

Bessie Whissell  
 by Daughter Jacqueline  
 Grace Anne Smith nee  
 Whissell  
 English War Bride  
 Queen mary  
 July 4, 1946



I visited Pier 21 a few years ago and was absolutely surprised to see and read all about the War Brides and War Brides.

My mother, Bessie, was a War Bride and I was a War Baby. I was only 13 months old when we made the "Big Crossing" on the Queen Mary. We



arrived on July 4, 1946. My mother often told the story of how rough the crossing was and how everyone, except me, was seasick. Apparently I was eating everything in sight.

My mother was 5 months prenanat with my brother, Warren, she was coming to a strange country - never

having been away from home in her life - with a young child. When she arrived it was very hot, about 90 degrees F, and she was wearing a fur coat. She almost collapsed from the heat. There were thousands of women and children on board and registration for a landed immigrant was long and tedious. My father, who was still in the Air Force, had previously left for Canada and was waiting for Mom and me in Montreal. We took the train from halifax to Montreal and were greeted by my

anxious father and all his French Canadian family. At the time my father spoke very little English and of course my mother knew no French. But love prevailed and they started this new life by sharing a duplex accomodation with my father's parents and his younger brother, eight adults and a small child. There were many hardships in finding employment and language was a huge barrier. Within the next few years we settled into a "war time" house in Tetreaultville, Montreal East, and remained there for 46 years.

We all survived and my brother Warren and I grew up in a very loving family atmosphere, surrounded by aunts and uncles, grand-parents and lots of cousins. I grew-up with two languages, but my mother never did master speaking French, although she could understand everything that was being said.

Bessie is now 82 years young and lives in a retirement home in Burlington, Ontario. We spend many a day reminiscing about the war years and her brave voyage across the waves that changed her life forever. She has had visits from her mother and brother but never re-visited England and her home town of Middleborough.



Thank-you for this opportunity to reminisce about my roots and how lucky & fortunate I've been!

