

Jeanne Bishop nee
Hitchcox
English War Bride
Aquitania
March 22, 1946



Editor's Note: The following

memoir is based on an interview that was conducted by Elinor Maher and Beverly MacLellan for the Colchester Historical Society Museum & Archives as part of the museums Year of the War Bride research and exhibit of 2006. The Pier 21 Society would like to thank Ms. Maher, Ms. MacLellan and the war brides that contributed to this collection by sharing their experiences and impressions of the war years and their early days in Canada.



Name: Jeanne (nee Hitchcox)
Bishop

Parents: Eveline (nee Maxwell)
and Reginald Hitchcox

Home: New Malden, Surrey (near
Wimbledon, south west of
London, about a 20 minute train
ride from the City)

Birthdate: April 15, 1925

War time memories:

"I was fourteen when the war started. Early in the war when an air raid siren sounded everyone ran for cover, carrying their gas masks. Later some people got very blasé about it. I remember when the planes flew overhead. You could hear distant sirens and you got to know the difference between the enemy and friendly planes. You could hear a distant thrumming sound.

I remember standing in our back yard watching fighter plane dog fights. My mother was at work [a secretarial job] because she and my father were divorced. I had one younger sister, Patricia.

I went to a Catholic boarding school until I was 12, doing academic studies and finished school as a day student at another convent. Then I studied at a business college. At seventeen I got my first job in a lawyers office in London. I commuted to work, walking a distance then taking the train and a bus.

Eventually I moved to Manchester, in 1945, and worked for the Ford Motor Company who were manufacturing parts for air planes. There were machine guns mounted on the top of the building. I worked in the Engineering Department for a year and a half."

What was the attitude to Canadian service men in your community?

"The attitude varied. People found some of them a little rough and there was a little too much drinking. As time went by they adjusted and we also adjusted. They were very welcome.

Husband:

"Donald Bishop from River de Chute, New Brunswick, near the Maine border, halfway between Perth-Andover and Florenceville. When I met him, he was stationed near Epsom, in the signal corps of the Canadian Army.

How did you meet your husband?

"During the war we went to movies and dances. I met my husband at a dance in Wimbledon. I knew him for quite a while, four and a half months, before we started to date. I didn't like him very much at first. He was too complimentary and he was five years older than me."

Wedding date:

September 14, 1943

Can you tell us about your wedding?

"It was a very small wedding but we had flowers and a reception at the house for a few family and friends. I wore a gold linen dress and brown accessories. My sister and my mother helped with the necessary food coupons . My step-father made the wedding cake and it was shaped like a horseshoe.

We went on a honeymoon in a country inn near Oxford and in October Donald went to Italy. He got a foot disease in Italy and was meant to go back to Canada but somehow was put on the wrong ship and ended up in Birmingham. I travelled by train up to see him there on weekends. Later he was sent to Germany where he was burned in a fire near Williamshaven and sent to Basinstoke, England. Again I was visiting on the weekends.



He was three months in the hospital but was able to go back to active duty in Holland near the end of the war.

Donald went back to Canada in the fall of 1945."

What was your family's reaction to the news you were marrying a Canadian?

"My mother was very upset when I left. Later she and my sister Patricia immigrated to Ontario in December of 1946 but there was no thought of this at the time. I cried all the way from Manchester to Portsmouth."

How did you come to Canada and what are your memories of the trip?

"I came on the Aquitania with 1800 other war brides and their children. The trip lasted seven days and I was sick for the first three. I was in a cabin with six bunks and one of the women had a sick baby. I remember the diarrhoea smells and the nurse chasing us up to the deck because

the fresh air was supposed to help. One girl was so sick she tried to jump over board and she was reported to have said, 'No man's worth this'.

The ship was so crowded that even the ball room was full of cots. There was only salt water for the bath tubs."

What was the date and memories of your arrival?

March 22, 1946

"The first sight of land was very exciting. One woman had four children and needed five helpers to aid her in getting off of the boat with all her kids and luggage."

Children?

Susan - 1947

Bruce - 1952

Karen - 1958

What were your first impressions of Canada?

"It was March and I remember it was cold and muddy. Pier 21 was a big warehouse with immigration officials at desks.

I took the train and my husband met me in Saint John. He told me he was worried I wouldn't stay. We drove to Fredericton and overnighted there before we went onto River de Chute. I remember lots of mud holes in the roads and only a few houses and they were small.

Donald's family was very welcoming. They were thrilled to death that two of their sons had married English girls."

Where did you live when you first arrived in Canada?

"Donald had a job as a Customs Officer at the Maine border. We lived with his parents in River de Chute for a while and then bought a two room house where we lived for about a year. We built a house after our first baby was born."

Tell us about the adjustments you had to make.

"Realising that everyone did their own baking and laundry. I was used to eating out and buying baked goods. We only cooked small meals except on Sunday. Also we were used to sending the laundry out."

Did you have trips home? Did your family come to Canada to visit?

"My mother and younger sister immigrated shortly after I did and were living in Canada. I wasn't really interested in going back. I felt that I wanted to go to places I had not seen."

Did you have difficulties with Canadian Citizenship?

"No. At the time I believe being married to a Canadian was enough."

Recent history:

"After my husband's death in 1999 I wanted a change. About three months after his death I moved to Truro where my son and his family live."