

Winifred Rose
English War Bride
Aquitania
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Editor's Note: Reprinted with the permission of the subject and author Linda Granfield who corresponded with Mrs. Rose while compiling stories for her book Brass Buttons and Silver Horseshoes: Stories from Canada's British War Brides.



I attended several War Bride meetings in Brighton Sussex England while awaiting news for my travel to Canada where Brides were given a little booklet put together by The Imperial Daughters of the Empire for British women intending to start a Rome in Canada.

This booklet contained information on life in Canada, it's Churches, Government and other important issues which was most enlightening and helpful.

When my papers arrived, when to leave to Brighton for London to join other War Brides at an arranged house to check in for first leg of preliminary's concerning all the work in getting the War Brides to

Southampton. It was 8th August 1946. We stayed overnight in London. Early next morning we boarded a train for Southampton Docks where our travel tickets to board the Cunard White Star Ltd - SS Aquitania were finalized and we were walking up the gangway onto the ship.

On board the Cunard White Star Ltd SS Aquitania we were given a postcard picture of the SS Aquitania and on the back of the postcard are the good wishes of the company to the War Brides printed as follows:



The Ship's Company of the SS Aquitania send you Best Wishes for your Happiness And Good Fortune In Your New Life In The Great Dominion The Country of Your Adoption. This gave me the feeling things are going to be alright.

We were allowed to send telegrams home from the ship. After my mother died, family members sent my telegram back to me. I didn't know my mother had kept it. I have just re-read it all this, and the memories of that day are flowing back clearly.

We stayed on ship overnight, the next morning 19th of August/46 at 10 a.m. the SS Aquitania pulled away from Southampton Docks on it's journey to Halifax, N.S. I joined other War Brides on deck to savor the [sic] last glimpse of England as it faded further and further into the distance until we couldn't see it anymore, mixed emotions were obvious as we wondered if we would ever see the land of our birth again.

Our quarters were very crowded I shared curtained area with five other War Brides and two babies. I was assigned the top bunk. My berthing card was 'C' Deck Section C5 Starboard. My dining room card read After Dining Room 1st Sitting table No. 18. I still have the menu card for our 5th day lunch at sea. The food was very plentiful after our war-time ration and I found I was not able to eat too much for several days, however I enjoyed my meals that I did manage.

The Atlantic Ocean was very calm which made the voyage very pleasant and I enjoyed the trip.

As the Aquitania neared the shores of Halifax, N.S. early on the morning of 13 August 1946 excitement at seeing land spread to us all, but there was a mist so we couldn't see too much.

Pier 21 meant the beginning of my journey across Canada it wasn't a very lively building but it was a special embrace to me, a beginning and a wonder of what's to come.

We remained on board all day and that night early next morning the 14th August, we were directed to the immigration shed and after the preliminaries my I.D. was stamped landed immigrant. Then looked for my luggage. Was issued a military train ticket for car number 61 on Great Pacific Railways, C.P.R. Was helped with luggage by army personal and escorted on the train 15th August. I had never seen such a large train before, was given a map of Canada outlining the train route we could follow. I don't know how many Brides etc there were, but 113

War Brides including me 32 children and 65 army repats were headed for British Columbia.

I had an upper berth No 3 which was changed each night and made up by the porter with clean sheets which was nice. It was very hot on the train and we could not open the windows because of the soot. Ice water which was new to me was welcome, and the white bread seemed like cake to me after dark colour ration bread.

The War Brides were let off at many train stations along the way. Some very remote places too.

The vastness of Canada was really an eye opener and the Rockies and lovely scenery too, wonderful.

I remember trying to wash my feet in the little sink that the cubicle had, one at a time of course, losing my balance when the train jerked.

I was glad to reach Vancouver and happy to be with my husband in North Vancouver and rest up after my journey.

Editor's Note: In a later letter Mrs. Rose wrote the following.

Looking at our wedding photograph I am recalling the lovely maroon colored orchid my husband had pinned on my coat lapel, a lovely corsage. He gave me one each anniversary thereafter, the same color, he never forgot. It became our special flower and I miss this special love taken so much today.

When I first arrived at my-in-laws house in August 1946 my husband had some beautifully wrapped gifts for me. I was overwhelmed, I had never received such lovely gifts before, one package contained a dressing gown which was padded and had an overall flower pattern of a maroon orchid, with a special orchid card (same color) which read "Orchids to you Sweetheart" and inside a special note welcoming me "home". I still have this lovely card. The dressing gown was nice and warm; I was always so cold at home. I was so upset when this special dressing gown wore out, all I have is a picture of me in it. There was also a letter waiting from my mother, half of it she addressed to Philip my husband, you can imagine how homesick I felt. I still have this letter. I always regret not being able to afford a trip home to see my mother again. By the time our lean years improved she had died. I have traveled back home a few times in recent years to see my sisters.

We even kept our Xmas tags to each other from our first Christmas together and we used them every Christmas on our special gift to each

other. Since he died, I put these two tags on the tree, my first gift from him was a pair of slippers which have long since worn out. But I didn't know Philip had kept his which was straight razor kit, over time the electric razor took over, but I found his straight razor kit among his effects, which surprised me.

P.S. - Corsages do not seem to be fashionable with the young couples today. I think it was so nice. Philip always bought me one if we were invited to a special dance and for my birthdays.

Thought you may like to read enclosed copy of the poem my husband dedicated to me, it is entered into Helen Shewchuk's book.

WINIFRED

Surrounded by so many
and far away from home.
Always with that feeling
of being very much alone.

Until, back in that war torn world
A little girl appeared.
Standing by a pillar in a place
so much revered.

Royalty once there stood;
to me she was a queen.
Forty and some years have flown,
I have not alone since been.

The Dome, once known by Royalty,
is the place where we did meet.
My War Bride, as she is now known,
had swept me off my feet.

Along with this book as a
Christmas Gift. I dedicate the above
poem to my dear wife.

Philip A. Rose
December 1988.

