

Jean Bock
English War Bride

Diary Entries

Friday, April 26

I left Sheffield at 9 am and was met in London by the Canadian Army and driven in a private car along with a girl named Beatrice to the hotel. This place is very nice and quite near Hyde Park. We slept in two tier bunks along with about two dozen other girls, including Margaret from Scotland. We three became great friends. We also made friends with six Dutch girls and on Friday afternoon we all went out together. On Friday night there was a Cinerama show in the lounge. On Saturday we were allowed to go out all day until 8:30.

We went with Beatrice to her sister's at Hammersmith. Then we went to see Bette Davis in "The Corn is Green". After that we had supper at a café and so back to the hotel.

Sunday, April 28

Sunday morning we left the hotel at 12:30 in private motor coaches for Waterloo. We boarded the special train for Southampton and after getting our passports etc. we went aboard the ship. This was a thrilling moment. I walked up the gangway and a steward took my bag and showed me to my cabin. I am on A Deck, next to the Purser's cabin, in B Cabin. I share this with twelve more girls. The beds are wonderful and soft and everything is very clean. I am second sitting so I went down with my friends to dinner at 7 o'clock. I chose soup, chicken, roast potatoes and vegetables, ice cream, tea and an apple. Then we walked the decks until bedtime.

Monday, April 29

Monday morning we were awakened by a voice at the microphone saying, "6:30: time to rise and shine, come on girls, get out of bed." We were up on deck by 7:30 and our breakfast was at 9 o'clock. I chose oranges, wheat flakes, two eggs, bacon and toast and tea. The food is wonderful and we have a very nice waiter at our table.

We went on deck and had a lifeboat drill. We did look freaks. At noon we sailed. It was a wonderful experience. As the boat sailed out, the girls sang, "There'll Always be an England". People on the docks waved and cheered and we did the same.



The gift shop opened at 4 o'clock and we got Coca Colas and chocolate, nail varnish remover, lip stick, handkerchiefs etc. We had lovely meals again, always with plenty of fresh fruit. At night we had community singing.

Tuesday, April 30

Most of the girls are sick and I don't feel so good myself, but I manage to keep eating although I only had grapefruit and toast for breakfast and for lunch and dinner, cold salads. The dining room is almost empty at every meal. I stay on deck all day in the fresh air. The weather is glorious.

Wednesday, May 1

A week today we should dock at Halifax. Most of the girls are very ill and my friends have been sick, but so far I'm eating lots of this good food. Oranges, peaches, apples, eggs - anything you wish, everyone is very kind to us and the nurses are in attendance all the time. Wednesday evening we sat up on deck until 10 o'clock, wrapped in our dressing gowns, singing songs and having lots of fun. The stewardess said once we get into the Mid-Atlantic, it will be much calmer.

Thursday, May 2

We were awake by 6:30 and up on deck. By 7 o'clock it is much calmer and most girls come down for breakfast. I ate oranges, corn flakes, two eggs, bacon, toast and marmalade and tea. We came straight up on deck again and were interviewed by a press man. Our names will be in the Canadian papers. We sit doing our embroidery. We have great fun. There are now eight of us all good friends.

We put our clock back $\frac{1}{2}$ hour each day.

Friday, May 2

Up early once more. It was a lovely warm sunny day and we were out doing our embroidery all day on the deck and stuffing ourselves with fruit and chocolate.

Saturday, May 3

We ran into a storm and the boat heaved and plunged something terrible. The spray was coming right over the decks. Lots of girls were

sick again, but I feel fine and I'm eating lots of good food, especially apples.

Sunday, May 4

It is much calmer now and the sun is coming out, but it's still very cold. I was up on deck by 7:30 am. I had a good breakfast: oranges, corn flakes, two eggs, bacon, toast and tea.

This morning we went to the church service. It was lovely. We sang "For Those in Peril on the Sea"; also "Through All the Changing Scenes of Life".

We sat on the deck all day. We had turkey, ice cream etc. for dinner. Then we washed our hair, Bebe, Scottie and me and then went to bed. It was lovely.

Diana Lamont was born today. This is the first time a baby has been born on the ship so of course a great fuss is being made and a fund has been started in honour of her. Mrs. Lamont was in my cabin.

Tuesday, May 6

Tuesday was a day of excitement as we sighted land. As we sailed into Halifax, the crowds on the dock cheered and the bands played "Here Comes the Bride" and the Canadian National Anthem, "O Canada".

My friends, the eight of us, were again interviewed by the press and also had our photos taken for the Canadian Newspapers. Then we had our money changed. Gosh we got a lot of laughing over the money business.

Wednesday, May 7

With a soldier for each girl, we left the ship and boarded the train and what trains - the comfort is wonderful. I am still with my friends. At the station, before the train left, we were given milk, wonderful milk and cream biscuits.

The first stop was Moncton. We got out for magazines. It was snowing. We had bananas after dinner, then to bed. The beds are just wonderful.

Thursday, May 8

A lovely day. We stopped for 20 minutes at Quebec, a lovely city. At 7:00 am Betty and I walked along the platform and were given oranges, nuts, gum and chocolate, all free.

The next stop was Montreal. Beatrice and Betty left here for Toronto. We had four hours in Montreal and we were driven around town to see the sights and then to Eaton's: a big store where we thought we were in a dream. Everything you could imagine. I bought a blouse, undies etc., rollers and a nightdress, perfume, sweets and picture cards.

Last night we passed through Ottawa, but I was asleep.

I posed for photos again. In the next place we stopped for twenty minute, almost all of the people were red Indians. We were able to get bananas and ice cream and then on again for hours. We passed through forests growing close to the railway lines and beautiful lakes, To us, the scenery seemed wild and reminded us of the stories we had read of Indians, the tall dark pines, the calming shimmering lakes and the wailing Whoo Whoo of the train as she roared on her way carrying us west nearer and nearer to our journey's end.

At 10 o'clock, Saturday, May 10th, we pulled into Winnipeg. There we split up. My friends went different ways. I was told that I would be met by my husband at 9 p.m., Sunday night in North Battleford, Saskatchewan. I was alone again.

I went to a small town in Saskatchewan of about 500 people. We only stayed there for two years before moving to the West Coast. My husband and I were married 47 years until he died. I was lucky and we were very happy together. We have three children and six grandchildren.