

Phyllis White
English War Bride
Duchess of Bedford
May 27, 1945



Information I received advised me to travel to a London station by 4 p.m. May 11th. However, as peace was declared May 8th, a further telegram notified me to follow previous instructions and travel to London May 14th.

My parents escorted me to London. This was for them rather a heartbreaking experience not knowing when and from where I would be sailing. My husband had returned to Canada three weeks earlier. Other war brides leaving before and around that time were familiar with the procedure. On arrival at Liverpool in darkness, we boarded the Duchess of Bedford. The number of war brides on that crossing was fairly low, as it was mostly military personnel returning to Canada. We were told we would travel across the ocean in convoy due to the possibility of U-Boats or mines. After two days on board, the journey started. The staff on the Duchess were very helpful, and of course, the meals were greatly enjoyed. As I had no children and was not pregnant, my sleeping accommodation was on a lower deck in a hammock. However, it was comfortable, and I was not too aware of the motion of the water. I had become friendly with two other brides (one from Essex) on the train to Liverpool, so we spent the day together. One was going to Toronto and the other to Vancouver, and I was ending my journey in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. We had been in touch with our new in-laws prior to leaving England, so felt slightly acquainted.

After disembarking at Halifax, May 27th, we were guided to our train. All the employees at Pier 21 and on the train were very kind and friendly. Then, en route, at each little stop, it was a wonderful experience to be greeted by the local residents who supplied us with fruit, chocolate bars and cigarettes. They, of course, were interested to hear the areas in England from which we came.

On arriving in Montreal on a rainy afternoon, we stopped for a few hours. I had met a young Canadian woman on the train who asked me if I would like to go into the city. I accepted her offer, as I was anxious to purchase a pair of shoes. She took me to Eaton's and helped me (my French wasn't that good) select a pair of dress shoes.

Back on the train, I was feeling a little more relaxed - the homesick yearning was wearing off, and I was anxiously looking forward to joining my husband in Saskatoon. I had read and been told about the vast expanse of flat land in the Prairies, but it was still overwhelming. I realized I would be a great distance from the Atlantic or Pacific Ocean, and I would miss the sea and the beaches. Also the forest where I had always enjoyed walking, and listening to the birds.

In Winnipeg, with an hour to spare, I attempted to phone a brother-in-law, whom I had never met, but he was not available. The journey from Winnipeg to Saskatoon seemed endless, and there were only a few wives remaining on the train. However, at 10 p.m. the train pulled to a stop in Saskatoon, and I was escorted by the Red Cross hostess to where my husband and his mother were waiting to greet me. We stayed with my mother-in-law for two months, then purchased our home on the same road. I have lived in Saskatoon since I arrived in 1945. Our daughter was born in 1946, and our son in 1947. My husband, unfortunately, died in 1988.

I have made several trips back to England. After my father's death, my mother age 87, came to Saskatoon to live with my husband and me. Relatives and friends were very kind to her. She had wonderful health, enjoyed travelling with us to East and Western Canada, and had a wonderful celebration for 100th birthday in Saskatoon. She died at the age of 102 and half years.

Canada is my home and the years have been filled with much joy. However, I still love the British comedies and films and the British humour. I have many cherished memories of the land of my birth.