

Joan Lucie Wallingford
nee Longley
English War Bride
Aquitania
August 15, 1946



MY WALLY - MY NICK
By Joan Wallingford

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CHAPTER ONE

It was a mild Saturday afternoon in April, 1944. I was 15 years old and anxiously waiting my 16th birthday in May. My girlfriend Audrey, had turned 16 in March and Saturday afternoons we went out together to have some fun. Sometimes we would go to an afternoon dance or a movie



or perhaps just go into the city of Leeds to look around the shops and look at all the pretty things we would like to buy but couldn't afford.

World War Two had been going on forever, or so it seemed to us teenagers. We had survived the air raids and being afraid as the bombs fell as we tried to sleep in dark, damp cellars or huddled in cold air raid shelters. We had survived the blackout, riding in dimly lit streetcars, walking on scary dark streets. We had coped with the rationing of food and clothing, making do with whatever we could find to wear to make ourselves look as presentable as possible. We even

painted our white legs because silk stockings were impossible to get. They looked okay until we got caught in the rain, then what a mess they became. We hated this war. It was brutal in so many ways. It cheated us out of what should have been our young, carefree days and made us mature much faster than we should have. But, we survived.

Audrey and I both worked hard in a woolen mill that was part of the war effort. Our hours were 7am to 5:30pm Monday through Friday and until 12:30pm on Saturday. We were on our feet all day, winding yarn that would be made into uniforms for the armed forces or other things that were required. The pay wasn't great and we had a grouchy foreman to work under. It wasn't pleasant and I'm sure it would be considered slave labor today. But Audrey and I sure welcomed every Saturday afternoon, because this was our time to enjoy ourselves.



This particular Saturday, we had decided to go and see a movie at the Odeon in the city, so we jumped on a streetcar and away we went. The city streets were crowded with armed forces from all the Allied countries as well as citizens. As we were walking up the street to the cinema, Audrey decided she wanted to stop in at a penny arcade because they sometimes had sweets (candies) which were hard to get in wartime. I knew my strict father would frown on me for going into such a place, but I went in anyway. Inside were some pinball machines and a jukebox. While Audrey went in search of candy, I stood listening to the music. A young man was hogging the machine, slapping coins in the slot before anyone else had a chance to. Suddenly, I noticed a young soldier with a coin in his hand, patiently waiting for a chance to play a record. I was standing quite close to the coin slot, so I took the soldier's coin and before the hog could, I slipped the soldier's coin in. When I asked what tune he wanted he said "Song of India" which I then played. By this time Audrey had returned minus any candy and because it was almost time for the movie, she and I left.

As we walked to the street, we suddenly heard the clomping of army boots behind us and it turned out to be this young soldier and his handsome buddy. They asked us where we were going and if they could come to the movie with us. We found out the young soldier's name was

Wally and his friend's name was Jimmy. Now Audrey was completely taken with Jimmy, he sure was a good looking hunk. I wasn't so impressed with Wally, but he seemed to be nice enough. They told us they were stationed in Otley, which was around nine or ten miles from where we lived. They also said they would like us to meet them the following Saturday. We agreed, or at least Audrey did, then we left to get our streetcar home. All Audrey could talk about was this Jimmy; she really had fallen head over heels about him. Myself, I was doubtful we would ever see them again. Little did I know then how this chance meeting was to change my life!

CHAPTER TWO

All week long Audrey raved on and on about Jimmy and that we simply must go and meet them again. I went along with her and sure enough they were waiting beside the stone Lions on Leeds City Hall steps, the place we had arranged to meet. It was then that we found out that they were soldiers from Canada and not English soldiers as we had thought. They had just been given their Canada flashes to put on their uniforms. Oh Lord, I thought, my father would skin me alive, if he knew I was with a Canadian. They also told us they had come to the city without a pass and asked if we could go somewhere away from the military police, so the four of us jumped on a streetcar and went to Roundhay Park. It was a large and beautiful area with flower gardens and lakes and as we walked around, they told us about Canada and how they had volunteered to fight in the war. We had a great day, a fun day together. I remember Wally climbed a tree and gave us the famous Tarzan yell. I was scared he would fall because of his big army boots, but he made it safely to the ground and we all had a good laugh.

Wally asked if he could write to me. I didn't dare give him my home address, but I knew my Auntie Minnie wouldn't mind so I gave her address. Sure enough a letter came within days. Some Saturdays, Audrey and I would go to Otley where they were stationed and we would spend the afternoon and early evening together. It was always the four of us and I got to know and like Wally more and more. He was fun to be with, always so pleasant and considerate. Audrey and I had both had a strict upbringing and didn't stand for any funny business like sex. Oh yes, we would hold hands, hug and kiss a little, but that was as far as it went as I was bound and determined to save myself for the man I married.

We had a really funny incident one Saturday afternoon in Otley as the four of us were walking in the park near where the army camp was. It seemed the army had held a tear gas drill for the soldiers to test their gas masks and following the test when they released the gas the wind had

blown it into the woods behind the camp. Well, all of a sudden there was a rush of soldiers and women running out of the woods in various stages of undress. They were crying and choking and all the time trying to get their clothes back in order. It really was funny to watch. The four of us almost choked from laughing at them.

In May, when I turned 16, I was a little concerned that Wally would think I was too young, but I was honest with him when he asked how old I was. He looked at me, then shrugged and said, "It didn't matter to him if it didn't matter to me. " He was only 20 and after all it was only four years difference. I was so happy he still wanted to see me.

His letters came often and of course, we always had our Saturdays together. Things changed suddenly that summer though. One Saturday when we went to meet them they were not there. We waited and waited. Just as we were about to leave Jimmy appeared. When I asked about Wally, he told me he had been shipped to the coast because he was being sent to Europe to really get into the fighting. I was upset and shed some tears. Why did this horrible war have to tear us young people apart?

CHAPTER THREE

I waited for his letters to come. All the time praying and wondering where he was and what he was doing. Finally the letters came, sometimes three or four at the same time and I would have to check the dates to see which one to read first. Of course he was not allowed to tell me anything about where he was or the war, as all letters were censored, but at least I knew he was still alive and doing okay.

Later that summer, I went to live with my sister Blanche in Ruddington near Nottingham. Her husband Philip was in the Air Force and they had a little girl named Elaine. A child I came to love dearly. Blanche and my older sister Sally both knew about Wally and when he wrote and told me he had been granted a leave at last, Blanche invited him and his buddy to come and spend it with us. We had a great time together and my two sisters really enjoyed meeting Wally at last. His buddy's name was Don Liscombe who was born and raised in Jackson's Point on Lake Simcoe. They only had a ten-day leave and the days flew by all too fast. Then it was another tearful goodbye. When oh when would this war be over?

My two sisters were very good to me and paid for my night school course. I was able to get a job in the office of a war factory in Ruddington. It was where they made one thousand-pound bombs and other bombs for the war, so security was very tight. We were not allowed to wear lipstick or jewelry and had to wear special shoes and keep our hair covered at all times. The entire factory was covered with sod so that from the air it

looked like it was just hills and fields. If the enemy had known it was there, they would certainly have blown a very large hole in the middle of England. I enjoyed my job. It was much better than the woolen mill.

The winter came and went. Wally wrote as often as he could and I replied. We were both very much in love. In the spring of 1945 he was granted another leave and I finally took him to meet my father. They got along like a house on fire. Wally had already written to my father asking his permission to marry me and my father wrote him a most beautiful letter back, granting his permission. So we became engaged. We found a little shop in Nottingham where rings were not too expensive. Wally



couldn't afford much on his army pay but I loved my ring anyway. Again Wally had to go back to his unit and the fighting in Europe, so it was left to me to make wedding arrangements. What a trial that was. We had so many papers to fill out for his government and mine, and it was only while filling out these papers that we discovered something very strange but true.

We discovered that Wally's father's name was Charles Edward and that my father's name was Charles Edgar. Two fathers with the same first name and the same second initial. Not only that, when it came to our mother's maiden names we found Wally's mother was named Hall and my mother was also named Hall. Two mothers with the same maiden surname. And both of us born over three thousand miles apart. It certainly seemed we were destined to meet. As well as filling out government papers we both had to have blood tests to make sure we had no venereal diseases. I had to have a letter of permission from my father and also a letter from my church minister to say that I was not a camp follower. I didn't even know what was meant by "a camp follower" but soon found out it meant "a female who followed soldier camps

around to sell their sexual favours." Boy oh boy was I young and green back then.

CHAPTER FOUR

Wally's mother wrote to me often and we exchanged photographs. In April 1945 I received the sad news that Wally's older brother Charles Melvin had been killed in action in Holland just six weeks before the war ended, a sad time for everyone.

Finally in May this horrible war ended in Victory. Church bells rang the lights in the streets flooded back on. People danced and cheered while I still waited for Wally to return from Europe. He did but was based in the South of England. However, he had survived the horrors of war.

We had hoped to get married in August 1945. I had bought a nice pale blue dress; a hat made of tiny blue flowers, dark brown gloves and shoes. My family had got together and given precious ration coupons so that I could have a small wedding cake made. Everything it seemed was falling into place. It was, until we got the news that permission had been granted by our governments but not before October. What a disappointment. Everything had to be packed away and I waited and wondered if I would ever get to the altar.



Wally finally was given a leave in January 1946 and so we were married on a three-day license at St. Peters Church in Bramley on January 22nd on a cold, snowy day. My girlfriend Audrey was my chief bridesmaid and my cousin Joyce Hall another bridesmaid. My sister Sally's husband Stanley was Wally's best man and because none of Wally's family could be there, some of my family sat on his side of the church so he wouldn't feel so alone. Reverend Richard Talbot officiated at the ceremony and I'm sure he felt we were both too young and it wouldn't be a marriage that lasted. We sure proved him wrong.

After the ceremony we had a one hour reception over a small bakery shop, nothing elaborate just a small get together. Following this, we caught a train back to Ruddington along with my sister Blanche and her little girl Elaine. Elaine fell asleep on the train and Wally laughed at the fact that here he was carrying a small child on his wedding night. We spent four wonderful days together then Wally had to return to his camp. I think all in all we had about ten days of married life together, a

weekend here, a weekend there. In March Wally was shipped back to Canada with his unit to be discharged from the army.

We wrote to one another often and I still worked in England while Wally worked at the Hollinger mine in Timmins Ontario Canada. In August 1946 I received notification that I was booked on the liner Aquitania to be brought to Canada with other war brides. My brother-in-law Philip managed to get me a large, black tin trunk to pack my belongings in and that was shipped ahead. The rest I packed into suitcases.

CHAPTER FIVE

It was very difficult to say goodbye to my family and friends. Many tears were shed but I was committed and certainly wanted to be with my Wally, my love.

On the first night of our journey to Canada, all the war brides were housed in a hostel in London and the next morning we were put on a private train to Southampton on the coast of England. The ship looked huge to me. We were well taken care of by the army officials; the only thing was they did everything alphabetically, so this meant that my name starting with "W" was nearly always one of the last to be called. When I was finally allowed to board the ship, I was lucky enough to find two bunks unoccupied near the center of a huge room filled with other bunks. I quickly grabbed the top bunk.

When the dinner bell sounded, we all got a lovely surprise. Lots of good white rolls and butter galore. I can't remember what else was on the menu, but I know we sure feasted on that lovely white bread and butter because our bread had been almost gray for the past six years. The steward serving us got quite a laugh out of us all.

The liner sailed early the next morning and as I stood watching the shores of England slowly fade away, tears filled my eyes. I hoped I was doing the right thing. Leaving behind the many I loved, the country I loved. However, I was going to the man I loved to start a new life so I squared my shoulders, dried my tears and hoped for the best.

There were many soldiers on board being shipped home, but they were restricted to the decks below and guards were posted. We were required to stay on our deck or the upper deck only. I loved to go on the open deck and watch the ocean, it was fascinating. Some war brides got really seasick but I was fairly lucky that way.

Life on board ship was different but interesting. The meals were excellent after all our years of rationing and entertainment was provided some

evenings. I met many new people and had some interesting conversations.

I also found out that salt sea air is murder on hair. No matter how I tried to curl it, within an hour it was straight again so most of us wore scarves

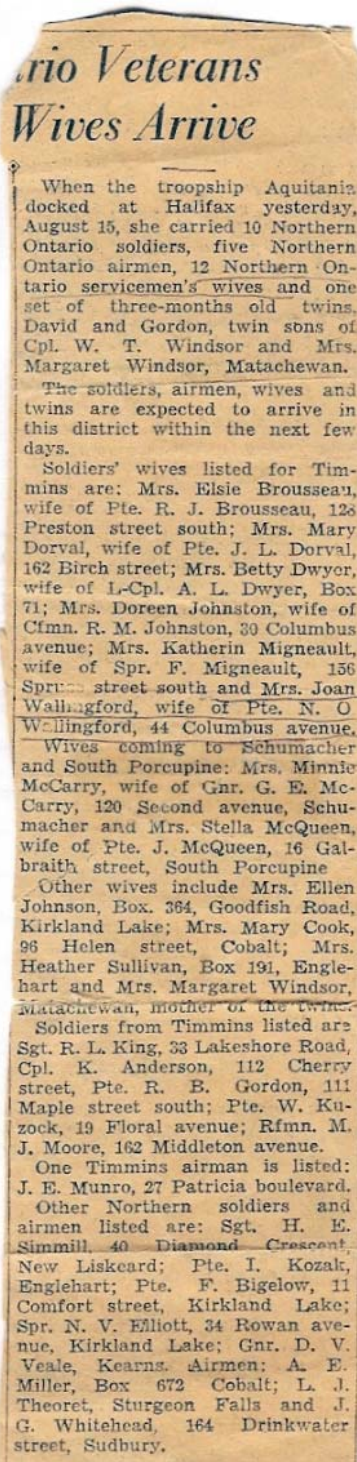
or turbans. Although I did like to go on the upper deck when it was sunny and let the fresh air blow through my hair. It felt so good. One night while I was taking a bath I laughed out loud. The soap would hardly lather in the warm salt water and it suddenly struck me that here I was sitting in a steel bathtub, in a huge metal ship totally surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean. One great big bath tub. It struck me as funny.

Another night there was a real fuss going on and we later found out that five women (brides) had been found below deck with the soldiers. Can you imagine? We were all disgusted with them, as were the officials. I was later told that the husbands of these women were advised of what had happened and that if the husbands didn't want them, their wives would be returned to England and not allowed into Canada. What kind of women would do such a thing? Camp follower's maybe?

CHAPTER SIX

It took five days and 13 hours to sail across the Atlantic and we arrived at Halifax harbor around 5:30 am on August 15, 1946. It was wonderful to see land again and we were all anxious to get on firm, solid ground once more. Still, we had to wait. We had to get our English money changed to Canadian dollars, which I thought looked like play money. I also had no idea what it was worth. When we were finally allowed to disembark, we were placed on a private train with armed guards and Red Cross workers.

I had an upper berth in the sleeping car and it was quite comfortable once I learned not to jump up quickly and bump



my head. We war brides talked a lot together and found out where each other was going to live. I think there was around six or eight of us heading for Northern Ontario.

During our first day on the train I remember getting off at one station along the way and I paid two dollars for a five-cent newspaper. Having no idea what I was doing with this funny Canadian money. No wonder the young paperboy gave me a huge smile. Shortly after the Red Cross worker came around and told us not to buy anything unless we checked with her, because we could get cheated, so I was careful from then on. We spent one night on a siding in Montreal for some reason, then the next morning we where on our way again.

When we reached North Bay some of us were transferred to another train (the Northlander) and put in charge of the conductor. He sat with us in a car at the back of the train.

Oh what a rugged country Canada seemed to be. So many trees, rocks and lakes.

Where were all the big cities, the people? It felt like I was going to the end of the world. Some brides got off at various stops along the way and I wondered when I was going to reach Timmins. Finally after almost three days on the train we arrived and there was my Wally with his father and his cousin Bill Cooke.

I rushed into his waiting arms. We hugged and kissed. We were together at last!

It was strange to see Wally in a suit and not in uniform, it was also strange to hear him being called Nick by everyone. It seems that he was only called Wally by his army buddies and so he became MY WALLY, MY NICK.

CHAPTER SEVEN

My first night in Timmins was spent with four men, my Nick, his father, his cousin Bill and a neighbor Mr. Robinson. Nick's mother was in hospital in Toronto but she telephoned to welcome me and hoped she would be home soon. The men told me many stories about "the bush and bears" and scared me a little until I realized they were joking.

I pulled my first no-no in Canada that night. When Nick and I headed for bed, Nick's father asked me what time we wanted to get up in the morning. Before Nick could say anything I said " Oh you can knock me up around nine." Well, the expression on dad's face was something to see.

When Nick could stop laughing he explained to his father that I wanted him to rap on our bedroom door at 9 am. Then he told me what "knock me up" meant over here. I was horrified. Believe me I never used that expression again.

Nick's father was a wonderful man and taught me many things. He showed me how to light the wood stove. I had never seen one in my life. Nick showed me how to work the washing machine. I loved that. Then I had to contend with the icebox. If you didn't empty the pan underneath, be prepared to mop up a flood. So many new things to learn. Not always easy but I learned.

Dad loved to pick wild raspberries and showed me how to preserve them. How to melt the wax to put on the top of the jars. The only thing I did wrong was to pour what was left of the melted wax down the kitchen sink. Of course, it blocked it up tight and poor dad had to work for hours to get it fixed. Always something new to learn.

Dad and Nick loved to play cards so they taught me how to play cribbage, euchre and other Canadian card games. It took awhile but I caught on and we spent many happy hours together especially long, cold winter nights.

Naturally, I would get very homesick at times but Nick, his parents, his brothers and sisters all helped to encourage me. They were all so great to me. I soon got used to Canadian money; it wasn't so strange after all. And I soon learned that a Chemist was a drug store, a Cobbler a Shoemaker, a bucket was a pail and so many other different words for different things.

My first winter in Canada seemed very long with lots of snow but I loved to see the icy- blue skies, the glorious sunsets and Northern Lights. It was during that winter that one of my tonsils burst. Nick called the Dr. and was advised to put ice on my neck so Nick went out and chopped icicles off the roof to put in an ice bag. I had my tonsils removed shortly after. They had bothered me all my life but my father would not allow the operation.

CHAPTER EIGHT

We lived with Nick's parents until the next summer and then we rented our own apartment. Times were tough as Nick wasn't making much money and he didn't want me to work so we lived from payday to payday. But we were happy.

Nick's older brother Bill loved to fish and one day he took Nick and I with him. That was the day I discovered muskeg. Before I knew it, I was up to my waist in water. Had fun fishing though. Summers were hot but I hated the black flies and mosquitoes and I let out a scream when I saw my first pine beetle and snake. Now I knew why all windows were covered with screens. So many flying insects.

In 1948 our first son was born and we named him Melvin Hall. Melvin after Nick's brother who had died in the war and Hall after our two mothers.

My family in England wrote to me often. Blanche had had a son Roderick just before I had left and my sister Sally had a baby girl Janet. A few months after Melvin was born Blanche had a girl she named Joan after me so we exchanged many photographs of our little families.

In 1952 Blanche gave me the wonderful news that they were immigrating to Canada as her husband Philip had landed a job with Austin Airways in South Porcupine. How excited I was to have some of my family with me again to be able to see my little Elaine again. It was quite a reunion and we laughed and cried together.

In 1953 our second son Martin Philip arrived and in 1956 we were blessed with our daughter Janice Christine. We decided this would be our family and so it was.

By this time Nick had left the mine and gone into the plumbing field. It was a much better job. The only thing was, he was out of town a lot of the time, so I was left to cope with the children. It kept me busy and I stayed home with them until they were all in school full time. One day I saw an ad on television that interested me so I applied for and got a job as a scriptwriter at CFCL Television. It was quite a pleasant yet stressful job but I enjoyed it and it made our financial situation a little easier.

In 1968 I had the opportunity to have a holiday in England and so after 22 years I got to see my sister Sally and all my relatives and friends again and of course the country I loved. It was great. A few years later Sally came with her family for a holiday and so all three sisters were reunited again. We had a lot of fun. Showing them the splendor of Niagara Falls, the thrill of being on the Maid of the Mist. Visiting the Canadian National Exhibition. Sally thought Canada was beautiful but was just way too big for her. By this time Canada had become the country I liked best. I loved England too but would rather live here. Too bad there was that big ocean separating us.

CHAPTER NINE

Nick and I, along with Martin and Janice, visited England to celebrate our 25th wedding Anniversary. It was a chance for our children to see where their mother had originated. It was a wonderful holiday. We visited the church where we were married and had our marriage blessed. We also got to meet Ernest the husband of my girlfriend Audrey. Marty and Jan really enjoyed exploring England. Climbing the hills and dales of Yorkshire and to the top of beautiful York Minster. Fishing in the North Sea and other exciting outings. They also enjoyed those good English fish and chips and Yorkshire Pudding. A good time was had by all.

Back in Canada, Nick and I were both members of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 88 in Timmins and we were both honored with Life Memberships for our years of service and dedication. Nick was also awarded the Meritorious Service Medal for his many years of service as Poppy Campaign Chairman. He was very proud to receive this prestigious award.



In the early 1970's we purchased our cottage on Kenogamissi Lake. Nick sure loved it there. I liked it too but was still a little nervous about those bears in the bush so wouldn't stray too far away from the cottage. We would work all week then on Friday night pack up the car and kids and head off for a fun weekend. What fun times we had. Watching Janice learn to water ski. Taking them fishing. Sitting around the campfire roasting wieners and marshmallows. Playing card games. In winter snowmobiling and skating on the frozen lake. Good quality time with family and friends, and we continued to do it as our children got married and our lovely grandchildren came along. So many happy memories. Laughing at the chipmunks and squirrels gobbling up peanuts. Watching the Whiskey Jacks stealing crumbs. Chuckling as our son-in-law Rick fell off the dock fully clothed. So many good times and not too many hassles along the way.

Oh yes, there were sad times and glad times along the way. Great sadness as parents, brothers, sisters and friends were laid to rest. Great happiness as we watched our family grow and prosper. They all married well. Had nice homes and good careers. We were so happy for them.

I worked at CFCL TV for almost 14 years and won many awards for commercials I created. Nick worked on many construction jobs for Local



1965 Campbell Commercial Script created by Joan Wallingford and Fran @ CFCL TV

Union 800. Baffin Island, Douglas Point, Darlington and many other out of town places. I also worked for CFTI radio and it was there that I won first place in the Canada Safety Council Award. This was for my "THINK CHILDREN" safety message. Quite an achievement for someone with no high school or university education.

I retired at age 60 and Nick retired a few years later. Now we could really spend our time together and we had both worked hard for it. We golfed and bowled together. Nick enjoyed curling and I liked to play bridge. We went to the cottage often and traveled. We also enjoyed our "Happy Hour" together. Each night before supper we would have a few drinks and talk over the doings of the day. Yes we had a good life.

In 1996 we celebrated our Golden our 50th wedding anniversary. What a great day that was. A day superbly planned and organized by our daughter-in-law Jane and other members of the family. We might have

had a small and inexpensive wartime wedding day but our 50th really was worth waiting for. Family picture taking at Royal Studio. A wonderful dinner reception and dance at the Legion Hall. Nick and I were both so happy and so proud that so many of our family and friends turned out to congratulate us on this great milestone. I felt like a bride all over again. We received many gifts and good wishes and my sister Sally who was unable to attend sent us two airplane tickets for us to visit England. What a lovely surprise. We took this trip in May 1996. My sister was in a nursing home but it was lovely to see her and other family and friends once again.

Nick and I returned to the church we were married at so long ago and our niece and nephew took us on a lovely trip to Scotland where Nick was able to purchase a Scottish golfing hat.

We also visited the town of Wallingford where Nick's ancestors had hailed from in the 1600's and because our name was Wallingford, we were royally treated by the Mayor of the town who gave Nick a tie with the Wallingford crest. It was an interesting and quaint town. The whole trip was just great and a terrific way for us to celebrate 50 wonderful years together. Not too many are able to do that so we counted ourselves extremely lucky as we flew back home to Canada once again.

Nick loved his children and his grandchildren dearly. He was always so kind, patient and understanding. He always looked for the best in people and was quick to forgive any shortcomings.

A sometimes stubborn man but a wonderful husband father and grandfather who will always be loved.

He passed away suddenly and peacefully on August 24th 2003 at his beloved cottage.

Today I am old. I am tired and yes, I am lonely. Yet I am so thankful. Grateful for the love and support of my family and my many friends. Grateful to my chosen country Canada and for my faith. They all truly help to keep me going. Most of all I am thankful for MY WALLY, MY NICK.

The man I loved so dearly who gave me such a true and beautiful life. May everyone be as happy and as blessed as I have been.

~The End~



Left to right
Front row: Kevin & Heather
Second row: Estelle, Carolle, Donna, Joan, Janice & Amanda
Third row: Melvin, Martin, Tara, Jane, Nicholas & Richard