my clothes went missing after the voyage, so the Red Cross provided her with clothing for me to wear. Mother was upset since she had brought pretty things for me to wear to meet my father`s family!

My father, Harold B. Morris, returned to Canada after the war ended in 1945 (I assume through Pier 21). My parents built a new house in Welland. In August, 1946, my sister, Heather, was born. Then, in a tragic accident on September 19, 1947, my father was killed at the age of 34.

With considerable courage, my mother, Berthe, stayed in Welland and cared for us (3 ½ years and 1 year old when she was widowed). On November 22, 1952, Mother became a Canadian citizen. Reluctant to leave us for night shifts, Mother did not return to nursing when we were small. Later, Mother was employed for many years at the Welland County Registry Office. Mother visited friends in England and her family in Switzerland occasionally, but she was always happy to return to her home in Welland, Ontario. Our mother delighted in her four grandchildren. As a retiree she was a volunteer, delivering Meals on Wheels. In January 1986, she passed away shortly after being diagnosed with acute leukemia.

I am so glad that Pier 21 has been named a World Heritage Site. I was proud to wear the alumnus badge during my visit. The old walls reflect the voices of many immigrants over the years who came to Canada with fear, but especially, with freedom and hope.