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Little Fanfare As Vessel
Brings 943 Vets' De-
pendents To Halifax

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"Year of the War Bride"

Canadian War Brides 60th Anniversary 1946-2006

Discussion Document

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Operation "Daddy" began yesterday as the 35,677-ton liner Mauretania slipped quietly into a Halifax berth, carrying 943 of the more than 48,000 dependents of Canadian servicemen scheduled to arrive in Canada during the next few months.

Absence of cheering crowds and fanfare created a sharp contrast to former voyages of the Mauretania, which carried troops on her last trip to Halifax. A few husbands were on hand to greet the wives and children, but most family reunions will have to wait for a few days until the arrivals reach their destinations across the country. Instead of bands and sound trucks the pier was lined with perambulators and trunks.

The Mauretania sailed from Liverpool last Tuesday and passengers with active children to guard found the voyage a trifle tiring. But others enjoyed "every moment of the voyage" as one of the brides said.

Col. W. E. Sutherland, Ingersoll, Ont., formerly officer-commanding troops, was forced to change his title to ship's commandant. The colonel had high praise for the Red Cross workers and stewardesses who cared for the war brides and children. He also thanked the brides themselves for their co-operation.

A few of the women found their husbands waiting for them, and those destined for military district six, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, disembarked from the ship this afternoon. One train left for Ontario carrying army brides, and two others will leave tomorrow, one of army dependents and the other with a mixed group aboard.

2005 was rightfully dubbed The Year of the Veteran, but 1946 was the year when greatest number of War Brides sailed for Canada. I hope it will be recognized as The Year of the War Bride.

Eswyn Lyster, War Bride, Author and War Bride who sailed on the Mauretania, the First Official War Bride ship, February 5-9, 1946

"The story of the Canadian War Brides and how they came to this country is one of the most fascinating of World War Two. Why nearly 44,000 young women would leave everything that was familiar to embark on a life of adventure in post-war Canada is certainly worth examining."

Melynda Jarratt, Historian
www.CanadianWarBrides.com

2006 marks the 60th anniversary of the War Bride's arrival in Canada. Now more than ever, it is important that we honour the legacy of these amazing immigrant women whose impact can be measured in the nearly one million Canadians who can count a War Bride in their family tree.

The War Bride phenomenon is unparalleled in Canadian history - and given the reality of modern life, probably never will happen again: 44,000 women, mainly British, and all from the same generation, the War Brides fell in love with and married Canadian servicemen whom they met overseas during World War Two. After the war was over, the majority of the War Brides and their 21,000 children were brought to Canada in an immigrant wave that was organized and paid for by the Canadian government.

Over the last five to ten years in particular, there has been a flurry of interest in the Canadian War Brides. They have been the subject of untold newspaper and magazine articles, radio and television documentaries, dramatic films, and books. Recently, the War Brides were honoured with a Commemorative Envelope by Canada Post to coincide with celebrations to mark the 60th anniversary of the Year of the Veteran. At a ceremony held on June 30, 2005, Governor General Adrienne Clarkson and her husband, John Ralston Saul, (the son of a British War Bride), officially presented a framed envelope to War Bride Jean Spears of Ottawa at a War Brides Tea held in Rideau Hall.

While I am pleased to see the War Brides receiving some well-deserved recognition, I have always said that it is historically inaccurate to place the War Brides within the context of the Year of the Veteran 2005, especially when the bulk of the War Brides actually came to Canada in 1946.

I believe it is time to seriously mark the War Bride's unique place in Canadian history with a series of events / activities that fall under the title "The Year of the War Bride 2006." Among other things, I believe it is time for our government to formally recognize the achievements of the Canadian War Brides through a Private Members Bill that specifically deals with commemorating the War Brides and through initiatives that may involve all or one of the following federal departments with a connection to the War Bride's place in our history: Veterans Affairs, Heritage, Citizenship and Immigration, and Status of Women to name a few.

What follows are a number of suggestions for "Year of the War Bride" activities that are national in scope but which will represent all regions - for we cannot deny that even though the War Brides became Canadians first, they also contributed to the development of their communities, provinces and regions where they became established in the post war years. What they share brings them together as a unique immigrant group who became Canadian citizens, and what makes them different is what we cherish as Canadians living in a multicultural society that values regional diversity.

Year of the War Bride Official Recognition by the Canadian Government

Even though we are rather late in asking the federal government to officially recognize 2006 as the Year of the War Bride, it does not mean we cannot or that we should give up the idea altogether of some form of official government recognition in 2006. I have been advised through the Heritage Department that to become officially recognized by the Government of Canada, an event must be brought to the attention of a member of Parliament, who then determines if the event should be brought before Parliament in the form of a private member's motion. Once the event has been approved in Parliament, it becomes officially recognized. Please check out the type of events by going to the link below:

http://www.communication.gc.ca/events_evenements/nel_fg_e.html You will note that the events are sponsored by national associations, such as Scout Guide Week, February 20-27 which is sponsored by Scouts Canada. I have asked Andrew Telegdi, MP for Kitchener Waterloo, and Chair of the Parliamentary Committee on Citizenship and Immigration to present the private member's motion. This will require some work and as everyone knows, there may be an election in the near future which would definitely interfere in any such plans.

From an historical perspective, if I was to choose a date that best represents the War Brides in 2006, I would say February 5 to 9, 1946, for this was the time that the official War Bride transportation got off to a fine start with the sailing of the Mauretania from Liverpool with nearly 1000 War Brides and children on board. Again, given the realities of deadlines and a looming election, I'd be inclined to accept other dates, weeks, or months if we cannot get February 5, and I'd also consider piggy-backing on other well established events, for example, Canada Day on July 1 which is coordinated by Citizenship and Immigration, or International Women's Day which "focuses on women's contributions to the community as well as on their achievements and history" and is coordinated by Status of Women Canada in cooperation with provincial Advisory Councils on the Status of Women.

Veterans Affairs

It goes without saying that if there had had not been a war, there wouldn't have been a War Bride phenomenon and we certainly would not be talking about commemorating their arrival in this country sixty years later if not for war veterans. The Ministry of Veterans Affairs is a logical choice to take the lead for commemorative activities during 2006. Canadian veterans are rightly proud of their War Bride wives and the one million Canadians – including War Bride children, grandchildren and even great-grandchildren who have a War Bride in their family tree are also proud of their connection to these women, who in turn, are inextricably linked to the men who, through their service overseas met, fell in love and married their War Brides during the war. Canadians have a love affair with the War Bride story and they honour the men whom the War Brides married every time they hear of the dramatic wartime circumstances that brought them together. Any one of the ideas noted below would be suitable for Veterans Affairs, from an event on February 5 marking the departure of the first official War Bride ship, the Mauretania, from Liverpool to an event on February 9, 2006 marking the arrival of the Mauretania in Halifax at Pier 21; from a more tangible traveling photo exhibition that appears in museums and legions across the country to an online searchable database of 1946 Canadian media coverage and / or War Bride related correspondence from the Department of National Defence's Canadian Wives Bureaus in London, The Hague, Paris and Brussels; from a Heritage Minute to a conference on the history of the War Brides; from a beautifully designed commemorative certificate that can be distributed to War Brides and their families, to a poster or a button or a post card that resembles one of the War Bride special passports; the only thing that is lacking is financial support and human resource allocation to make any one of these ideas a reality.

1946-2006 Year of the War Bride Photo Exhibit

1946 was the pivotal year during which the Canadian Wives Bureau, under the aegis of the Department of National Defence, the Immigration Branch and voluntary organizations such as the Canadian Red Cross, organized the War Brides journey to Canada. Every detail of their transportation was handled with the precision of a D-Day assault, and no wonder - mothers with babies could not expect to sail in the same manner as troops so ships like the Queen Mary and the Mauretania had to be refitted to accommodate the needs of thousands of Canada's newest citizens. By February 1946, when "Operation Daddy" began in full swing, nearly 6000 so called "servicemen's dependents" were arriving at Halifax's Pier 21 every month, escorted by trained Red Cross Escort Officers who accompanied the War Brides on board refitted War Bride ships

from Europe and Britain to Halifax. After landing in Halifax, their land journey began on special "War Bride Trains" destined for every train station and whistle stop across Canada.

After six long years of war, the arrival of so many young War Brides and their children in Canada was big news. Day after day, week after week, and month after month in 1946, every newspaper in Canada featured front page stories and photographs documenting the War Bride's arrival at Pier 21 and followed the wives as they made their way to their husbands and new homes across Canada.

The Department of National Defence knew the public relations value of the War Brides so their story was extremely well documented by photographers such as Sgt. Karen M. Hermiston, a CWAC photographer with the Film and Photo Unit stationed overseas during the war. In addition, I have personally amassed what is probably the largest collection of War Bride photographs in Canada and others who are working on other aspects of the War Bride story are eager to contribute photographs from their own collections so that we can make this exhibition truly national in scope. These include author / War Bride Eswyn Lyster of Qualicum Beach, British Columbia, and artist / War Bride daughter Professor Bev Tosh of Edmonton Alberta. Pier 21 also has a substantial War Bride photograph collection and there are many many we have not even heard of yet that will come out of the woodwork once the War Brides and their family members here in Canada and overseas hear about this exhibit through my website www.CanadianWarBrides.com and others.

Currently, I receive on almost daily basis unsolicited photographs and stories from the children of War Brides who want their mother's or grandmother's experiences to be shared on my website. I was recently sent an entire folder of original photographs from the niece of a Red Cross Escort Officer, May Feetham. The niece inherited her aunt's photographs and was ready to throw them out until she stumbled upon my website and figured that I might have a use for them. The photographs are previously unpublished and show numerous unidentified War Brides with Red Cross Escort Officers on ships like the Lady Rodney, the Queen Mary and the Aquitania during 1946.

Escort Officer Kay Ruddick's diary and photographs are also a treasure trove that can be used in the exhibition. I have the permission of Kay Ruddick to use the photographs and text in her diary and, in a separate project that I have been working on for two years, I have typed up the manuscript and prepared all the images for lay out and eventual publication. These images are easily transferable to an exhibit medium.

At this point, I am seeking the endorsement of key individuals who are involved in documenting the War Bride story so that the exhibit will have the best selection of photographs from across Canada representing War Brides from every province.

Year of the War Bride On Line Searchable Database of War Brides Newspaper Coverage: Canada Collections On Line

As the webmaster of www.CanadianWarBrides.com, the most frequent question I am asked is "My mother / grandmother is a War Bride. Can you help me find some information on her journey to Canada?"

Although I would love to be able to help every person who asks me that question, the sad fact is that my response is most often "no – that's because except for the most dogged researcher, the archival information on the War Brides is not readily accessible.

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This in spite of the fact that the National Library of Canada has the world's most extensive holdings of War Brides material from 1940 to 1948. Available on microfilm, the reels can be ordered for periods of up to 3 months, but if a researcher wants to look at the original documents, a trip to Ottawa is in order. Although we would love to digitize the entire War Brides collection of the National Archives, it would be a gargantuan task that would require years of human effort not to mention massive financial investment. That is why we have opted for an on line project that would have a greater chance of achieving its goals within a shorter time frame, and with considerably reduced human effort as well as financial resources.

In October 2005, we¹ submitted a proposal to the Department of Canadian Heritage's Canada's Culture On line. Our intent is to create a free, on-line searchable database of the media's coverage of the arrival in Canada of War Brides during 1946-47 - when the majority came to this country - and of their subsequent migration to their final destination in Canada. During those two years the vast majority of 65,000 War Brides and their children arrived in Canada, representing approximately 60% of Canada's total immigration during that period. The War Bride's transportation was organized and paid for by the Canadian government and their journey to Canada by War Bride ships like the luxury liner the Queen Mary was big news after six long years of war. Human interest articles about individual brides were daily fare in the Canadian print media and led to a "love affair" with the War Bride story. Stories of their arrival appeared in the newspapers from coast to coast and passenger lists detailing the War Bride's name, children's names and husband's name were printed word for word in the front pages of every provincial newspaper in the country. There is no other similar immigration to Canada that we know of in Canada's history, where an identifiable group of immigrants were so identified by name and followed by the media from point of embarkation to arrival in Canada. We therefore intend to follow and recreate the paper trail that followed the War Brides in 1946-47 as they made their way from their homes overseas, across the Atlantic on the War Bride ships to Pier 21 in Halifax and thereafter by War Bride train to cities, towns and villages in every province across Canada. Our objective is to put this information online and the outcome would be a reliable source of primary research material that will be free and easily accessible to the public who have clearly demonstrated a desire for this information.

Year of the War Bride 2006 "Today in History"

Following the example of the Globe and Mail, CBC, and other major Canadian media outlets, we suggest a daily "Today in History" of the Canadian War Brides starting with January 1, 2006. The content for the daily "Today in History" would be sourced from original correspondence and archival materials in the National Archives, personal correspondence and the untold number of newspaper articles chronicling the War Bride transport in 1946. These little windows on War Bride history could appear on www.canadianwarbrides.com and on www.Pier21.ca

First the correspondence will be scanned. Second, volunteers will be recruited from the War Bride Listserv and elsewhere to digitally enter the data in Microsoft Word or .txt format through a back end application that allows users to log on to a secure site and become part of this War Bride research initiative. This methodology has already been employed in numerous other genealogy projects worldwide, including the 1901 British Census. Every day a new page will be featured in "Today in War Bride History" and the outcome will be a searchable database of correspondence by date, subject and author. Text content in the correspondence is also searchable and the entire project will reveal a considerable amount of archival information which would heretofore be unavailable to researchers, genealogists, historians, students, teachers and

¹ Nepisiquit Genealogy and the Bathurst Heritage Trust Commission partnered with Melynda Jarratt of CanadianWarBrides.com to submit a proposal for an on line searchable database on the newspaper coverage of the arrival of Canadian War Brides in Canada during 1946-47.

family members whose War Bride relative may be mentioned in the correspondence. It could also form the core of a larger project in the future to digitize the entire National Archives War Bride collection.

Year of the War Bride: Heritage Minute

The Historica Foundation supports and promotes awareness of Canadian history through the production of Heritage Minutes. I have dealt with Historica on War Brides related issues as recently as October 31, 2005 and have discussed with Laura Bronikowsky the possibility of developing a Heritage Minute on the Canadian War Brides to mark the 60th anniversary of their arrival in Canada.

National History Conference

Although there is a growing interest in the history of the Canadian War Brides and their place in Canadian society, they have never been the focus of a concerted effort by historians at a national level. We believe that 2006 is the perfect time to organize a national history conference with the theme of Canadian War Brides. In Fredericton, the University of New Brunswick History Department or St. Thomas University History Department might be the suitable venue to carry off a national conference where historians around the country and the world can share their research on the subject and the proceedings become the basis of a publication. Another venue might be Mt. Allison University where Professor Della Stanley and Professor Jim Morrison are already working in a project to develop a research tool on the War Bride holdings at the National Archives.

Graphics / Logos / Branding

The Canadian War Bride website www.CanadianWarBrides.com has already developed a War Bride brand that is easily recognizable across the country and internationally. During the Year of the Veteran, the Department of Veterans Affairs proudly launched a logo celebrating the achievements of Canada's veterans and our country's military history. We believe that there is a desire for something tangible that War Brides, their children and grandchildren can take home with them in the form of a graphic that can be printed and distributed for a nominal cost. Using the example of the War Bride certificates which are currently available through the War Brides website, an example would be a colourful poster, or a custom made replica of a War Bride passport that contains the names of her children and grandchildren, or an authentic looking passport stamp that can be peeled off (like the Lung Association's Christmas Seals stamps) and added to correspondence. There are a number of ways we can integrate a logo into print media that can be distributed for free or purchased on line at a nominal cost. An example would be a sticker or button that says "I'm one of one million Canadians with a War Bride in my family tree."