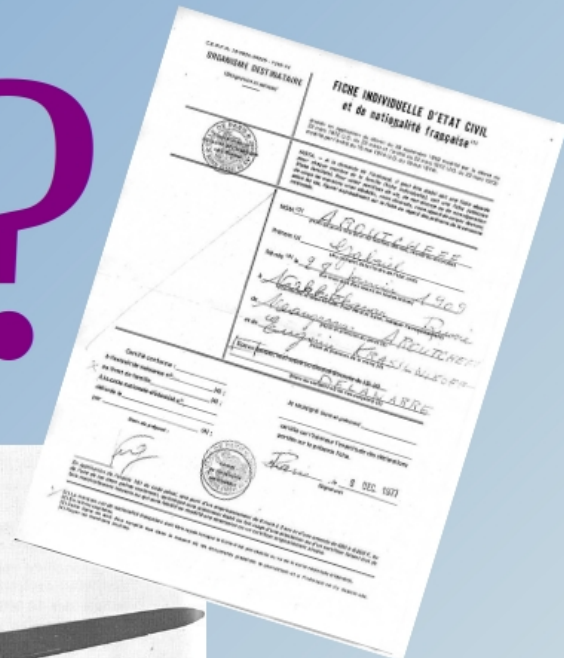


Who is Paule?



John C. Nash

Who is Paule?

John C. Nash

Copyright ©2023 John C. Nash

nashjc @ ncf.ca
18 Spyglass Ridge
Ottawa, ON K2S 1R6
Canada

Like many others of advancing years who were born elsewhere but came to Canada, I know with certainty that I'm a Canadian. However, I imagine all of us who came here as immigrants have had occasions of confusion and doubt as to our identity. My name is Paule, but many people have known me as Paula. As a teenager, I had to try to answer the question "Who is Paule?", first for myself, then for everyone else.

Preamble

Who is Paule? is a work of fiction. The initial text was written in early 2023.

Some people named were real, but except for publicly recorded actions, their role in this story is fictitious. However, if there are historical details about the events on which my fiction is built that make some of the narrative impossible or implausible, I would be delighted to learn about them.

I welcome courteous communications, including criticism if the sender is willing to engage in discussion that can bring better understanding. I may be contacted at `nashjc_at_ncf.ca`.

John Nash, Ottawa, 2023

Notes on images used for the cover

The images used to create the cover were drawn from the Wikipedia collection at <https://commons.wikimedia.org/>

- 1945_UK_Passport.jpg is public domain. *Oddly, my mother's initials were E.M. but she was not married until 1946, and I have no idea who this Mrs. E. M. Nash would be.*
- Avro_Lancastrian_BOAC.jpg is public domain.
- Fiche_d'État-civil_de_Gabriel_Aroutcheff.jpg
From the file description: *This document is a facsimile from an official text (law, regulation, etc.) published in the Journal officiel de la République française, the official gazette of the French Republic. As such, it is not eligible for copyright.*
- CTravDoc1951.jpg is a saved version of the file "Front cover of a Canadian travel document issued to refugees under the 1951 convention.jpg"
From the file description: *This work is ineligible for copyright and therefore in the public domain because it consists entirely of information that is common property and contains no original authorship.*

Glossary: Some notes on 1940s English jargon and usage

Thanks to Leah Levert for pointing out that some of the colloquial expressions used by my characters are likely to be unfamiliar to contemporary readers. Below are some explanations, as far as possible in alphabetic order.

17/6 = seventeen shillings and sixpence. Read “seventeen and six”.

ARP = literally “Air Raid Precautions”. The people were referred to as Air Raid Wardens, and were under the administration of local councils. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Air_Raid_Precautions

council house = See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_house. Living accommodation, in the time of this book mainly houses, built under the auspices of the Housing Act of 1919 and generally administered by the local municipal authority or “council”.

demob = demobilized, that is, discharged from military service.

DP = displaced person, that is, a refugee or stateless person. Many were from Eastern Europe where the tide of war caused many boundary changes. Many were also Jewish. Estimates range from 11 to 20 million in the European theatre.

POW = Prisoner Of War

seconded = assigned to work elsewhere

V-1 and **V-2** – German vengeance weapons. The V-1 was a pulse-jet pilotless airplane and essentially the first cruise missile, but unguided, while the V-2 was a true rocket powered, supersonic ballistic (unguided) missile. See Wikipedia or other sources for more details. YouTube has videos of both devices, which carried approximately 1-ton warheads.

WC = toilet. More recently, the colloquial expression in England would be “loo”, but in the 40s “WC” or “lavatory” were more common. “Toilet” was also used, but somehow considered less polite than “lavatory”.

I came to Canada in 1946 on a Trans Canada Airlines *Lancastrian*, the civilian version of the Lancaster bomber. It only carried a dozen passengers on a long, noisy flight from the just-opened London Heathrow airport. Heathrow was so new in October 1946 that it was a set of tents with wooden floors. Still, it served to launch us on a 15 hour journey with a stop in Gander, Newfoundland, to our new home in Canada.

The Lancaster/Lancastrian was particularly noisy because of the famous Merlin engines. They had 12 cylinders each, and on each side 6 exhausts without mufflers. Thus 24 exhausts were pointing towards the cabin. Conversation was very limited. As I recall, I tried to sleep as much as possible.

That I came from England suggests that I might have been originally English, but, no, I was born in France on June 5, 1933. My parents called me Paule, a name that gives the English some difficulty. They don't want to say Paul, and the "O" sound in *Paule* seems wrong for the spelling of the name. So I was usually called Paula. In Montréal, I was able to resume use of my name.

My family name was Ronen. It's a Polish name, but my father was also born in France. His father came from somewhere near Krakow and was Jewish, but had married a French woman and become a Catholic. My mother, Maria, née Richelieu, was not Jewish as far as I know. They both died in Nazi concentration camps. Mother, ironically, not far from Krakow in Auschwitz on Oct 31, 1943, possibly because she refused to abandon my father. Father, tragically, some days after Belsen was liberated on April 18, 1945, one of about 14,000 souls who died either of illness or the shock of too much food when it became available.

I left France in 1940. Well, I was taken away, just before the Dunkirk debacle. My great-aunt Matilda, née Moore – who I generally called Mathilde – had gone to France as a governess around 1890 and had met and married a lawyer named Charles Bonin. He was a bit older than her and died in the early 1930s. When she realized the Germans might succeed in invading France, she took me to Southampton. Unfortunately, she lost control of her property in France, and we were quite poor. Worse, though Southampton was her childhood home, her family had all died, some in the flu pandemic of 1919. Moreover, Southampton as a port and the site of factories for Supermarine and their Spitfires and Thorneycrofts for their engineering products meant

we experienced a lot of bombing.

Tante Mathilde was already near 70 when we came to England, and her health deteriorated in early 1946. It didn't help that we lived in a rather pathetic rooming house in a single room. On Good Friday, she had a fatal stroke. I ran to the telephone box and called the operator for an ambulance. 999 was just being introduced then. London had had it for a while, but we weren't used to the idea yet. The ambulance came, as did Police Constable Murray.

Neighbours came out in the street as it was quite early in the morning. Some of them were probably just gawking, but Maud Crighton who lived a few houses away on Radstock Road knew me from Mass at St. Patrick's. She'd had a tough time in the War. Her husband, Jeremy, served on HMS Hood and wasn't one of the three survivors of her encounter with Bismark. Then two days before VE Day, her 14-year-old daughter Jenny was riding home on her bicycle with some shopping when an American dispatch rider who'd been in Britain only a couple of days came down the wrong side of the road and she was killed. Tragic.

At the time Tante Mathilde died, Maud had had to take in a lodger, both to help bring in some money and to avoid the Council saying she had more space than proper in a time of great housing shortage. Ted Newman worked managing logistics for Supermarine and had been seconded to the RAF to do the same. But while he was in Normandy in June, 1944, a V-1 flying bomb destroyed his house and killed his wife Agnes and 15-year-old daughter Margaret, who most people called Peggy. I knew them both from Mass, which was held in one of the classrooms at St. Patrick's School because the church next door had been gutted by an incendiary bomb in 1940. Ted had only been demobbed in February 1946, and his duties until then meant he'd not been home at all before that. Essentially nothing to come home to.

When the ambulance arrived, along with Constable Murray, I stayed in our room after they took out Tante Mathilde's body. Constable Murray let me sit on my cot and cry for a bit while he went outside. I learned later that he realized the people who could find me help and accommodation would not be working until the following Tuesday given the Easter holiday. Maud offered to take me in, at least until social services took over.

I said Maud took Ted as a lodger because she was afraid the Council would toss her out because she had a whole house and just herself in it. This wasn't quite true – the front room on the ground floor was closed off because the bay window had been caved in by a bomb down the street, and the front bedroom windows were mostly boarded up too. Thus my cot was brought over and shoe-horned into the kitchen.

When Mrs. Carbury from social services came the next week, she really didn't have anything much to offer. I was too old for regular orphanages. I

had a tiny amount of money. I wasn't a British citizen, but had a residency permit. Maud and Ted said I could stay.

At the time, I was grateful, but in retrospect I am almost overwhelmed to realize the magnitude of the generosity Maud and Ted showed me. Then the holier-than-thous started to grumble that two unrelated people of the opposite sex should not be looking after a 13-year-old girl.

Somehow in the short period of time I'd lived at Maud's house, we'd started to behave like a family. A Sunday outing to Winchester, both Maud and Ted told me later, led to them seeing a reflection of us in a window. When Mrs. Carbury started to agitate that I should be moved to a hostel, Ted asked Maud if she felt they should get married so they could adopt me. They asked me if I wanted that, and we all went to see Father Walsh that very night to find out if it were feasible and appropriate.

The marriage of convenience created a loving family. Both Ted and Maud have told me separately how much more they found in each other than they expected. Love, support, sharing, partnership. And I was a great beneficiary. Being not quite an adult, they never treated me as a child, but more as a part of a joint enterprise, especially when Ted got an opportunity in Canada with Trans Canada Airlines.

But I'm getting ahead of my story, for which I fortunately have a partial journal that I started on April 19, 1946, the day Tante Mathilde died. I'll explain as we go along, but I'll probably repeat myself from time to time.

* * *

It was Good Friday morning. Tante Mathilde and I were going to sleep in. Well, we would get up at 8 o' clock instead of 7. However, just as I was thinking that it was now past 8, I heard Tante Mathilde make some grunting noises. I got up from my cot and went over to her just as she stopped making noises and went quiet. Then I realized she wasn't breathing. I pulled on a skirt and pullover and slipped on some shoes and ran out to the telephone box and called the operator for an ambulance. We didn't have 999 yet, and apart from London and I've heard Glasgow it wasn't available.

About 10 minutes later, an ambulance arrived and I let them in. Then a police constable arrived who said his name was Murray. The ambulance men tried briefly to revive Tante Mathilde, then put her on a stretcher with a blanket over her.

During this time, I must have been more or less in shock, and I was crying. Constable Murray at this time asked for names and what had happened. Then he said he would need to talk to someone for a few minutes and that he would come back when the ambulance had gone.

When he came back, Mrs. Crighton was with him. Her daughter Jenny had watched me some evenings when Tante Mathilde had to go out, and I knew them also from Masses at St. Patrick's, which were held in the school because of firebomb damage to the church. I was quite upset when Jenny was killed just before the War ended by the American motorcycle dispatch rider travelling on the right hand side of the road. He'd just got to England and hadn't any training on British roads.

Mrs. Crighton said, "Paula. Constable Murray thinks it is a bad idea for you to stay here on your own. We could move your cot to my kitchen if you'd be willing while we sort out things. It seems the social service people are unlikely to be working until Tuesday with the Easter holiday."

I thought for a few seconds. My mind was working slower than I'd like.

"Thank you. I don't think I could stay here alone."

"Let's get some of your things and go over to my place and see what we need to do."

I put some things in a small suitcase. Then Mrs. Crighton made sure I locked the door. There was a group of neighbours outside. I recognized Mrs. Brownlow and her little boy Jack, and Mr. Newman who was Mrs. Crighton's lodger who came to Mass with her. As we made the short walk to 161, Mrs. Crighton explained "I've locked up. We'll give Paula something to eat and figure out how we'll manage until Tuesday at least."

I'd stopped crying, but I'm sure it was clear that I had been. We came into the house and Mr. Newman put on the kettle and toasted a pair of hot cross buns. He actually put some butter on them for me. A portion of their rations. Though I didn't feel hungry, I ate them – they were very nice – and I drank some tea.

Mr Newman said "Paula. Can you tell us about yourself, and we'll see what we can work out to keep you safe and sound?"

I answered "Well, ... I think Mrs. Crighton already knows that Aunt Matilda brought me here from France in 1940. My parents have been taken somewhere by the Germans. We have asked the Red Cross where they may be, but so far nothing."

"How does your aunt provide for you?"

"She has some money in the bank. I don't think a lot, as we live in just one room, and we share the WC with the others in the house, and we cook on a gas ring by the gas fireplace. But it eats shillings, so we are often cold."

"Do you know if there are any other family members in either England or France?"

"I don't think so. I asked Aunt Matilda once, and she said they all died. She said her family died in the influenza of 1919."

"Do you know if the furniture in your room is your aunt's?" Mrs. Crighton asked.

“I think it is all Aunt Matilda’s.”

“Because if it is possible you don’t have other family, we had better see if we can find your aunt’s bank book and other documents, as well as any of your own,” Mr. Newman said.

We talked a bit more, but then decided to go back to our room. I had my own set of keys but Mrs. Crighton had Tante Mathilde’s. I think Constable Murray must have handed them to her.

As we opened the front door, Mr. Heatherington, one of the other tenants in the house, was trying to open our door.

“What are you doing, Mr. Heatherington?” I asked.

“Nothing. Nothing. Thought you might need help.”

Mr. Newman said “Mr. Heatherington, I will state right now that I intend to inform the constable who was here that I and Mrs. Crighton observed you trying to gain entry to the room of Paula and her aunt, with the possibility that your intent was to rob them.”

“No! Don’t do that. I didn’t mean any ’arm. Figured the old biddy wouldn’t be needing anything now and the girl’d be looked after properly. I’m a pensioner, and don’t ’ave anything.”

“Well, if – and that is a conditional statement – if Paula tells me nothing is missing today or later, then I will not submit a report to the police. That means not only missing due to your efforts but to any other intruders. For your efforts, Mr. Heatherington, you are now the watchman.”

“All right. All right. Don’t get yer knickers in a twist. I’ll go back to my own room, an’ I’ll keep an eye out that nobody steals ’er miserable rubbish.”

Mr Heatherington went back upstairs and we unlocked the room. I took out Tante Mathilde’s bank book from the top drawer of the chest of drawers.

“Here’s Aunt Matilda’s bank book. Do you want to see it?”

Mr. Newman said “We’ll look at it together later. Do you have a bag we can put it and any other important things inside? We’ll take them with us, make a list and some notes, but you can keep hold of them. I’m afraid you are rather going to have to act like a grown up, Paula. But I think that will be better than being treated like a baby.”

“Yes, I suppose.” I wasn’t really sure of anything right then.

In the top drawer were also some documents. I took out my identity card – it gave my correct name, which is Paule Ronen – and my French birth record, some letters and some photographs. Also the rent book. It had been paid until the next Friday. The rent collector had come early because of Easter.

I also knew where Aunt Matilda’s handbag was kept in a small cupboard and we found her identity card inside – Matilda Bonin, aged 74 – along with a wallet purse with a small amount of money and our ration books and coupons. Mr. Newman suggested I take Matilda’s handbag and eventually

use it myself. He had a notebook and we made a list of things in the room. I got some more clothes and put them in a pillowcase. The simple cot I slept on could be folded. We probably could have moved it right away, but took the important items in one trip, then came back for the cot and a few other things.

When we were back in number 161 with the cot, Mr. Newman asked Mrs. Crighton if there were space in the front room to put one of the two wing-back chairs that were in the kitchen, which would be too crowded otherwise.

“I’ve not been in that room for over a year, and then only because Jenny heard noises. It was mice, and we put down some poison.”

Mr. Newman suggested we’d better take a look, and Mrs. Crighton found a candle.

The door was stiff from not having been used. Inside the room was essentially empty. The ceiling was missing some plaster. There’d been a bomb land a bit further down the street, and it was clear some shrapnel had come through the window and sliced through the light fitting and bits of the plaster. There were big gouges out of two of the walls. The frame of the window was gone and the inside of the makeshift cover was all that could be seen. I saw a dried up mouse corpse near the blocked-in fireplace.

Mr. Newman said “We could sweep and then use this for storage. And perhaps contact the Council to ask if they’d either do some repairs or let us do them.”

“Yes. Paula, hold the candle. I’ll get a broom and dustpan and bucket,” Mrs. Crighton said.

We did a peremptory sweep to get the worst dust out. It had clearly been swept earlier of the plaster and debris from the bomb damage. Still, it was very dusty, and we opened the front door, which allowed some light into the room too. Then we moved one of the wing-back chairs into this room and closed the door again. Mr. Newman and I set up my cot where the wing-back chairs had been in the corner. It just fit, possibly a bit close to the cooking stove, but it was in. We put the remaining wing-back chair in front of the boiler. It was going to be a bit awkward. Someone would have to sit on the cot, the other in the chair and one at the table if we were all in the room and wanted to be close to the warmth.

I’m getting a bit tired of using Mrs. Crighton and Mr. Newman. I call them Maud and Ted now, so I’ll use those names from now on, but of course until we talked about that, I was more formal.

Anyway, that Good Friday morning Maud put on another cup of tea, the universal response in England to any difficult situation. A knock at the door came as we were just taking our first sips of tea and finishing the last of a packet of Rich Tea Ted said he’d managed to buy at work from what he called an “informal” source. He said they cost him double the official price,

so black market. Still, they were nice.

Ted said “Ah. Constable Murray. What can we do for you?”

“Well, Mr. Newman, my sergeant pointed out that we have a deceased person and we need to establish that there are natural causes. If it wouldn’t be too disturbing for the young lady, I’d like to ask her some questions. I’ll be as gentle as I can.”

Ted ushered Constable Murray into the kitchen and said “Paula, I’m sure you heard what Constable Murray said. Do you think you can try to tell him what he needs to know?”

“I think so. It didn’t seem much different than before.”

Constable Murray said “Why don’t you just tell us in your own words and I’ll make some notes.”

“Well, I woke up when I heard Aunt Matilda making some noises, like grunting. She did that a month ago, and had some trouble speaking for most of a morning, and her left leg seemed to not work. Then this morning the same, but her face was crooked, and then she sort of went to sleep and I noticed she wasn’t breathing so I got dressed as quickly as I could and went to the telephone box and called for an ambulance.”

“Thank you, Paula. I know that was difficult to tell me. Oh. I need to make sure I have your last name correctly.”

“It’s Ronen. R O N E N. My father’s family was Polish and moved to France where he was born. But they were originally also Jewish, which is why Aunt Matilda brought me here in 1940, just before” I started to cry. Maud put her arms round me.

Murray said “I’m sorry to hear all that, but you have been very brave to tell me everything. I think we have enough information to guess that Mrs. Bonin had a stroke or something like it. Unfortunately, we have to be sure.”

“Where have they taken Mrs. Bonin’s body?” Ted asked.

“I was told the hospital mortuary. It’s likely the coroner will have to provide information for a death certificate, then the body will be released for a funeral. I know you and Mrs. Crighton are ... well, you’ve been kind to Paula, but perhaps you and Paula can talk about that, especially if there’s enough money to cover the costs.”

“We’ll talk about it,” Ted said, and Maud nodded.

* * *

We went back again to the rooming house to get what bits of food were there, as well as gathering as much of any clothing, bedding, towels, and other objects that might be of value. Maud had an old suitcase, and Ted had an empty kit bag from the RAF.

The fresh food Tante Mathilde and I had was some bread and milk, a tiny piece of cheese, two onions, 4 carrots, 3 potatoes and some mushrooms. It was likely more valuable that there were two cans of baked beans, one of corned beef, and one of the Nestle's sweetened condensed milk. When we got back to Maud's house, Ted and Maud talked to me about the meals we would have until Tuesday, when hopefully we would learn more about what needed to be done. With rationing, it was always a matter of planning the meals or going hungry.

"What'll happen to me now Aunt Matilda is dead?" I asked.

Maud looked like she was about to make some comforting noises, but Ted clearly decided not to say something that would turn out later to be a disappointment. It felt harsh at the time, but I know now it was much more sensible and kind in the longer term. He said "I think that the first thing that has to be arranged is your aunt's funeral. I have met a Mr. Beeston, who was the undertaker for my wife and daughter, and I'll be willing to help you with that. But as Constable Murray said, there has to be a death certificate. I had to get copies of those each for my wife and daughter recently."

"Oh, yes. I knew about them. I'm sorry. I was ... "

"That's all right. You're probably in shock. We'll try to make this weekend as ordinary as possible for you, and assume that on Tuesday things will start to get arranged."

"Where will I live?"

Ted said "I honestly don't know. I suspect you shouldn't stay where you have been. Heatherington and whoever else is there aren't reliable neighbours I fear."

I nodded.

"Do you know if your aunt had a will?"

"She never mentioned a will."

"No doubt we'll need to arrange that you have whatever money and possessions she had. I'm willing to help you sort that out, though we may need a solicitor to do the forms.

Are you going to school?"

I answered "Yes, I go to the secondary school. I've one more year until I can leave. Aunt Matilda was very upset that school finishes here so young. In France she said I would have gone to the Lycée and then to University."

"Yes, there's Butler's new plan, but things got messed up with the War. I went to grammar school, then was apprenticed in engineering at Supermarine. I was lucky."

"I left at 14," Maud said. "Worked at one of the department stores, then met Jeremy and we got married. Sometimes wish I'd had more schooling."

"I believe you go to church at St. Patrick's, Paula?" Ted said.

“Yes. I was baptized in France. I’ve seen you and Mrs. Crighton at Mass. In fact, on St. Patrick’s Day when there was tea after the Mass because it was special.”

“We’ll go together Sunday. Perhaps we’ll write a note to the priest to ask for prayers for your aunt. Hmm. Maud, do you know where the priest lives or how he is contacted.”

“It’s written on the notice on the front of the church where they give information on services.”

“Oh. Right. I should have registered that when I looked the night I came here. We’ll write a note then go and find where we have to deliver it. That will give us a walk this afternoon.”

* * *

The weekend was one of waiting for Tuesday. We went for some walks. We did some gardening. I liked that. It was somehow ... normal.

On Saturday, Ted went out to get some bread and managed to find a small Easter egg at the newsagents. I’d seen it there, and knew it cost a coupon as well as a shilling. He gave it to me, which made me very emotional. Maud said something that it was hardest to deal with kindness when you were grieving. She’s right about that. I insisted we all have a piece. It’s an important memory for all of us, I think, now that we can look back on it.

On Monday we looked at the letters we’d gathered from my room – “my” meaning where Aunt Mathilde and I lived. That’s what we called it now. We’d have to decide whether to pay the rent on Friday. Ted pinned a note to the door of the room asking the rent collector to contact him at Supermarine since Mrs. Bonin had died. Together, we decided to empty the room and store things in the front room of 161 Radstock Road. In the unlikely situation that I went back to the room, we could return things.

Looking at the letters we had brought over, they were of four main types. First, there were some letters from my parents. I knew Aunt Matilda had kept them safe for me. Ted had some large already-used envelopes he had salvaged at Supermarine, and we put the family letters in one of those and labelled it. Similarly, we put all the letters from the Red Cross in another. There were just a few, and they really didn’t say much, though they did give the office address and the name of someone who was clearly aware of my file. Ted had me write a letter saying my aunt had died and that I should be contacted via Maud at 161 Radstock Road, or by telephone via Ted at his office number.

Aunt Matilda had a fountain pen in her handbag. Ted cleaned and refilled it – there was a bottle of ink that we found when we went back to the room for more things – and I actually wrote this letter. Ted seemed to be really well organized. He had paper and envelopes, and also some stamps.

The third group of letters were about my status in England. It seemed that His Majesty’s government had decided, sometime in 1943, that I could be considered a bona fide displaced person and I had been granted residency in the UK, with Matilda Bonin as my guardian. Ted put these letters and documents in another envelope and marked them STATUS. I got a cold feeling realizing I didn’t have a guardian at the moment and my age meant I was still a child under the law. Ted said something about the need for a change in guardianship. It all made me feel very lost.

Finally, there were letters to and from friends, mostly in France. These were primarily in French. I asked “Should I write to them?”

Ted answered “There seem to be quite a few. At least a dozen people. Why don’t you write down a standard letter saying your great-aunt has died and put it in French and English. Then when we have better information about where you’ll be we can copy the text for each, starting with the addresses that have the most recent dates. Some are surely no longer valid.”

“That makes sense. My French is all in my ear. I need to use the dictionary. I think we brought it over.”

“We’ve cleared the room except for your aunt’s bed and the chest of drawers. I’ll get some friends to help with those tomorrow or Wednesday so the room is empty. We’ll use the front room for storage.”

* * *

Tuesday I didn’t go to school. Maud thought we should see if we could start to find out what had to be done to make sure I had accommodation and the necessities of life, as well as some plan for the future.

We did some housework after breakfast, but really we were waiting to see what would happen, though Maud said if nobody came by half past eleven, we’d go to the Council offices to see what we could find out. We actually didn’t have to do this, because around half past ten a Mrs. Carbury came by from what usually is known as “the Welfare”, though that isn’t its proper title. We talked for about an hour. In the middle a man came from the mortuary. The coroner had declared death by natural causes and they wanted to know where to send Tante Mathilde’s body. Maud and I signed a form that she should go to Beestons. I think Maud is worried that signing means she might be responsible for paying. Later on I told her “If I can use Aunt Matilda’s money, you shouldn’t have to. It wouldn’t be right.”

Mrs. Carbury seemed very uncertain what would happen to me, though she was quite adamant that I would have a place to stay and proper food and safety. But it seemed there were complications.

First, I was older than most children coming under the umbrella of the Welfare. They had very few places for a girl my age. Then too, I was technically a French citizen, though I had residency in the United Kingdom. Third, my parents were missing, so guardianship was uncertain. Fourth, I had some money, which seemed to be more problem than being destitute for some technical reason. And finally, it seemed clear they would try to oppose me staying in the rented room on my own. Actually, I agreed with that.

After the man from the mortuary left, Maud asked Mrs. Carbury whether I could remain with her and Ted, at least until I left school and got a job. Mrs. Carbury thought that a good idea until she asked about Maud's husband. The whole story took quite a long time to tell, and I could see she thought it unsatisfactory for a girl of 13, well almost 13, to be living with two people who were of opposite sex and not married.

Maud also mentioned that there was the front room if we could get it fixed up. Apparently, the extra room would probably count in favour of my staying with Maud and Ted, but Mrs. Carbury said there was a big waiting list for Council repairs.

Finally, Maud asked Mrs. Carbury if she had anything to offer me right now, and the only choice would be some sort of emergency hostel, but that was more or less for homeless people, or else a camp for displaced persons. So Maud said would the present arrangement be acceptable for the time being. Mrs. Carbury hemmed and hawed, but said there didn't seem to be much else, and it would save a lot of bother if we were willing. Unfortunately, she also said the new Family Allowance won't give anything to help out until there are two children in the house, which won't be happening.

I was rather surprised that Maud seemed to have the bit between her teeth at this point and said "Are there any forms to complete so Paula's status here is legal?"

It turned out Mrs. Carbury had a temporary guardianship form, and Maud filled it in and signed it, and got a copy to show in case anything were needed for medical, rationing or school reasons.

Once we'd shoed Mrs. Carbury out the front door, we put on our coats to go shopping, or else there'd be precious little for tea. We had a very late meal of beans on toast, and just finished that when Mr. Beeston, the undertaker, dropped by to say he would take care of funeral arrangements. Maud asked him to please keep the funeral as modest as possible, as my finances were precarious and we didn't know what my future would be.

So we had lots to tell Ted when he got home from work. After we finished a quite long set of stories, Ted said "On the topic of money, I remembered

the name of the solicitor Agnes and I used when we bought our house. He's now died, but his son is in practise and his secretary said they'd be happy to take on any necessities. She had been there when Agnes and I did our house purchase, and she remembered us and said she'd make sure the fees were as small as they could be."

"Oh, that's helpful," Maud said. "I'm certain the money will be important to Paula."

Ted added, talking to Maud, "When you mentioned the front room in talking about Mrs. Carbury's visit, I really meant to call the Council today to ask about that, though really since you are the tenant it should be you. However, I've the office telephone, so I'll do it tomorrow. At least I can find out what the policies and situation are. But it wouldn't surprise me that there's a long wait, and we probably don't have the luxury of much time.

"However, on the topic of funds, I think there'll be enough money. And it seems you made sure to get at least the interim legalities taken care of with the guardianship form."

Just then, there was a knock on the door. Ted went and opened it and it was the parish priest, Father Walsh, who he ushered into the kitchen.

"I can't stay long, as there's a parishioner needing the last rites. I'm only sorry I missed that sacrament for your aunt, Miss Ronen. However, given the request for prayers yesterday, some parishioners have indicated that they wished to help out in a more worldly way and I wanted to let you know that there will be a small fund to help cover funeral costs. You should ask me in a few days and I'll give you the money. I've also reserved a time on Saturday coming for a requiem Mass. If the undertaker can manage that time, it could also be used as a funeral service. However, given we're using the school, it may be a bit difficult to coordinate with them. Possibly we'll have a separate committal at the grave."

I said, "Thank you, Father Walsh. It's all very confusing just now."

"Well, it seems you are being cared for here. I know the history of Mrs. Crighton and Mr. Newman. They have had their own sorrows. But I must be along. Good luck to you all." And he was gone in a whoosh of his cassock.

He nearly knocked over one of Ted's co-workers, Charlie, and his son David. I went with them and Ted to the rented room and within a half an hour we'd moved the remainder of the objects to the front room of 161.

David said "This room wouldn't take that much to put in order, at least to be functional. Wouldn't be Country Life or such, but could work as a bedroom or a parlour. Just need to work out a new frame for some glass."

"I think the Council wants to put it back the way it was, and that gets in the way of a quick fix," Ted commented.

"Ah, yes. The council pooh bahs never can just get on with it," Charlie opined.

Charlie and David wanted to be off. Apparently some sort of darts tournament at one of the pubs, so we thanked them profusely and they left.

“My goodness. Do you think we’ll get a chance to eat supper?” Ted asked coming back into the kitchen.

“I’ve made a sort of shepherd’s pie with the corned beef Paula had,” Maud said.

We sat down and ate, largely in silence. We were all a bit exhausted from the day. After supper Ted wanted to go for a walk. I was preparing my satchel for school in the morning. Maud was sorting laundry which we’d all helped to do yesterday. That was Monday, when Maud did the wash, but of course also a holiday. Also, Maud wanted to wash all the linen from the rented room. I think she wondered if I’d be embarrassed, as it was pretty obvious she wanted to make sure there were no passengers, so to speak. Actually, I’d do the same. Even if Tante Mathilde and I were scrupulously clean, the others in the house were probably not.

Perhaps also she wondered about my diffidence when offered a bath on Saturday. Apparently Maud and Ted each take a bath on Sunday, but they were worried the boiler would not have heated enough water to handle three baths in a row. In fact, I really wanted a bath. We very rarely took one in the rooming house because there was almost never enough hot water and we had to do so much work to clean the tub. My reluctance came because I was concerned that they would use up their coal ration, but Ted said he figured we ought to get a bit more for the three of us. He also hinted at what he called the “informal sector”, meaning the black market. As well, he mentioned that some of his RAF pals had had some tricks.

“One of my LAC’s had a neat way of using a dried turf of grass and a small copper pipe attached to a can of used engine oil. The pipe was set to drip oil into the turf which he put in a grate and lit. Gave pretty good heat. Not as smokey as one would imagine. I’d have to look around. There is probably a bit of used oil at the works that could be liberated.”

Ted also noted that there was quite a lot of coal dust in the shed. A bit of cement powder and some cardboard for a form and he claimed he could make some "bricks" that would burn in the boiler, cardboard container and all.

* * *

I was in bed before ten, given all that had happened. I think I was really overwhelmed by it all, but Ted and Maud were being really, really wonderful in just carrying on. They didn’t fuss over me. If they did, it just might have put me under, I think.

Tomorrow I'd go back to school and try to carry on myself.

* * *

The requiem Mass on Saturday morning had a surprising number of people. About two dozen people were there. Beeston couldn't manage to do a funeral that day. It would be Monday morning at 9. Ted – how he managed I don't know – took time off and would stay late at work to make up for it. Maud knew and said supper would be at 7:30.

Apparently with all the fuss about Tante Mathilde and my coming to stay at 161, Ted's 41st birthday had slipped by on Friday. Since he said nothing, we didn't learn about this until some months later. But apparently he'd had no birthday wishes from anyone since Agnes and Margaret died in 1944.

On Tuesday during lunch hour, I went to the offices of Mr. Rushworth, the solicitor, and Ted and Maud met me there. They'd brought along all the documents they could think of, including a death certificate that Beeston passed to us.

Mr. Rushworth said he should be able to sort things out fairly quickly, then asked for some document showing that either Ted or Maud had temporary guardianship for me. Maud fortunately had put this in her handbag and Rushworth took it and gave her a receipt for it.

"The bank may quibble, but the amounts are not huge and I know the manager, Mr. MacKenzie."

"He knows me too," Ted said.

"Good, it will oil the works."

"Now, Miss Ronen, do you want to take over the account or put the money in something like the Post Office?"

"The Post Office is open longer hours, aren't they? It's hard to get to the bank when I'm at school except for Saturday," I said.

"That's a good point. I suggest that you open an account if you don't have one, so when we get the money you can put it in easily."

Mr. Rushworth also asked about any property my parents or Tante Mathilde had in France.

"Frankly, I don't expect there's much chance of getting anything from it, but I have a personal interest in finding out what might be recoverable, and would take on the task of finding out on the basis that I'd guarantee Miss Ronen no less than half of what I managed to recuperate, no matter what my own time and expenses were."

I said "I believe Tante Mathilde sold her apartment in Paris in 1940, but she did not get a good price and then the exchange on the franc was terrible when we arrived in 1940, which is why we were so poor."

And I believe my parents rented our apartment, but I was very young.”

Rushworth asked “Is there a possibility of bank accounts or investments?”

“Papa talked about the bank, and I think also of – the word I recall is *placements*. Tante Mathilde also had some investments, and there are a few letters about them.” Ted nodded.

“Then there may be something of value hidden away somewhere. However, the Nazis played all sorts of pseudo-legal games to cover the theft of property. I’ll advise you to expect nothing, but I’ll prepare an agreement for me to act on your behalf that you can review with Mrs. Crighton as your current guardian and Mr. Newman as the friend I believe he is. I won’t be offended if you choose to decline. These things are very confused right now.”

Ted mentioned later that he thought I was showing a great deal of maturity. I wasn’t convinced of that. I’d cried at the requiem Mass, and my eyes were full of tears at the committal. On the other hand, Mr Beeston must be well-connected with Father Walsh, because when Ted approached him discreetly after the coffin had been lowered at Hollybrook Cemetery to ask about payment, he apparently said not to worry because the parishioners’ collection covered his costs, even if not quite the regular fees. So he’d already told Father Walsh there’ll be nothing owing. Ted told us Beeston admitted that he was actually thinking that he’d get plenty more business when Father Walsh tells people about his gesture. I guess that makes sense. He hasn’t lost any money, and people like to deal with someone who isn’t always trying to grab every penny.

* * *

On May 5, we went to Mass together. Ted and Maud had been attending together since Ted arrived back in Southampton, but I came today, and I had the week before.

I think both Ted and I were surprised and a little shamed by Father Walsh when he started his homily. Or is it called a sermon. I should find out the difference.

“My dear parishioners. This week marks a year since the end of hostilities in Europe. It did not mark the end of fighting, and certainly not the end of suffering. Tomorrow also marks the anniversary of our loss of Jenny Crighton who was a member of this congregation. I ask your prayers for her and her family.”

He went on to remind us of the need to remember, and to work for peace and for reconstruction.

Maud was, I think, close to crying, but clearly didn’t want to. I wished I could do something to ease her grief.

As we walked home, Ted asked "Maud. Do you want to go to Hollybrook or do anything particular to remember Jenny?"

"I think I should put some flowers on her grave. I'll go there tomorrow."

"Would today be better? I could come with you. It feels important."

I was walking behind them. The pavement was too narrow for three. In fact, it was quite narrow for the two of them. I said "Unless you'd like to be alone, I'd like to come too, and I have school tomorrow."

"Thank you both," Maud said. "Yes. Let's go this afternoon."

* * *

Ted said his enquiries about fixing up the front room met with great sympathy and equally great inaction, or rather inability to act. It seemed that there were lots of regulations and policies, or at least perceived ones. Unless the Council workmen did the job, there was inordinate fear of corruption. But the Council workmen had been largely drawn into the Forces and some still weren't demobbed. The ones left were old, lazy, possibly incompetent, or all of the above. I smiled when Ted said that. But the upshot was, of course, that it wasn't worth pursuing fixing the front room beyond a couple of phone calls.

* * *

It was about a month later, on May 24, when I got a letter from a lady at the Red Cross. It was not good news.

British Red Cross
Family Reunification Unit

May 20, 1946

Miss Paula Ronen
c/o Mrs. M. Crighton
161 Radstock Road
Woolston, Hampshire

Dear Miss Ronen,

With sadness, I am writing to you to let you know that

we have information from former inmates of German concentration camps about your parents.

It appears that your mother, Maria Ronen, died on or about the 31 October 1943 in Auschwitz, almost immediately on her arrival there.

Your father Theo, most tragically, died at Belsen on the 18th of April last year, just after the liberation by the British Army. Unfortunately, his name was mis-spelled and we only very recently corrected the documentation. Your father was, sadly, one of nearly 14000 prisoners who have died since the camp was liberated.

I recognize the extreme weight of this letter, and can only wish for a brighter future for you.

Yours truly,

Anna Radetska (Miss)

Ted and Maud stayed very quiet while I read the letter, then passed it to Ted. He and Maud read it together. I think they both expected me to weep, but I said "I already knew they were dead. I dreamt it. But I didn't know when or where."

Perhaps I'd cry later. Ted and Maud seemed to be nervous that I might have some sort of reaction or delayed consequences. Really, they could not do much in the event that I did. They could only try to be attentive and supportive.

Actually, it was one of the days when Maud and Ted wanted fish and chips, so Ted prepared to go out to get them. Almost by a sort of habit, though we'd not had much time to develop patterns, he asked if I wanted to come with him, and I said yes.

As we walked to the chip shop, I said "I'm not sure if I should be relieved or sad or angry or ... I don't know what."

"You'll probably be all of those in the next few weeks or months. Both Maud and I have been there. When I came in February, I used to hear Maud crying in her room. And I used to have nightmares where I would cry out. One time she had to wake me up. Now I still have the dreams, but I seem to be able to wake myself."

“Thanks Mr. Newman.”

“Perhaps it’s time to call me Ted. And we’ll see if Mrs. Crighton wants you to call her Maud. I think that Red Cross letter and the way you handled reading it means you’ve mostly grown up. And grown up far too quickly.”

“Yes. I suppose I have.”

Ted added “I already talked to Maud about this, but you may not know that today is the 5’t anniversary of the sinking of HMS Hood.”

“Oh no! I didn’t realize, or I would have expressed my sympathies.”

“We’re going to have a small glass of sherry and toast the men of the Hood after tea,” Ted said.

* * *

On Sunday May 26, to give ourselves a bit of a change, we took the train to Winchester. We had afternoon tea in a small café. It wasn’t very good. There was a so-called Battenburg cake, but any hint of almond in the fake marzipan was inhaled in one breath.

But we did have an outing. The cathedral and the old town were a pleasant diversion. I think Ted and Maud were waiting for some sort of Paula penny to drop, though I don’t think it ever did, at least not in any stereotypical way. Perhaps they were worried that there might be some spark that would ignite a petrol vapour of overwhelming grief.

I missed seeing what both Ted and Maud have said was a pivotal moment in our collective lives. Apparently, as we made our way back to the station in Winchester, Ted saw the three of us reflected in a shop window. We looked like a regular family of father, mother and daughter. He wondered if that’s what we were. And as he was about to look away from the reflection, he saw Maud looking too, and for some reason the image caused her to have a strange expression on her face.

We were able to have a salad for supper, using some rather young lettuce and radishes from the garden. Our first produce. Then Maud and Ted took their baths in sequence – my bath was now established as Saturday – then in pyjamas and dressing gowns we all listened to the wireless until after the news. Despite the Red Cross letter on Friday, there was a gentle companionship in the kitchen.

I didn’t know it at the time, but Maud had labelled us “leftovers” because we were the survivors of all kinds of trouble. She didn’t know what we should do with ourselves to continue with life, but I think the image of the three of us had a big influence on both her and Ted.

* * *

The next day, Ted told us he'd had a phone call from one of his RAF friends and had reconnected with addresses and phone numbers. This was Nigel Hughes and the renewal of the friendship would turn out to be very important for Ted, Maud and myself, because Nigel was getting into the business of salvaging and refurbishing aircraft parts, particularly Merlin engines.

You don't think at the time how important a telephone conversation will be. I know when Ted told us, Maud and I probably made comments of the formulaic "That's nice" type and didn't even register the memory. I'll tell more later about Nigel.

* * *

On June 3, Maud was surprised by a visit from Mrs. Carbury. We never quite learned how Mrs. Carbury discovered that my parents were dead. Or maybe she didn't find out, and her visit on June 3 to talk to Maud was simply a routine one.

In any event, Maud was furious because Mrs. Carbury made comments that could be taken to imply Maud and Ted were having an affair. Except at first, Maud couldn't tell me that. In fact, I didn't know about Mrs. Carbury's visit until I got home from listening to records with Carol, a school chum who lived down the street and whose family had a gramophone.

I think English girls don't get much information about men and women and, well, sex. Tante Mathilde, who was for the most part pretty straight-laced, had lived most of her life in France. She also realized, I think, that she might not be around when I started to discover that boys could be interesting, even as equally they were horrid. So she told me the facts of life rather bluntly, and even more bluntly told me how men might try to finagle their way into my drawers. She told me some tales of seduction and rape, and how I should be vigilant. But also she told me Charles, her husband, had shown her great respect and kindness, as well as a lot of pleasure, though she didn't go into any detail about the pleasure.

I wasn't home when Ted got in from work. I guess he got an earful of Maud's complaints. I'd love to have been a fly on the wall, because when I came in, they were both red faced. I think they'd been kissing.

* * *

After supper, Ted mentioned that Mrs. Carbury had been round. Maud said “Now that it’s known your parents are dead, there is some concern about me being temporary guardian. Not that Mrs. Carbury or anyone else has a good idea of what they want to do.”

“But I like it with you and Ted,” I said, likely in a worried voice.

“The authorities don’t like us being unrelated,” Ted contributed.

“Meaning that you and Maud aren’t married but living under the same roof? They think you’re having an affair.”

“Most girls your age wouldn’t recognize the issue,” Ted said.

“Aunt Matilda was English, but lived a long time in France. Such things are more open there, though there is still gossip. And Tante Mathilde was worried I wouldn’t have the information I might need should she die before I started to be interested in boys.”

Maud said “That awful Mrs. Carbury. She’s a self-righteous busybody. And she has no more to offer you now than she did when your great-aunt died. But she said how inappropriate it is for two unmarried people of the opposite sex to look after a young woman. She practically called me a whore.”

Ted said “Why don’t we talk about how we might solve things?”

Maud said “Yes. Before you came in for supper, Ted and I talked about a possibility, but we’d like to know what you think.”

“What about?” I asked.

“About us. The three of us. Ted and I are wondering if it makes sense for us to marry then see about adopting you so we can be a family. Adoptions generally don’t seem to be allowed for single people.”

“But do you want to be married – both of you?” I knew that it was important for them to want to be married before they did so for my benefit. I was looking at them both, my eyes moving from one to the other.

Ted said “Truthfully, Maud and I have not known each other long, nor had much chance to get to know each other. But we seem to work well together, and we understand each other pretty well, perhaps because of what we’ve been through in losing our families. Without you in the picture, it would be a while before we reached the point of discussing marriage, I think. However, that doesn’t mean that the idea is a bad one. Still, some careful consideration is warranted.”

I realized the importance of the moment. And I sensed that both of them had a lot of goodwill to each other. It came through in how they treated each other with care and respect.

“I’d be very happy to be your daughter,” I said. “You don’t talk down to me, and you don’t coddle me, but you do make me feel safe and valuable.”

“What shall we do now?” Maud asked.

“Why don’t we go for a walk and see if Father Walsh is willing to hear our idea and give us his reaction?” Ted said.

“All right,” Maud said. I was already getting on my jacket.

* * *

It was a bit after 8 when we rang the bell at the house where Father Walsh and two other Catholic priests lived. The housekeeper ushered us into a room that looked like a dining room, having a fairly large table with chairs, and asked us to sit down. Walsh came in and joined us.

Ted said “Good evening, Father Walsh, we wonder if you have time to give us a few minutes to get some advice from you, or if not now, if we can arrange another time?”

“Better now, since you are all here,” Father Walsh said. “How can I help you?”

“We are here because, since Paula has learned that her parents are dead, her living situation with Mrs. Crighton and I may have become tenuous. The house we live in is owned by the Council, and it has been suggested that it is not suitable for unrelated persons. A welfare worker has hinted that Mrs. Crighton and I might be considered inappropriate ... examples.”

“I suppose all of those ideas have some consequence, but I suspect you have a more direct question.”

“It has occurred to us that if we were a family, there would be no discussion. Thus we are wondering if it is appropriate for Maud and I to marry and adopt Paula.”

“It would indeed solve some of the concerns, but marriage is a sacrament not to be treated as a convenience, though many do treat it so.”

“Both Maud and I have known happy marriages. We have had daughters. We have, sadly, lost spouses and daughters to the War. But we do know the pros and cons of marriage. Truthfully, we are not head over heels in love, but there is affection and respect, and we get along better than most couples.”

“Though it is but a short time since your arrival, Mr. Newman?”

“That is true, Father Walsh,” Maud said. “But many marriages made in the last few years have been built on much, much less.”

Walsh nodded. “And what of Miss Ronen? What do you think?”

I said “Mr. Newman and Mrs. Crighton have been very kind, but also they have been very straightforward with me. They talk to me as a grown-up, which since my aunt’s death and the realization I am an orphan, I know I must try to be. I would be very happy to be their daughter, if that’s possible.”

“Well, the three of you at least seem unanimous in your wishes. This is a new situation for me. At least, it has never been put so directly to me, though perhaps others who presented themselves for marriage did not admit

their concern. But you would make a handsome family, and you do all attend the church, though I understand, Mr. Newman, that you are not a Catholic.”

“That is true. Faith is a gift that has not been granted to me. But you are well-aware that I supported my late wife and daughter in their religious observance, and will do so again. And truthfully, I find Mass important to me.”

“Yes. It is a pity some who claim full membership are less regular.” Walsh said resignedly.

“Have you any critical objections to what we suggest?” Maud asked.

“No. I don’t think I do,” Father Walsh said. “It may be just that our recent times put great store in romantic love. Respect and affection have a lot to commend them in marriage. And Paula has said you give her not only practical security, but also a sense of belonging to a family.

“I would only counsel that you give it a few days’ thought. Then if you are still happy with your intentions, let me know by Saturday night so we can call the banns, and you could marry by the end of the month. Unless I mistake your story, there is concern that the Council might act soon. While a Special License would be even quicker, I would advise against it. The banns serve a good purpose in giving people a chance to consider what they are doing. And your intentions will be public, which should be enough to quiet some noise.”

Ted said “Thank you, Father Walsh. We’ll let you know.”

* * *

When we got home – I’d started to think of 161 Radstock Road as home – we were just in time for the nine o’clock news, though I don’t think we really listened. We had a cup of tea and Ted said goodnight as Maud was setting out some breakfast things.

I said “I really hope for the best for you and Ted, but I hope it isn’t just for me.”

“No, I don’t think either Ted nor I are foolish that way. As Ted said, your situation just pushed things along a little.

“By the way, you may want to be careful in talking about ... er ... affairs and things like that with some people.”

“Yes. I think Tante Mathilde called it ‘English reserve.’”

“She wasn’t wrong. Oh, I meant to ask you. When we were putting away some of your things in the cases under your cot, I saw your belt and pads for your monthlies. Did your aunt explain all that?”

“Yes, though I haven’t had a period yet. Tante Mathilde gave me her belt. She said she didn’t need it any more, having passed the change of life as she called it.”

“Yes. I noticed it’s a pretty old style, but probably good to have it on hand, just in case.”

I asked “Is it painful?”

“Sometimes cramps and headache before the flow starts. I find it more a big nuisance. If we see a chance, we’ll get you a more modern version that you can carry with you. It always seems to come when it’s inconvenient.”

* * *

Ted and Maud wanting to adopt me was, for me, the best birthday present I could get in the circumstances. I knew that my 13th birthday was going to happen, but given all that was going on, I didn’t want to add to the load on Ted and Maud. However, when I got home from school two days later, there was tea set out, a small – given rationing they were always small – sponge cake and an envelope with a card and a 10/- note. The card said

To Paula,

Happy Birthday to a new teenager.

Best wishes for a bright future together.

Ted and Maud

* * *

The first banns for Ted and Maud were announced the following Sunday, June 8. They got quite a few congratulations. It was also the day of a victory parade in London to celebrate the end of World War II. It had been more than a year since VE Day, with thousands of servicemen yet to be demobilized. Several hundred thousand German POWs were still detained in Britain, largely working as agricultural workers or in rebuilding destroyed roads and buildings. Some probably helped get things ready for the parade.

Sunday afternoon, Ted and Maud wrote to Mrs. Carbury of their intentions as well as the tripartite wish that I become their adopted daughter. We were not sure whether the reaction would be a positive one, but by return of post got a short letter saying that our plan would solve a lot of problems. Well, we were certain that the letter meant one of Mrs. Carbury’s problems

would be solved. There were, after all, thousands of displaced persons all over Britain and the rest of Europe.

Later that week, Wednesday, we visited Mr. Rushforth to set the legalities in motion. He had managed within a month to probate Tante Mathilde's estate. He now set the adoption process in motion, but not before advising both Maud and Ted to prepare wills.

We must have been an odd family trio. We'd put the cart miles ahead of the horse. Here we were, doing the legalities before arranging a wedding or what we would wear to the wedding. There'd been talk of wills and adoptions but not a thought about a reception, a cake, or a honeymoon.

Moreover, Thursday was June 13. Two years since the V-1 killed Agnes and Peggy. After tea on Wednesday, Maud asked if Ted wanted to do anything to remember them. She'd mentioned it to me in advance. We were all a bit careful not to tread too heavily around the soft spots in our lives.

"Can we walk up to the site?" Ted asked.

Maud said "Would you like to do it when you come home from work? We could have a late supper, or else have tea right away, then walk up there."

"Maybe before supper," Ted said, with no particular reason.

"Should I get some flowers?" I asked.

"No, I think just having the two of you there will be about right," Ted answered.

* * *

In the middle of the next week Ted came home a bit earlier than usual. Maud was going to be late coming in from a meeting at Mrs. Carbury's office to complete some formalities, and they seemed cautious not to leave me alone in the house. Perhaps too cautious. In any event, it was a nice evening, and Ted suggested he and I go for a walk.

Without any planning we wandered southwards to the Weston Parade where we could watch the ships in Southampton Water. For the first several hundred yards, we said nothing. Then I asked "Should I call you and Maud Father and Mother?"

"You know, I'd not given that any thought," Ted answered. "I'm not sure it sounds right compared to just Ted and Maud. How do you feel?"

"I think I'm more comfortable calling you Ted and Maud. Mama and Papa were what I called my parents, and I think I want to keep them remembered that way."

"That makes a lot of sense. I know I've no wish to displace them in your thoughts, and I'm sure Maud feels the same. For us there are Peggy and Jenny to remember."

“Yes. I remember Jenny, and I think I may have met Peggy, but I think I was introduced to her as Margaret. I find the English use of Peggy for Margaret difficult.”

“It is a bit silly isn’t it?” Ted offered.

“Do you miss her a lot?” I asked.

“Perhaps I shouldn’t say this,” Ted said, “but I’m finding it more and more difficult to remember her precisely. I have to really struggle to remember exactly how she looked, the sound of her voice, the pattern of her feet on the stairs when she rushed down to meet me when I came home. I know that I used to have a clear memory of those things, but now the memories seem to be fading, and it makes me very anxious sometimes.”

“Oh, and I thought it was just me having trouble remembering. What you said about Peggy’s voice – that’s what I find terribly hard to remember about Mama and Papa. And lately I remember them talking to me, but my memories have them talking English, which they never did to me. So I get all mixed up inside. But I didn’t want to say anything because it seems like I’m failing them by not remembering properly.”

“We’re all doing our best, but it doesn’t seem enough, does it?”

“No. It’ll never be enough,” I said.

We’d reached Archery Road Playground and our rather maudlin conversation was cut short by an errant football from some boys who were playing three-a-side some distance away. I kicked the ball hard and sent it back to them.

“Pity they don’t let girls play football,” Ted commented.

“Yes. We play netball at school, but I think I’d prefer football. You could kick the ball hard and not be so cross with the world.”

“Should I buy a ball so we can do that?” Ted asked.

“Possibly. But it won’t really change things, will it? The important change is what you and Maud are doing. I’ll do my best to help us be a family, Ted.”

Ted seemed to be about to say something more, but then he just nodded as if we had summed up the situation as well as anyone could just at the moment. We got to the Parade and watched the water and a couple of ships for a few minutes, then made our way back by a slightly different route in time to arrive just as Maud was coming in.

* * *

On Saturday June 15, Enid Brownlow invited Ted and Maud for tea. Maud had asked her to be matron of honour. Initially, there were just going

to be two witnesses, but somehow people around were absolutely convinced that Ted and Maud should have a proper wedding.

Ted had already asked George Cummings if he'd stand up for him as best man, and he'd agreed. George had served with Ted in the ARP and had recovered a few important things of Ted's from the crater that was now where his house, wife and daughter had been.

I'd gone to a matinee at a cinema with a school-friend, Judy, so there were just the three of them along with Jack. Apparently they discussed what they'd wear. Ted would use his demob suit, which was the only decent one he had. Maud had dug out an old but very nice dress from long before. It still fitted – blame the tight rations for that, at least – and it had avoided moth or mice damage. When Maud and I checked it, there was just a touch of adjusting needed, but it would make Maud look very nice.

Enid apparently asked if they'd be having a honeymoon? In all the running around, Maud and Ted hadn't talked about that. Ted had only been back at Supermarine since February, but he actually had taken no leave since the beginning of 1944, so it was reasonable that he should get a few days off.

There was a reason for Enid's question, as she offered to have me stay with her while they went away for a honeymoon, as long as my cot could be moved over so I'd have something to sleep on. It was a good wedding present for her to give them. I approved too, as I really didn't want to be on my own in the house overnight. There probably was no real danger, but I would feel better at Enid's house.

When I got home, I think I caught Ted and Maud smooching. They seemed flustered and red faced. I had to stifle a giggle. They were so good to me and to each other and deserved some joy from life.

* * *

Next morning as we were walking home from church my school chum Carol said hello as she passed us by on her bicycle.

Ted said "It's a pity we only have one bike between us as yet."

I responded "It wouldn't make much difference as I've never learned to ride."

"Then we'll have to teach you. It could make getting to school easier."

"Yes. Some of the girls ride to school. It saves them time."

Thus that afternoon, Ted adjusted the saddle of his bicycle. It was a woman's pattern that Ralph Dixon, one of Ted's ARP colleagues, had put together from salvaged parts. Apparently when the V-1 smashed Ted's house, Ralph had taken two smashed bikes to use for salvage and he felt guilty, so made one for Ted. The fact it was a women's pattern was now an advantage,

because Ted now used it to teach me to ride. I didn't find it that difficult, and after an hour or so I could mostly manage to keep upright and go where I intended. After a few evenings of practice, the bicycle was essentially mine.

* * *

When Ted came home on Tuesday June 18, he had some good and bad news.

On the good side, Mr. Gooch, the Supermarine boss, had asked Ted if he could participate in a meeting in Derby that Rolls Royce were hosting on July 5. That was not quite a week after Ted and Maud were getting married on the 29th. Apparently Gooch knew this, and offered to pay expenses for travel and accommodation for Ted and Maud for a couple of nights, even though the meeting was only a single day.

Ted said "I told Gooch I thought the answer would be yes, but that I intended to share such decisions with Maud."

Maud said "It will give us a longer honeymoon than we'd been thinking of. Will we go to London for Saturday to Thursday, then to Derby for Thursday night and Friday night?"

"Yes. But I'm going to write to Nigel Hughes, and see if he wants us to come to Leicester on Saturday and stay over to Sunday. We can get home Sunday. What do you think?"

"I'll be cross if you don't agree," Maud said. "But what's the bad news?"

"Oh. Nothing really important. Just sad.

"As I was walking back to my office, I was about to come round the corner of one of the passageways when I heard the squeak of the tea trolley and Mrs. Noonan, the tea lady, said to someone near my office – it must have been one of the char women who tidies the offices – 'Did you 'ear his nibs is marrying his landlady?'

"The other replied 'Yeah. Wonder how far up the spout she is. Widow and widower and their families not much more than one foot in the grave.' "

"Well, I never!" Maud said. "The gossip mill is churning."

Ted said "I decided not to cause an embarrassing meeting and quietly snuck back down the corridor to the toilet door where I could make a hasty retreat or else appear to be returning from a call of nature. They said some other unflattering things before I opened and then shut the toilet door loudly and walked briskly back to my office so my footsteps would be heard. The two ladies looked away and pretended to be busy. I was more disappointed than angry."

Frankly, I felt badly for both Ted and Maud. They were both really decent people and didn't deserve the nastiness. Or was it jealousy on the part of the old biddies?

* * *

Later Maud told me she thought she and Ted would just go for a night or two to Bournemouth. The revised plan was a few nights in London, then travel to Derby on the 4th. Maud would have to entertain herself on July 5 in Derby, but the two nights there would be on expenses, and also the train. Likely all trains would be covered by Supermarine.

Ted found a hotel in Chelsea for the London nights and used the telephone to book a room with a private bath. Maud thought this extravagant, but I learned a long time later that having a bath ensuite let them get to know each other in a gentle and relaxed way by sharing the tub.

Nigel called Ted the following Monday afternoon, and insisted he'd pay for their stay in Leicester on the Saturday night. They worked out how they'd arrange to meet on Saturday morning. In retrospect, it was a very important re-connection.

* * *

Ted and Maud hadn't really thought out a reception, nor sent out real invitations. They even decided to re-use Maud's wedding ring from her marriage to Jeremy. Waste not, want not. They told people they knew that they were going to marry at St. Patrick's – in the school classroom of course – at 10 a.m. on Saturday June 29 and have a reception in the garden at the back of 161 Radstock Road. Given the rationing, people were very generous in bringing things. Ted and Maud did manage a modest cake, and Ted got in some beer and some cider.

The main worry was rain. As it turned out, pretty good luck in that regard. And they were fortunate that bread for sandwiches wouldn't be rationed until July 21. Flour disappeared quickly from shop shelves. Maud and I went into shops separately and managed to get a total of six bags. I suppose we were being hoarders. It was hard not to. A lot of long faces and angry comments about this new restriction, since bread hadn't been rationed for the entire War. The claim was that there were people starving in Germany. Quite a few remarks of "Let the bastards starve", which ignored the fact that a lot of the starving were the people overrun or displaced by the Wehrmacht.

When we got back from the marriage ceremony, we were all a bit shocked to find that there were about two dozen people in the garden, but almost everyone brought something to contribute to a modest feast. Enid and George

told Ted and Maud to stay until a bit after noon, then get on their way. I'd already arranged with Enid and George and some others to make sure things were tidied up. I think I surprised Ted and Maud by finding a key to the door between the kitchen and the hall. I found a box of knick-knacks under the stairs with the toolbox. That had been Jeremy's toolbox, Maud's first husband who'd been killed on HMS Hood. Anyway, there were several odd keys in this box of assorted objects, and one of them fit the door to the kitchen. This meant we could lock it to avoid people going into the rest of the house. I said "We'll want to come and go in the kitchen, but we don't want people wandering through the house when we're not around. But they'll need to come in and out of the kitchen."

There was, fortunately, a toilet next to the coal shed. Ted and Maud had their luggage packed before the wedding and ready in the front hall. We were back from the ceremony by 11 o'clock, did the toasts and cutting the cake and at the agreed time I let them through into the hall to freshen up before a pre-arranged car of an acquaintance drove them to Southampton Central.

The party stayed going until about half past two. George subtly encouraged folk to help tidy up and somehow everyone helped. By three, Enid and I led Jack back to her house. We'd moved my cot early in the morning, so I just had to check the gas was off, the boiler was carefully raked and secure so not to risk a fire, and the doors and windows closed and locked. We said goodbye to everyone and a big thanks to George and walked over to Enid's place.

Jack had been running about, and he was tired. I think both Enid and I were afraid he would be fussy, but we set him on my cot in the kitchen while we sat down to a cup of tea and he was asleep in a few seconds.

"Well, that was a really nice wedding. Friendly and relaxed. I really hope they do well after all they've been through. You too, Paula."

"Thanks. I'm hoping for the best for us. And I hope your husband Fred gets home soon. I saw an article somewhere how there is quite a lot of anger that men are being kept in India to oppose the Indians wanting their independence, even though they joined up or were called up to fight the Axis powers."

* * *

It was only over several years that I pieced together the story of Ted and Maud's honeymoon, but it was clear as soon as they got home that it had been much, much more successful on a number of levels than either had anticipated. I was probably in my middle years before I understood that they

had correctly predicted it would be important to spend some time together and that they would enjoy this. What they didn't forecast was that by the end of their short honeymoon they would recognize that they really did love each other. That love wasn't shown in lots of kissing and hugging. It was in many small, almost unseen, acts of thoughtfulness and kindness. A lesson I hope I learned but still find difficult to practice every day.

When they got home a bit before six o'clock on the night of Sunday July 7, they found me in the kitchen making some soup for supper. I said "I didn't want to make something that would spoil if you were late."

Maud said "Our journey turned out to be straightforward, though we did need a taxi across London between the stations. That should be fixed. The railways could at least negotiate with London Transport and work out single tickets that allow passengers to transfer more easily."

I told them they should take their things upstairs and wash up. They did this and came down to say they thought Enid and I had done a good job in setting up Ted's room for me. Ted said "It looks different. Feminine."

Their big news had to do with the people they had met, in particular two Canadians from Montreal. Trans-Canada Airlines, or TCA, was looking for someone to do for them what Ted was more or less doing for Supermarine. And Ted and Maud took the two men, Gerard Lapointe from TCA and Michael McPhee from Canadair, to meet Nigel Hughes to see his refurbished parts operation, especially his cleaned-up Merlin engines. Apparently the connection was a fluke chance meeting going in to dinner on Friday that cemented the contacts.

Maud said "We learned that Montreal is a very mixed city. There's even a Jewish community there. Michael McPhee is actually a French Canadian, but Gerard Lapointe says he's English Canadian – he used the term anglo. I realize how little we learn of the different cities in the Commonwealth."

I asked "Are you thinking we might move there?"

Ted said "There's a lot to think about. And I finally realized Maud has worked in an engineering environment at Thorneycrofts. It embarrasses me that I somehow ignored that."

Maud said "We should all talk about Canada. Ted's brother Joe is in Calgary, as I think we've mentioned."

Actually, I would not have remembered if she hadn't said. A lot had been happening.

Ted said "Until Gerard mentioned the possibility, I'd not given any thought to leaving England."

Maud replied "Perhaps you should at least write up your qualifications. It's likely a good idea even if you don't send them. But somehow I think you should send them along with a whole lot of questions. And we should find out what we can about life in Canada."

Ted said "It's a big place. I think Montreal is not much more than half way to Calgary from here. I'm exaggerating a bit, but the scale is about right."

Maud responded "Hard to imagine."

"From what they said, there's a lot of French spoken. And as I said, a Jewish community. I wonder what the education is like. It could be good for Paula as a place to finish growing up."

Ted said "Maud, the more I get to know you, the more I like you."

"Why don't all three of us start to learn more about Canada and about Montreal as well as how we might get there. And I'll get my history written down so we can send it to Gerard."

Maud said "And Mr. Rushworth will now have a copy of our marriage license to start adoption proceedings."

I said "Shall we eat outside? It's rather nice out."

There was general agreement and we moved some chairs outside. We ate our soup without conversation. It seemed we were hungry.

"Did you get the postcard of Tower Bridge," Ted asked.

"Oh. Yes. I meant to say thank you. It was nice to get that."

"Did you have a nice ... honeymoon?"

"We did, Paula. Very nice," Maud said with a big grin. "Ted and I haven't known each other very long. During this last week, we've found we rather like being together, at least I like being with him."

"Yes, I think we got along much better than I would ever have imagined. And we talked and learned more about each other," Ted added.

"Did everything go all right here?" Maud queried.

"Oh yes. Mrs. Brownlow seemed to like having me there to help with Jack at bedtime. He's a bit of a terror about wanting to stay up. I read him a story each night."

"Do we owe Enid any money for food?" Maud asked.

"I had some money. I took 7 and 6 from the Post Office account and I used it to buy some of the groceries for here, but I split some of the items and gave her some. She said she didn't want to take anything, but I could tell it was helpful. So, we had a sort of mock argument, and then she took the things."

Ted said "Thank you Paula. We've also got a little present of a bottle of sherry for her. Actually got it before we got married. And one for George too. We'll take them round later in the week."

Maud said "Earlier I mentioned the marriage license so Mr. Rushworth could start adoption proceedings. Are you still all right with us adopting you?"

I felt a cold chill. "Of course. Where would I go?" I'm sure I looked a little worried.

Ted said "It's what Maud and I want, but it would be bad if you were just being polite."

"No, No. I've not felt I ... belonged ... for a long time. Aunt Matilda really was not doing very well. She wasn't always making sense. I had great fear she was going ... funny. Like old people sometimes do."

"Well, we've got the marriage certificate copies. Did you take one round to Mr. Rushworth?" Ted asked.

"Yes, on Monday on the way to school. I put it through his letter box."

"I'll phone tomorrow and ask if everything was in order, though I know it was."

Maud said "Regarding Canada, we're going to at least investigate, but the decision has to be from all of us, because it's a big step. That includes you, Paula."

I said "We had Canada in geography last year. It's so big. I think Ted said his brother Joseph is in Calgary, and Montreal is at the other end."

Ted said "Not quite, but you are more or less right. Perhaps we should get a small atlas."

"I've got my school one," Maud said. "I always liked looking at the maps. I'll go and get it."

Ted and I were quiet, watching the early evening sun of summertime drift to the west. When Maud came back with the atlas and a ruler, we moved our chairs close, I was on one side of Maud and Ted on the other.

Maud said "There we are. If I take the ruler I get about 4 inches between Montreal and St. John's. And – where is the scale? Oh. There it is, 250 miles to the inch. So a thousand miles."

"But St. John's is in Newfoundland. That's not part of Canada, is it?" I said.

"No. You're right, but it gives us an idea of the size of the land. And Montreal to Calgary is ... 8 inches or 2000 miles as the crow flies.

"Ted, how far is Montreal from here?"

"I think 3000 miles give or take a few."

"Wow!" I said.

"Anyway, Paula. Did you learn that a lot of people in Montreal speak French?" Maud asked. "Gerard said there's a lot of English too."

"I think I do remember something about that, since they were a French colony until 1700 and something when a man named Wolfe captured the city of Québec. I remember because the teacher left off the *accent aigue* on the e."

"It looks like well over a hundred miles between Québec and Montreal," Ted noted.

"If we go there, we'll have to get used to thinking of these distances," Maud said.

Ted added “As Maud noted, Gerard mentioned there is also a quite active Jewish community in Montreal. I don’t know if that is of any interest to you, Paula, but it could be a start to learn more about your family.”

“Perhaps. But I’m not sure whether I want to know.”

* * *

In the next few weeks, it seemed that Mrs. Carbury and her associates were really anxious to get me off their books. Bureaucracies usually grind slowly. However, in the case of my adoption application there was, it seemed, an almost indecent haste to get the process completed. By August 1, I was officially the daughter of Ted and Maud. I didn’t change my name, however. Ted and Maud both said they thought that was sensible. It might cause a bit of awkwardness with school and social matters, but my name was part of who I was.

We celebrated my adoption by taking a trip into the New Forest on a Saturday by bus and having a picnic. The New Forest ponies watched us carefully from the other side of a dry-stone wall which fortunately kept them from our sandwiches. Especially now bread was rationed. We were also back to the old National Loaf. Nutritious, but not very appetizing.

Maud and I spent some time in the library to learn a bit more about Canada and about Montreal. Or should it be Montréal? We also wrote to Canada House – Ted and Maud had seen it in London – and asked for brochures about emigration to Canada. Within 10 days, a packet came which listed the technical requirements but also described some aspects of Canada and Canadian life.

Just as we got my adoption confirmed, we decided to start to get passports or related travel documents. Whether or not we emigrated, it seemed a good idea to get our documents in good order. For Maud and Ted the passport seemed relatively easy. It appeared I could travel either on Ted or Maud’s passport, though we all feared my background might cause some concerns. Eventually, I was added to Ted’s passport.

Ted wrote to Gerard Lapointe within a week after the end of the honeymoon. Ted had written up his background and work history and Maud took it to a typist who prepared it in 3 copies, so Ted would have one for himself and another to send somewhere else if need be. Ted sent off the copy for TCA with a letter saying he’d be interested in learning what opportunities TCA might have for him.

* * *

On August 23, Ted got a letter from Gerard Lapointe on TCA letterhead. It was an offer of a job running the TCA parts supply and inventory.

Maud said “It says a salary of \$6000 per year. How much is that?”

“About 1500 pounds,” Ted replied.

“1500 pounds!” Maud exclaimed. “Isn’t that about one and a half times what you earn now?”

“Yes. And my salary here is considered quite good.”

“Does that mean we’re going?” I asked.

“I think so,” Ted said, “but we need to think of what we’ll need to do.”

Maud said “They say we’ll be given a place on one of the Lancastrian flights and an allowance to ship 5 hundredweight of boxes by sea. So, it is a good offer. Our main concern is going to be having some money when we get there, since there are exchange controls. I think we’d better check those in the next day or so.”

I wonder where Maud learned about exchange controls. She must have been reading something in the newspapers. But she was right. It turned out that in March the amount a person could take out for travel was reduced from 100 to 75 pounds, and from 50 to 40 for those under 16. Namely me. So, 190 pounds for all of us. It likely would not go far in Canada.

In the evening of the 24th of August, Saturday night, the three of us decided after supper that we’d accept the offer. It would, of course, be conditional on getting immigration papers – the letter of offer said we could use it to get our immigration papers via Canada House. We would need medical examinations. The letter asked us to reply to Gerard Lapointe of our acceptance and direct any questions to him.

We wrote the letter of acceptance that night. Ted mentioned that he would follow-up with some questions once we had contacted the Canadian immigration people.

* * *

Tuesday, 27th August

Ted came home tonight with some information about getting money out of the UK. He’d talked to Desmond Snow who ran the accounting section at Supermarine. The exchange controls would not let you convert much or take it out in currency. There was apparently a premium market where you sell your pounds at a discount, but at the time it was not clear on whether it was yet properly set up.

There were also under-the-counter ways – some people smuggled notes out, or sovereigns if they had any. The fur and diamond trade were rife with fiddles to export stuff paid for in pounds and sold in dollars. Also, some art

works and things like that. Trade like that was legal if the value declared was fair, but full of bureaucracy and rife with spivs – near or actual criminals – because "fair" is a slippery word.

Ted said “It’s likely legal to export something at fair value and take payment in the country of delivery, especially if you are resident there when you receive the dollars. So UK law should not apply to a resident of Canada. The problem is finding something you can buy here and ship over. All the ration coupons make that awkward, but perhaps not impossible. I’m considering whether I could be the agent for a Merlin engine, for example.”

* * *

In the second week of September, I missed one of the first days of the new school year – if we stayed in England it would be my final year – so we could go to Canada House. Fortunately, we had an appointment, as there were lots of people queuing to learn how to emigrate to Canada. Since Ted had an offer of employment, we were moved right to the front. We each had a medical examination, and all of these were satisfactory. I was relieved about that. It would be a blow to be told we couldn’t go to Canada if we wanted to.

I think Ted and Maud were worried my French origins would cause trouble, but though all the documents we had were examined, and some notes were made, nothing was said. The very busy state of the offices seemed to work in our favour. About half-past three we were given a stamped and initialled document to present to immigration officials on landing in Canada, wished good luck and rather unceremoniously pointed to the exit.

There was a Lyons Corner House opposite Canada House and we went in and had Welsh Rarebit – very British – along with iced buns. I had coffee rather than tea.

“I wanted to remember a bit of when Papa and Mama were still alive in France. Here in England, I almost never smell coffee.”

Then I realized that my statement could be considered a complaint against Ted and Maud.

“Oh. I hope that didn’t mean I’m not grateful to you both and”

Ted said “Paula, in our family – and we are a family – we are never going to be afraid to talk about the other families we belonged to. If we try to do that, it will only be difficult and, besides, we should remember all the people we loved.”

I wonder how many other men would be so understanding. He was right. Loving Mama and Papa didn’t stop me loving Ted and Maud.

* * *

161 Radstock Road
Woolston, England
Sept 10, 1946

Gerard Lapointe
TCA
Dorval, Quebec, Canada

Dear Gerard,

This is to let you know we now have passed our medicals and have our immigration permit, so now we will await confirmation that we fly to Montreal on October 28.

Following your instructions, we are packing household items and will arrange for them to be shipped by sea to Montreal with TCA as our contact address.

As you are aware, we are restricted to bringing only 190 pounds sterling with us. Nigel Hughes has been in touch to confirm you have asked me to arrange payment for a Merlin engine priced at 450 pounds FOB your Dorval address so you can evaluate one of his inventory. Since I will be repaid in Canada at the official exchange rate, it will allow us to bring our modest monies. We have been advised that this should not contravene British exchange controls. Given that a new Merlin was priced at 2,000 pounds, TCA should get a bargain, though I am sure you -- ultimately including me -- will be giving it a thorough evaluation.

We look forward to our new start in Canada.

Yours sincerely,

Edward Newman and family.

161 Radstock Road
Woolston, England

Sept 10, 1946

Lawrence Lorimer
80 Avenue 19e, Apt 1
Lachine, Quebec, Canada

Dear Fifty,

Since you left to go back to Canada last year, I've been meaning to get in touch, but have had a rather hectic time.

Given it is less than 12 months since we said farewell, I've returned to Supermarine, got married, adopted a daughter, been offered a job at TCA, and will be coming to Montreal by air, leaving London October 28. So maybe you'll forgive me not getting in touch beforehand.

It was my new daughter, Paula -- actually Paule, since she is originally French and her partly Jewish parents were murdered in the Nazi camps -- who pointed out that Lachine is a Montreal suburb neighbouring Dorval. I'm hoping that we can meet and catch up soon after our arrival. Moreover, we'll be very interested to learn of places where we can live, as I'll be surprised if accommodation is not in short supply, as it is here.

Looking forward to reconnecting,

Yours sincerely,

Ted Newman (with Maud and Paula)

Maud said "Why do you call him Fifty?"

"His initials are LL, in Roman numerals Fifty Fifty, which got abbreviated."

"You men! Always giving each other nicknames."

* * *

September 21 – the equinox – we took a walk on Southampton Common. As we walked, we talked and imagined what we might find in Canada.

“It will be very cold in winter. We’ll need good clothing and boots,” I said.

“If we could find some arctic clothing that didn’t need points, we could use it instead of straw to pack the crockery,” Maud mused.

“That’s a good idea,” Ted said. “What about the Friday market? Might they not have some stuff being disposed of by the military?”

“I’ve not been to the Friday market for at least a year,” Maud said.

“Given Paula will be leaving the school soon, why don’t you send a note saying you need her with you next Friday and go and see what you can find?”

“Yes, we can take a look.”

“Take plenty of coin and a few ten-bob notes,” Ted suggested.

“What about boots?” I said. “Wellingtons are no use in the cold.”

“Any chance they might have some at the Market?” Ted asked.

“Perhaps we’ll have to wait to get boots in Canada,” Maud said. “But we’ll look. Though how will we buy things for you?”

She was asking Ted, thinking that he’d be at work.

“Coats can – perhaps should – be loose fitting. I’m not so much different in height from you, and you can take a tape measure and see how much my current coat is loose on you if you pull it out at the front. For boots, we can make some cardboard outlines of my feet. And again, we don’t want boots too tight. I can wear double socks in the cold.”

Maud said “We may be building castles in the air and they’ll have no suitable items. On the other hand, if we can pick up some woollies, they’d be useful. I wonder if such items would be saleable in Canada.”

“No idea. But good woollens could be sensible, as long as we pack them with mothballs,” Ted answered.

“Mothballs! Paula. Make sure we get some.”

* * *

We didn’t find much of what we were really looking for at the Friday Market. No boots, for example. And no Arctic coats.

We did find some woollens. Some were frayed at the edges, one or two had stains that probably wouldn’t come out, but we bought them very cheaply and would use them for packing, then possibly unravel them and knit new items from the wool. Or we could use them as bed-clothes on a cold night. And, to say it again, for padding around breakables in packing.

Maud spotted some souvenir tea-towels. There were a dozen, priced at ninepence each.

The vendor, in a strong East End accent said “Lovely souvenir of Canterbury, Madam. Just ninepence.”

Maud said “They’re from all over – here’s one of Oban in Scotland. Have you ever been there?”

The man laughed. “No, Madam. I’ve not. But they are good quality.”

“Possibly. How about I buy the lot. Shall we say 4 shillings?”

They settled on 5 bob. It was clear that the man did not want to transport them back to his base.

Maud said “Great for packing, and they may even be useful for decorating or something like that.”

We also saw a small, rather flattish tin box that had been for Hershey’s cocoa and picked it up for a penny-ha’penny. At the time it was bought on a whim, but I’ve still got it.

* * *

80 Avenue 19e, Apt 1
Lachine, Quebec, Canada
October 1, 1946

Dear Ted and family,

Great to hear from you. I’m writing my phone number at the bottom. If my girlfriend answers, you may want Paula to talk, as Denise’ English isn’t so good.

And her sister Marthe Gagnon isn’t much better with English, but she does have a house, and a daughter Lise, but her husband Henri was in the mess at the Walcheren Causeway and didn’t make it. She’s had a couple of boarders, and they haven’t been good experiences, so when I mentioned you had a family, she suggested that at least it would be worth a try if you are interested. Given the shortage of accommodation, I’ve taken a chance and given her a bit on account to cover October. You’d have two bedrooms and share the rest of the house, which is about 4 miles from the airport. There are buses, but you’ll probably want to try to find a car or someone to pool with.

I’ve got myself a small trucking business. Not much different from the RCAF except I get to take the risks and keep the profits.

So you're in the loop, I called TCA and eventually talked with Gerard Lapointe. He was glad that I found you a place, and that you can go there straight away. I'll meet the Lancastrian. Lapointe says to start work formally the following Monday but to phone when you've got your head straight after the long flight.

Should explain that I came home to find my wife shackled up with her former boss. We're getting a divorce. Will fill you in when you're here.

Your buddy,

Fifty

Maud said "Fifty is really being helpful. I hope we can fit in all right with Marthe and Lise."

Ted answered "I speak a little French. School stuff plus what I picked up in Normandy. We'll learn. And Paula should be OK."

Ted wrote back to Fifty immediately to let him know we'd take up the offer with Marthe. We'd have to see how things worked out. Two women in one kitchen could be another war.

* * *

We'd already started to organize our belongings and had found some tea chests to pack. Ted knew where to get things weighed, and, being in Southampton, we were able to find a ship going to Montreal. Weighing the chests was something that would still be awkward to arrange so that we could check that we did not go over 5 hundredweight. There was a minor discussion about whether the Canadians might mean the short measure of 100 pounds rather than the Imperial 112 in a hundredweight. A big difference. Maud suggested we should just assume Imperial and that if we were wrong it would likely be overlooked.

Since July, I had been collecting straw and newspaper and other things to serve as packing materials. A necessity that neither Ted nor Maud registered

we would need, and which would be difficult to find in a hurry. That's why I'd started to collect stuff. Then, as mentioned, we thought of using clothing.

Sometime in the middle of July, Ted had managed to figure out that the light in the front room could be made to work. The room was now our headquarters for organizing our belongings. On one side of the room were the things that we were going to ship, though we had some pieces of cardboard with the names of things to be shipped but that we still wanted to use.

On the other side of the room we put the things to sell, and indeed started to tell people about them. The newsagent charged threepence to put up small announcements on 3 by 5 cards. We used this to advertise some of the furniture and possessions to be sold. Apart from the few bits from Tante Mathilde, Maud was the only one of us to have any things really. We did have the furniture we were using, but decided to sacrifice some of the pieces early. For example, we used the tea chests instead of the kitchen table. We used our suitcases and other bags instead of chests of drawers.

Gradually we got down to just a couple of kitchen chairs, and then Ted and I found some bomb-damaged ones and made them usable, though far from visually attractive. Two legs of each of these chairs were sticks cut from tree branches Ted and I picked up when the Council were pruning. They did this so that vehicles, particularly buses, would not hit the trees. They probably used the trimmings somehow, but there were piles left around for pick up, and in the evening we could pick out some lengths that were thick enough to fashion chair legs. Pretty rustic, but these make-shift seats allowed the kitchen chairs to be sold.

As I've mentioned Maud and I went to the last Friday Market in September. A lot of the stuff there was junk, and the rest was mostly things of the type we were trying to get rid of. As I said, we did pick up a few items worth packing and, moreover, using as packing material, but only a few. There wasn't anything like decent cold weather clothing. With the fuel shortage in Britain, people grabbed that sort of thing very quickly. We'd need to find proper cold weather clothes after getting to Canada.

Gradually the house looked more and more like we were camping, but we were counting down. It was a debatable point whether Maud or I were most anxious to make sure things we were shipping were well-packed. Eventually, all but the most dilapidated dishes, pots, pans, and utensils were in the tea chests.

Friends who had taken wedding pictures were asked for double copies of prints, for which we would pay, and we put one set in a tea chest and another in one of the suitcases. At Ted's suggestion, the three of us had put together photos from our previous lives and paid a photographer to copy them for us so we could have two copies.

One night at supper, Ted said "Somehow I feel more unsettled than

at any time during the War. I think it's the waiting for the "off" like the racehorses waiting for the tape to go up."

I'd only seen horse races at the cinema in the newsreel for things like the Derby or the Grand National, but the image had the right tone. We were waiting, and we'd feel more at ease once we could be on our trip.

* * *

Fred Brownlow arrived back from India at Southampton docks in the second week of October. I was in school that day. Maud looked after Jack while Enid went to the dock, as it was anticipated – rightly as it turned out – that the disembarkation would take some time. Fred would have leave for a number of weeks before he was officially discharged. Enid hoped he would, in that time, be able to find a job.

It was a pity we'd be leaving so soon after Fred got back. Enid had said, one evening sitting in our garden drinking tea, "I'm sort of nervous that we'll have drifted apart and have trouble getting along. It's been four years since we've seen each other, and I'm not sure how I'll feel getting into bed with a man who's essentially a stranger. Oops. Maybe shouldn't have said that in front of Paula."

I answered "Aunt Matilda talked to me about what being married means. Even though I'm only 13, I think I can understand."

Maud nodded, and said to Enid "Better just tell Fred what you just said to us. You're not saying you don't want him. Just the opposite. You're saying you want him, but you want to go forward together."

"Thanks Maud. That could help both of us. There's a whole lot of thinking and dreaming, but two separate sets of thoughts and dreams when you're that far apart for so long have got to be different."

"Perhaps I wouldn't have been able to suggest that before Ted came. I never told you that we each discovered that we each had ... problems. He heard me weeping a few times, and I had to wake him from a nightmare. He used to have them pretty much every night, crying out and such, but one was particularly bad and I woke him. Then he said he could hear me weeping sometimes and we started to talk. And things gradually got easier for both of us. He still has the bad dreams, but now says he can wake himself up because he can realize they are dreams. And I still have weepy moments – more about Jenny than Jeremy, probably since more time has passed. But Ted and I share our feelings, and I'm closer to him than I ever was to Jeremy, who I loved deeply, but we didn't really talk about emotions."

Enid said "Yeah. I'd better see if I can get us to talk."

“Make time to go for walks and just be together. Ask him about India and what he saw. The things that he liked and didn’t, particularly if he can describe things. Maybe see if there’s pictures or magazine articles or library books. You each need to know about the lives you had. And he probably knows nothing about how you were working on building landing craft at Thorneycrofts like I was.”

“Yes. That’s true. And all the little things about Jack growing up. Jack will have to get used to having a Daddy again. Well, to having a Daddy – he was too young to know when Fred went off to war.”

* * *

October 23, 1946

We decided yesterday would be my last school-day to give us a chance to make sure nothing was forgotten. Ted had a tin box that he thought was lost in the V-1 explosion, except that George had found it. It had some important memorabilia and a few documents. That tin box was now full of our important documents, and we locked it and hid it under a loose floorboard in the cupboard under the stairs with a piece of old carpet on top. It would stay there until we put it in a small suitcase or rucksack to go with us. It would be a disaster to lose documents now. Also the money that Ted would be getting from the bank in a day or so that we were allowed to take out of Britain.

After breakfast, Maud said “I’ve a little errand we should do today at Boot’s.”

“Do you need me with you?” I asked.

“I think so.

“You remember we talked about the menstrual belt your aunt gave you? Well, I think we should get you a more up-to-date one and some pads, and make sure you always have them handy. Also maybe a pair of clean knickers.”

“Oh. Er ... You think I might get surprised and need them in a hurry?”

“It does happen, I’m afraid. You might as well be spared the misery and embarrassment of a mess you can’t easily deal with quickly.”

“All right. Do you want to go now?”

We left a few minutes later and went into town. We found what we were looking for and Maud also bought some Aspirin and some Elastoplast.

“We might need them”.

She also took me to Lyons for coffee and a bun, saying “We need a treat after all the packing.” The Lyons was apparently the only building on the High Street that bombing had not rendered unusable during the War. It

stuck out, like a single tooth in an otherwise empty mouth. Lucky? Or lonely?

Still, I enjoyed my coffee, and the bun was fresh and tasty.

When we got home, Maud said “Remember that rather flat cocoa tin we found at the Friday market?”

“You got it for a penny ha’penny. It says Hershey’s, so must have been left by the Americans.”

“Yes. And I think it will be just right for the belt and two or three pads, and it will fit in your satchel or the handbag we kept from your Aunt Matilda.”

“It will keep them tidy and clean.

“You mentioned I should also have a pair of clean knickers. Will they fit too?”

“Probably not. There’s a bit of leftover material in my sewing box that’s big enough to sew a small envelope to hold a pair. I’ll let you make that. It only needs to be a few inches on a side. A rectangle about 3 inches by 6 folded in two with a hem on the edges will do the trick.”

“I’ll do it right away,” I said.

Of course, it took me a bit longer than I thought, but I had it finished by early afternoon. Maud said I’d done a good job, and we celebrated with a cup of tea. As we sipped our tea, I asked

“Maud, Aunt Matilda said when I started having a period, it would go on until I was in my forties or fifties. She seemed to imply that what she called ‘the change of life’ could be soon or late.”

Maud said “I learned that the proper word is menopause, meaning the menstrual periods stop. But from talking to other women, it can be a bit hit and miss, and some women have irregular periods all their lives. I really hope you have regular and pretty ordinary periods. I’ve one or two friends who have irregular periods and lots of discomfort. They sometimes need to take a day off, typically just before the bleeding starts.”

“Do you have pain or discomfort?” I asked.

“Not so bad. Actually came yesterday for me.”

“Oh, does that mean no baby coming?”

“Yes. Not this time. And probably no baby because I had an infection after Jenny was born. As far as I know, Jeremy and I had a pretty normal marriage, and I didn’t get pregnant again. Perhaps it will happen with Ted. If it does, we’ll welcome the child and give him or her the best start in life that we can.”

“I know you’re doing that for me. ‘Thank you’ doesn’t get near to what I need to say.”

Maud said “But in a way, you’ve given both Ted and I a new sense of purpose that we’d lost in our grief.”

Over the previous week or so we'd got beyond the point of no return in our emigration. Most of our household stuff should be half way to Montreal by now. It had been delivered to the docks the day Fred came home. It actually was under 500lb – just, so there couldn't be any argument over Imperial versus American units. I wondered which Canada would use. Somewhere I'd read the Canadians often used both, which could cause confusion sometimes.

When I asked Ted that evening how long before our stuff actually arrived, he said "About another 10 days, I think, at the earliest. There's a stop in Halifax and one in Québec before they get to Montreal."

"Let's hope it all arrives," Maud voiced my own misgivings. It turned out to be the end of November before we collected it from the docks in Montreal.

* * *

That day I'd emptied my Post Office Savings and Maud and I transferred all the money we would not be able to take out of the UK to Ted's account. Maud made me put the deposit receipt away safely. "It's your money. One day you'll hopefully be able to use it."

The amount was just over £ 94, since I'd got £ 40 that was my allowance carefully set aside. Maud put in about £ 120.

"Think it'll be worth much when we finally can use it?" I asked.

"We'll live in hope," Maud said resignedly.

* * *

Ted's last day of work was October 25, and they gave him a bit of a send-off at mid-day dinner time in the canteen. He came home a little subdued. It was a big change for him, I think.

We spent Friday going over the house and cleaning top to bottom. That night we had fish and chips. Didn't need plates. We'd found some military knife-fork-spoon sets and some tin plates and mugs that we were packing in our luggage so we'd have at least basic means of eating.

On Saturday morning at 9 o'clock a couple came round with a lorry and driver to get the beds. We'd given back all but one key to the Council rent collector Friday. The bicycle Ted had passed on to me was picked up before 10 a.m. by a girl from school who'd arranged to buy it in advance. She got a good price and I had access to a bicycle to run errands right up to our leaving.

We had breakfast with Enid and Fred around 8 in the morning. I was happy to see they seemed to be settling in. At least Enid was smiling and

Fred seemed comfortable, if quiet. They got all our remaining odds and ends of food, and Maud and I had shopped to use up all our rations, so this wasn't just bits of rubbish. We kept the few points we had left – the coupons we could spend on things that weren't rationed – in case we spotted something small we wanted like some chocolate.

“You'll no doubt find it takes a bit of time to get used to being home and learning about each other,” Ted said to Fred as we moved the last of our odds and ends to their house. We'd told them they could do with these what they wished, even burn the chairs for heat.

“Yeah. Seems strange, but Enid told me right away she wanted us to make a big success and we'd need to tell each other how we were feeling. I hope she wasn't indiscreet – she told me you'd had nightmares and Maud had to wake you, and that that had got the pair of you to talk so you ended up married.”

Ted answered “Yes. Talking probably helped us get together. And the dreams aren't such a problem now. Somehow a mix of what I saw when a V-2 hit a convoy of lorries in Antwerp and thinking about how Agnes and Margaret were killed. I usually know I'm dreaming now and wake myself up.”

“Guess we've all seen some nasty stuff.” Fred didn't have time, or likely inclination, to elaborate.

Maud said “Hope you and Jack can get to know each other too.”

“Yeah. I never had the chance to be a Dad before.”

Ted said “Good luck to you, anyway. We can all use a bit.”

* * *

We'd booked a taxi to get to Southampton Terminus and got the train to Waterloo, then back out to Staines. We had a room booked for two nights at a place called the Pack Horse, a combined pub, restaurant and hotel, and a bit more than a traditional inn. Our room had a double bed with a cot set up for me. A bit tight, but it did have a private bathroom.

Our luggage made the room even tighter. We'd been a bit surprised to find we were allowed 66 lbs each on the flight, and managed to find a second kit-bag. One of the two of these we now had we packed with just clothing so Maud could handle it and a suitcase. Still looked a bit odd, a woman in a coat and beret carrying a kit bag and a suitcase like a soldier off to war. We fixed up her handbag with a long strap so it could go over her head and tuck under one arm so she'd have hands free. Of course, we weren't expecting to carry our luggage much, but there'd be times when we'd need to shift it a short distance.

We fixed up Aunt Matilda's old handbag with a long strap too, then decided my school satchel would be more useful in this role. The satchel had a couple of pockets and could take books, snacks, and other odds and ends. The handbag was flattened and packed in the bottom of one of the kit bags. It was of decent quality and had some memory value.

The rucksack that Ted and Maud used for coats and sweaters when walking about in London on their honeymoon was going to be my responsibility. A bit awkward for me to carry the rucksack and the satchel at the same time, but I could manage for a short distance.

The rucksack could carry quite a lot, so we packed relatively heavy items in the bottom – for example, some books and our two photo albums of which the duplicates were in a tea chest. The top would be left partly empty to take cardigans and pullovers. The sack had a drawstring then a large flap, so such clothing could be added and removed easily.

We made sure that we split up our money, with some pocket money for ready purchases. Over dinner one day in the Supermarine canteen, Ted had overheard someone saying that a friend emigrating had their money – possibly an amount over the exchange control limit – in a bag that was stolen. All the family's savings. Ted wasn't sure this was actually a true story or just one of those bits of gossip that becomes a legend. It didn't matter whether it was true, of course, since it still made a lot of sense not to have all our money in one place and to be careful how we took out purses or wallets.

* * *

It was about half past three before we were established in the hotel. As we registered, Ted arranged for a taxi to Heathrow for Monday morning at half past 6. The lady at the desk commented that we'd miss breakfast, but she would see if something could be put in a paper bag for us. It was at least easier for us that TCA was now flying from London rather than Prestwick.

Maud had her shoes off and was lying on the bed. I was sitting on the cot. Ted had just come out of the bathroom. There was suddenly an awkward pause.

“What are we going to do until we leave, Ted?” I asked.

Ted said “I've not actually had time to think. I know I didn't want to make any specific plans. Do you have any ideas what you would like? We need to think of dinner, and the hotel restaurant is possible, but not the bar because you are under age.”

“Can we see London?” I asked.

Maud responded “It's probably a good idea to show you round London tomorrow when we can use the whole day. Even arrange to have dinner here

tomorrow night – we’ll ask today about that so we don’t end up hungry. But then we can use the day well.”

“That would be nice,” I said. “So we need to think about tonight.”

“Maybe we could go to the pictures?” Ted suggested.

“That would be good,” Maud agreed. I nodded.

“Let’s go, then,” Ted suggested.

We trooped down to the desk and made sure we could get dinner tomorrow night. The dining room didn’t close until 9. They were used to aero crews. So we suggested 8 o’clock and made a reservation. Then we asked about cinemas. There were a few and the hotel had a local paper under the counter and we looked up what was on. Nearby in Feltham we could see *A night in Casablanca* by the Marx Brothers. We decided something silly like that would be better than dramas or anything that might upset sleep. And we could easily get there on the train. However, we walked along the river for a bit first because it was picturesque.

Feltham didn’t offer much in the way of food. There was, fortunately, a small café. It would close at half past five, and we got there about five. Not a lot to choose from. Maud and Ted had beans on toast, and I ordered a Cornish pasty. And rather strong tea. Still, it would hold us. It was a good job Maud had the good sense to pack some sandwiches for the train.

The cinema had a double feature, and the second film was a pretty standard western. Ted said he took a nap, and woke up as the lights came on.

* * *

Sunday morning, we made a decision to skip church, in part because we could not find out where to go nearby, and went directly to London after breakfast. We were the early-birds for that even. For my sake, I think, we visited many of the traditional sights and wore out our feet, even though we did take buses several times. Lyons gave us food and drink. Twice, in fact, which was a bit of a luxury, but we all needed a rest and a toilet from time to time. People were about, doing much as we were. In the afternoon, we did actually go inside St. Paul’s. Ted and Maud said they hadn’t done that when they were here on honeymoon. I suggested that we sit and spend a few minutes simply enjoying the atmosphere of St. Paul’s.

Apart from the issue of tired feet, it was a good day. When we got back to the hotel, we had dinner and Maud and Ted took a bath. We’d stuck to our usual days, fearing that hot water might run out if we tried all three, so I had bathed the night before. Maud and I had washed our hair on Friday. We both had berets, which we pulled down a bit to avoid the smoke of the

trains. Maud had packed her "church" hat in one of the tea chests, but she had a scarf she could wear if the beret would not go with her clothes. She was wearing low heeled shoes. A good idea given the walking we were doing.

As I say, Maud and Ted took a bath. I think they were a bit awkward about sharing until I said "If you share the hotel can't complain you're using too much hot water." Later, Ted admitted to me he couldn't imagine his daughter Margaret being so direct and accepting of parents sharing a bath.

* * *

We were surprised that the terminal at Heathrow was a set of army marquee tents. There were wooden duck-boards between and leading to the aprons where the aircraft were parked. Despite the tent arrangement, the setup was well-organized and not uncomfortable.

We had to show what money we had, and on Saturday we had carefully made sure each of us had our allowed amounts set aside. Ted had attempted to spend the rest, in fact paying for the hotel a day early on Sunday morning so we would know how much we were over the limit and could spend the extra.

When we were touring around London on Sunday afternoon, we still had a little over 4 pounds when Ted looked in his pocket purse. Maud and I had given him all our excess money so we had everything together apart from a penny each for the toilet.

Ted figured 10 shillings more than enough for the taxi on Monday morning, including a good tip. So we had 3 pounds 10.

"The off-licenses will close soon," Maud said. It was about twenty to two.

"Is that one over there?" I asked. It was, and we went in and bought a bottle of brandy and a single malt whiskey, leaving us with about half a crown. We used that, and our last points, on some Cadbury Fruit and Nut bars in a tobacconists nearby. The shop assistant's eyes were wide when we bought out the last he had. Little did we know they would also be the last we would see, since Canada didn't have them for many years. I think it was a half century before I saw one in Canada.

So at Heathrow we showed our money. Maud and I had to open our handbags or, in my case, my satchel.

"American cocoa?" the official asked. Oops. That was awkward. I must have blushed bright red and stammered "No. ..." as Maud leaned forward and whispered something to the man. He smiled and said "I've a daughter too. Miss. Just open the top a tiny bit and let me see and we'll say we're done."

Ted was asked to empty one pocket. However, the fact we had our money organized and were a family leaving for a new life possibly saved us a more rigorous inspection.

Apparently, though I didn't know about them until later, there were 10 sovereigns Ted kept for emergencies. He and Maud decided not to carry them on the airplane. They were, in fact, tucked in the thick top hem of some curtains we packed in one of the tea chests. The cloth was thick enough that you couldn't feel them, and Maud had sewed them into the hems carefully. There was a risk they'd not make it. Ted noted at one point that the War made us all a bit less upright with respect to the law.

* * *

"Ted! Over here," a man called as we exited the customs hall. That was Fifty – Lawrence Lorimer – who became a firm family friend who I've known ever since and sadly helped bury not so long ago.

We'd staggered off the Lancastrian after 15 hours of noise and some bumping around. Well, some of that was on the ground refuelling at Gander, Newfoundland. The flight had not been a bad one, but Ted had explained to us that the Merlins don't have an exhaust pipe, just a stub for each cylinder – all 48 of them, of which half are facing the cabin. The service on the aeroplane was very good, and we were fed well. According to Ted, better, in fact, than many restaurants. I'd not had any real experience of restaurants. Probably Lyons was my main point of reference.

In the Montreal terminal, an Immigration official had taken our document from Canada House and stamped it and said "Welcome to Canada". It was evening, and near supper time, so Customs made a show of asking Ted to empty his kit bag onto the inspection table then put it all back. But that was the only bag they asked about, and they didn't dig around once things were out. Mostly clothing, and no particular packing system. A minor nuisance. Then we were out into the main part of the building, which was better set up than Heathrow's tents, though those had been quite well organized, just ... tents. They'd be cold in winter, especially the nasty one that would be coming to England at the beginning of 1947. Of course, we learned about that later.

"Ted!" We looked around the crowd and located the voice. There was Fifty.

"Hello Fifty. Here's Maud, my wife, and Paula, our daughter."

"And plenty of luggage!" Fifty grabbed the larger kitbag. "Come on, we'll get you to your new home."

We followed Fifty out to a road that circled in front of the building and to a large car. “Boy, Am I glad my Dad and I bought this ’38 Dodge 4 door before the War started. Cars are starting to be made, but lots of people want them, and this beauty is good because it has lots of room and plenty of trunk space.”

“Trunk?” Maud said.

“You call it a boot,” Fifty said. “But nobody here’ll understand that. And this is a fender, not a wing,” he added, tapping one of them.

We got in, feeling awkward because it was facing what we perceived as the "wrong" way and Fifty started the obviously big engine and we moved off. It was already dark now. Fifty gave a running commentary, but I think all of us were still woozy from the long flight. It didn’t take long to our destination on a residential street of two-storey houses, clearly built of wood. Fifty pulled into the driveway of one with what I much later learned to call a hip roof, the upper storey being covered in roofing. It was covered in what we learned later were called shingles, which could be made of tarred material or even of cedar wood. Rare in British roofs.

“Here we are 687 25th Avenue, or Six Cent Quatre Vingt Sept, Vingt-Cinquieme Avenue.” We’d soon learn to rattle off our new address by heart.

We were ushered inside with our luggage and introduced to Marthe, Lise, and Denise. English and French seemed to get all mixed up, but I had no trouble at all with most of the local French that was used that evening, though we were mostly dealing with practicalities, so didn’t get into any slang or idioms. I felt in my element, and when the Paule / Paula naming was explained, I became Paule again. Lise was about a year younger than me, as we later learned one day less than a year younger.

Our rooms were two of the upstairs bedrooms. Marthe used the front room downstairs. There was a dining room which was now also the living room and a quite big kitchen on the main floor. Upstairs Maud and Ted would have the front room, I’d have the next and Lise the smallest. There was also a bathroom with a claw-foot tub. And here the toilet wasn’t separate.

The house was cosy. We learned later that Henri had got one of the earliest oil furnaces. It made for a very convenient and comfortable house. The only discomforts would be the social and linguistic adjustments.

Ted realized that we owed Fifty some money and I heard him whisper “When can we settle up?”

“For sure not tonight – get a good night’s sleep and I’ll come by for breakfast and we’ll set you on track. I’ve a busy day, so you’ll be on your own or with Marthe. But given what we did in France, Belgium and Holland, you’ll get organized quickly.”

“The first thing I’ll need to do is get some money changed and a bank account,” Ted said.

“Yeah. That’s important, and you should be able to do that tomorrow. There’s a Bank of Montreal nearby. Probably as good as any.”

Though we’d eaten, Marthe had some pea soup for dinner. She said “souper”. Not so common in France, but I understood. Apparently Ted took a while to realize she was talking about supper, not about the soup. Lots more for him and Maud to learn.

After we’d eaten the soup, Denise said “Ils sont completement fatigué, Lawrence. Il faut les laisser dormir.” [*They’re completely exhausted, Lawrence. They need to be allowed to sleep.*] She pronounced Fifty’s name with a decided accent. It was similar to the way some people talked as I remembered from when I was young, but there was a difference. I’d need to adjust to it, and Ted and Maud would likely really need to get their ears around the different pronunciations here in both English and French.

But indeed, we were falling off the chairs, so we proceeded up to our rooms and within 15 minutes were asleep.

* * *

We came down to breakfast at about a quarter to eight. Lise was getting ready for school and had just finished eating. She went upstairs to the bathroom to brush her teeth, then yelled “A plus tard!” [*See you later!*] and was out the door just as Fifty came in with a bag of groceries.

“In case Marthe didn’t get out,” he said, kissing that lady on the cheek.

“Assois-toi, Lawrence. Toi aussi, Ted,” [*Sit down, Lawrence. You too, Ted*] she said.

Maud and I were right behind Ted and we all found places at the kitchen table, which had six chairs around it. Marthe poured coffee and put it in front of us. There was milk – actually it turned out to be a sort of cream – and sugar. Maud and Ted didn’t know quite what to do. I did. I added cream and some sugar, as did Fifty. Maud and Ted copied us, but they’d likely switch to milk and no sugar if my growing understanding of them was correct.

I said “C’est beaucoup moins fort que le café de Paris il y a six ans. Mais je l’aime.” [*It’s a lot less strong than the coffee in Paris six years ago. But I like it.*]

Marthe said “Oui, c’est probable. Les français aiment le café foncé.” [*Yes. That’s likely. The French like dark coffee.*]

Marthe opened the oven and there was a luxurious smell of bacon. She put a big plate of crisped streaky bacon on the table with a bowl of scrambled eggs and a plate of toast.

“Bon appetit!”

“Fifty. Does Marthe know that’s a whole month’s ration in England?” Maud asked.

Fifty tried to explain. I had more success, but it was clear Marthe did not quite believe us.

“Sacrément!” was her eventual conclusion.

* * *

Fifty wrote down some addresses and phone numbers for us for his business and home (which we already had), as well as the address and phone number here. The phone was on the kitchen wall.

“We’ll have to keep a log so we can pay for our calls,” Ted said.

“Not unless you’re doing long distance. Local calls are free. Well, part of the monthly bill.”

If I knew Ted, we would contribute to that. Fifty also sketched a map and marked a couple of useful places. We’d go out and explore, with the first priority the bank.

The rent was going to be \$75 a month. There seemed to be some uncertainty about things like heat and electricity or telephone. Ted said that at his salary, the amount was not going to be a problem. When we were walking toward the bank, he said that he thought the main difficulties would be communication and getting along cordially. But no doubt we could if Marthe and Lise could. Ted said that he’d talked to some of the Walcheren veterans and could possibly tell Marthe a bit about that campaign once our skills in communication improved. Fifty seemed to manage, though I could tell he broke a lot of rules of grammar and vocabulary.

We went upstairs after breakfast to get ready to go out. Marthe refused help with the dishes, but through me said we’d arrange things later so we didn’t fall all over each other. That made sense.

We were in the front room making sure we had documents, for which my satchel turned out to be the most sensible container. We might need to show them for the bank.

Ted said “I was talking to that diplomat fellow on the plane when we stopped in Gander. Couldn’t really talk easily other times. He said the school system in Quebec is divided on religious grounds, with the Catholic Church really hanging onto their control, mainly with French schools. And I don’t know if he was prejudiced – I didn’t let on we were Catholics – but he said the Church more or less only gave girls about 7 years of schooling, then generally expected them to get married and have hordes of good Catholic babies. Some sort of expression that translates to the revenge of the cradle. We’ll need to see whether that’s got any truth.”

“So the English education is under the Protestants?” Maud asked.

“It seems so, and the Jews tried to set up their own schools, but now muck in with the Protestants. I got a hint that English Catholics do too.”

Maud said “Paula – Paule – speaks French, but probably the French of a child, and from France, not here. Her grammar and spelling could be a big handicap, and she’d already be about to leave school too. I’m not sure religion should interfere with education.”

“Me neither. But we should give ... Paule a chance to decide. If she is already nearing school leaving age, there won’t be a truant officer breathing down our neck. The diplomat walla said a lot of people send their kids to private schools. Apparently private day schools aren’t that pricey here.

“Paule. You’ve not said anything.”

“I don’t think we know enough yet. And I feel a bit topsy turvy still.”

“Not sick, I hope,” Maud said.

“No, no. Just mixed up a bit.”

* * *

We’d left the house at about a quarter to ten and found the Bank of Montreal just at opening time. After a short wait all of us were brought into the manager’s office – a Mr. Green – and explained our situation. We would easily be able to set up an account. Was it to be just for Ted? Mr. Green explained that we might want to have a joint account for Maud and Ted, or she could – with Ted’s permission – have her own. I sensed Maud’s annoyance as this was said, but she said nothing.

Mr. Green added that a slight problem with joint accounts was that they were frozen if one of the signatories died, which meant a family may be without resources in that situation. Ted and Maud decided to have separate accounts, chequing for Ted and savings for Maud, roughly half each of our capital apart from that we knew came from me.

“Can we get an account for our daughter?” Ted asked.

“Yes. Usually there are limitations to prevent imprudent withdrawals, and usually a savings account.”

“Paula – well, her name is really Paule and we think we’ll go back to that here – has had her own account in England, in fact about twice as much money as she was allowed to bring out.”

“How interesting. Miss Newman, you must be quite mature for your age.”

I said “But my name is Ronen, Paule Ronen. Ted and Maud adopted me after Aunt Matilda died. She’d brought me from France in 1940, and the Germans took my parents to the extermination camps.”

Green blanched. “I’m sorry to hear that. And I actually know a couple of people here named Ronen. It’s a Jewish name. Are all of you Jewish?”

Ted said “Paule’s mother was Catholic and so are she and Maud. I go to church with them, but can’t seem to believe all the doctrine, but I’m happy to support them. And at sometime I’ll be interested to see if we can find connections to Paule’s family here, though they will likely be distant relations.”

Green said “If my arithmetic is correct, Paule has been educated in English but speaks French and is not far from being of school leaving age.” He was quick to understand.

“Green can be a name from a variety of origins,” Ted commented.

“I’m actually Jewish. I don’t advertise it. The Bank, like many Canadian institutions, has fairly strong male, white, and Protestant lines.

“Paule has probably grown up a lot quicker than most young women here. We’ll set up a savings account for her. And you can leave me a message if you’d like to have an informal chat about what educational choices may be open to her. Quebec has a rather strange structure for schools.”

We thanked Mr. Green, who passed us to one of his staff and we got our accounts set up, our bank books and some Canadian money. The coins seemed small compared to our familiar British ones.

* * *

We got almost exactly \$300 each for the 75 pounds Ted and Maud were allowed. They each took out \$100 to have in hand, because they would be giving Marthe \$75 and didn’t know what we owed Fifty. Probably almost the same, since there’d been almost a month since he’d written about staying with Marthe. Ted gave me three \$1 bills and some change. I’d have to look at it later to learn the coins.

We saw a shop with a sign *Drug Store*. We looked in, then went in when we realized it was something like what we called a chemists’, indeed very like *Boots*. We took a look at the products and the prices, largely out of curiosity, but did see a rack of newspapers and Ted bought a *Gazette*.

Further along the road, we saw a sign that said *Diner*. We realized it was something between a café and a restaurant. We’d have to try it.

It was a bit cool out. We had walked to the St. Lawrence River. It was impressive. There was a bench and we sat down and unfolded the newspaper to get a quick look at advertisements. There was a fairly large one for a grocery shop called *Steinberg’s*. Actually, it was a quarter page. We later learned that once a week – often Thursday – there would be a full-page advertisement. Even the quarter page caught Maud’s attention.

“They have butter and eggs and ham and ... lots,” she said. “Ted. Did Mr. Lapointe or Fifty talk about ration books?”

“Not specifically, but we were given Temporary Ration Books at Immigration last night. I put them in your handbag in the inside pocket.”

Maud said “I must have been asleep almost. Here they are. Well, they can stay there for now. But from what we had for breakfast, the allowances are much better than at home.”

I said “But isn’t this going to be home?”

We all looked at each other but said nothing.

Somehow we’d brought with us the two small notebooks that Ted said he purchased at *Smith’s* when he first arrived in Southampton. He’d used one with Maud as a rent book but only one page had been used. Ted and Maud had each used one of the notebooks when packing as a way to keep track of things. I had a slightly larger one that was in my satchel. Ted took out his notebook and wrote down a question mark at the top of a page and then wrote RATIONING.

“Ted. Where’s your fountain pen?” Maud asked. I think she was worried he’d lost it.

“They tend to leak with the pressure changes on aeroplanes, or should I say airplanes to get into the vernacular here. So I cleaned it out, and also the one Agnes used to use. Perhaps you didn’t notice that I’d emptied and cleaned the pen in your purse. I forgot to tell you. And I made sure the bottle of ink was double wrapped. I’ve got several pencil stubs and my pen-knife so I’m not without a way to write things down. ”

“And I have straight pens plus Aunt Matilda’s fountain pen which I cleaned after Ted reminded me, but we combined the ink with Ted’s,” I said. “I’ll use pencils mostly too. I have a couple and a sharpener.”

Ted said “You could have Agnes’ fountain pen if you wanted. It might fit your hand better than the one your aunt left, which I think is large and probably her husband’s.”

“I’d like that,” Ted had caught the real reason I didn’t use the fountain pen of Tante Mathilde.

* * *

We came back to the house on 25th and we gave Marthe \$75, which she seemed to appreciate. Then we spent some time with trying to work out how we’d pool the cooking and cleaning. Between myself, the very impoverished French Ted and Maud could muster, and an old French-English / English-French Larousse, we came to an agreement to set up a weekly roster of tasks,

baths, shopping and a housekeeping fund. We would put in 60% of the food and supplies since we were 3 of the 5 bodies in the house.

When we asked about fuel, we were told “compris”, which I think Ted and Maud found most welcome. But there was something about snow and a shovel that I translated verbatim, but Ted thought he’d need to get Fifty to explain. Later we learned it was that Marthe wanted Ted and I to do the main snow clearing from the path and driveway, though all of us would be expected to sweep minor snowfalls.

As Ted mentioned that he’d ask Fifty to explain, Marthe said “Fifty. He say you in Belgique.”

“Oui. Antwerp. Anvers. Et après, je suis au Pays Bas.” [*Yes. Antwerp. Anvers. And after, I was in the Netherlands.*]

“Dommage. Henri est morte là.” [*Sad. Henri died there.*]

“Paule, how do you say ‘causeway’?” I had to look it up.

“I think ‘chaussé.’”

“Marthe. J’avais des amis qui sont partis du bataille de la chaussé de Walcheren.” [*Marthe. I had friends who were part of the battle of Walcheren Causeway.*]

“Alors, tu comprends. Et aussi, Fifty m’a dit que ta femme et ta fille ont subi une bombe volant. Et que Maud a perdu son mari sur le cuirassé Hood et ta fille par un accident routier toute à la fin de la guerre. Et Paule n’a plus de famille a cause des Nazis. Nous sommes tous les pauvres survivants.” [*Then you understand. Also, Fifty told me your wife and daughter were hit by a flying bomb. And that Maud lost her husband on the Battlecruiser Hood and her daughter in a road accident at the end of the War. And Paule had no more family due to the Nazis. We are all the poor survivors.*]

Ted and Maud were nodding. Strangely, we were starting to understand each other already without translation. No doubt we’d have some misunderstandings. I know I hoped there’d be no major ones.

We had a sandwich – some sort of luncheon meat, but hearty and not cut so thin it was transparent as in England. I wondered if Ted or Maud were thinking “as at home” again.

After lunch, Ted telephoned Gerard Lapointe to tell him we’d arrived all right. From this, it seemed that Mr. Lapointe would pick him up tomorrow in the morning and he’d get signed up at TCA and start on Friday, which was November 1, rather than Monday. That way his pay would be for a full month and there wouldn’t be all sorts of calculations to pro-rate it.

It also seemed that Fifty had done us a huge favour in finding us accommodation with Marthe. Housing was in very short supply with men returning from the War, often with wives and sometimes children in tow.

Apparently Ted could submit our moving expenses right away and get almost immediate repayment. That would help a lot.

Ted was also the agent for a Merlin engine from Nigel Hughes. It would be the evaluation engine that TCA would use to judge if they wanted more of the refurbished engines. Ted paid Nigel in pounds but would get paid here in dollars. A way – apparently above board – to get money out of the UK, since the price would be fair value and we were no longer UK residents. However, the payout was dependent on delivery and satisfactory evaluation.

Since the telephone was in the kitchen, we heard at least Ted's side of his conversation with Lapointe.

* * *

In the afternoon, I went shopping with Marthe and Maud. Ted decided to stay in and unpack our things. Well, all but my stuff. I think Maud almost said something about her underwear, but she was getting to be comfortable with Ted, and now let him fold and sort her smalls. *Smalls?* I don't think that was used here. I think they just said *underwear*, or if they're trying to be fancy *lingerie*.

There was a built-in closet in Ted and Maud's bedroom, which overlooked the street. The trees were mostly bare, but when I was in there I noticed a few leaves. Some were bright red – maple leaves. They seemed unusual or artificial. Or unusual to me.

While we were out, Ted had recovered his late wife Agnes' pen and also his bottle of ink and his own fountain pen. I guess he filled the pens. When we got back, I found Agnes' pen on my little table. He'd also hung some of my things that must have been used for padding in the suitcases and they were in the small closet in my room. Marthe had left us enough hangers – cintres – which was thoughtful of her. It must be difficult to have a bunch of strangers move in. It WAS difficult to be the strangers! I didn't find it too hard working in two languages. Ted and Maud did, but I figured we'd adapt. Actually I found it comforting to hear French again.

Ted had clearly emptied his and Maud's luggage. I'd have to do my own, but I think Ted felt that I'd want to, and he was right in that. I wanted to be in charge of my own stuff. Sometimes that might seem ungrateful to them. I'd need to be a bit careful to keep the way I expressed that need – my need – kind. I really wasn't wanting to push them away, just to have a sense of what was my own space.

In the meantime, we'd been to the supermarket. It was really different from back ... from England. We could select what we wanted and put it in a small cart. The fruit and vegetables too. In England you weren't allowed to touch or select. The greengrocer or barrow-boy did that. And there were lots of products I hadn't ever seen before.

The biscuits were different – Maud was going to miss Rich Tea and Digestives. And they were called cookies, not biscuits, at least in English. Later on I'd discover they were rather sweeter and less refined. We'd need to make things that we truly missed.

There was also a lot less stringent rationing. Mainly butter, sugar and meat. And the allowances here were bigger, and there seemed to be some ways around some of the restrictions by getting products not quite in the restricted categories.

Marthe was very patient with us as we examined things and learned. She seemed almost to disbelieve it when I told her how small the British ration was.

When we got back to the house – I guess we'd better start saying “home” – Ted came down to see what we'd brought back.

Maud said “There you are. We learned a lot. There's quite a difference in what is available from what we're used to, and different products in some cases. And the ration amounts of things still rationed are quite generous.”

Ted had noticed the refrigerator before, but now that things were being put away, he seemed to realize just how big it was. Refrigerators were rare in England, and tiny by comparison. I think he was guessing the French word when he said, mangling the pronunciation but more or less getting the sentence “C'est un très grand réfrigérateur.”

Marthe replied “Non. C'est plus ou moins normale. Mais nous avons de la bonne chance que Henri a remplacé la glacière en trente-neuf.” [*No. It's more or less normal. But we had the good luck that Henri replaced the ice-box in thirty-nine.*]

“Glacière?” Ted said.

Marthe answered “Une coffre refroidis par de la glace. Nous devons avoir une livraison trois ou quatre fois par semaine.” [*A chest cooled with ice. You have to get a delivery three or four times a week.*]

“Oh, an icebox,” Maud said. “We rarely had those in England except in some of the big country houses perhaps.”

“So, did you make some plans for dinner?” Ted asked.

Maud answered “Tonight we'll have a stew, and, since we've not had the chance for some years, a treacle tart. But here it's called *tarte au sucre*, but with the rationing, we're going to use maple syrup from Marthe's brother's farm. I couldn't see Golden Syrup in the shop – I mean supermarket. But there's some decision still to be made about using the breadcrumbs. I think we'll make two small pies and try the recipes separately. I couldn't find custard powder either, but Paule had learned in school that it's made with cornstarch and a little turmeric for colour, so we can do that, and Marthe got the milkman to leave plenty of milk.”

I went upstairs, and as I told earlier, found Agnes' fountain pen on my

table. But before I went downstairs I fairly quickly unpacked the rest of my things and put them away. The closet in my room was pretty small, but I had a small three drawer chest, and everything I had fitted easily. Later I would realize that most Canadians would find my room a bit short of space to put my things.

I wanted to try out the pen, and tried a signing my name in my notebook. But that wasn't a real test, so I went downstairs and said "Ted. Thank you for the pen. It writes beautifully. Can I have a sheet of paper and an envelope to write to my friend Judy in Southampton and and tell her about our journey?"

"Of course, and we'll have to find the post office for you so you can get a stamp to send it.

"I put the writing paper and envelopes – they're in the leather writing compendium – in the top drawer of the chest of drawers." Ted meant the chest of drawers in the front bedroom, not mine. "Just make sure we know to replenish the supply so we don't run out, and there's a little folder thing for stamps, but we'll need to have some for Canada, some for England by sea and some air mail ones. For Christmas cards, we'll have to do something almost right away, since they'll go surface mail."

"I hadn't thought of that," Maud said.

"Qu'est-ce qu'il y a?" [*What's that?*] Marthe asked.

I explained the need to send Christmas cards early. Marthe nodded. She was making the pastry for the pies. Maud was watching while making some breadcrumbs from some left-over toast crusts by rubbing them against a grater.

There was a small discussion on how to make the syrup for the pies, mostly concerning the proportion of sugar to thicken the maple syrup. It wasn't at all an argument, more a collective questioning. Eventually it seemed that roughly equal parts by volume was about right. Here cooking seemed to use volume in cups rather than weight, and Marthe had a very nice-looking glass one that had a scale on the side and measured up to 2 cups or 16 oz. or – how could this be? – 1 pint!

I asked "Marthe. Est-ce qu'un "pint" est égale seize onces?" [*Marthe. Is a pint equal 16 ounces?*]

"Oui. Pour les Américains. Mais ici – officiellement – c'est vingt. Particulièrement pour la bière! Autrement les hommes se pleindre beaucoup." [*Yes. For Americans. But here – officially – it's twenty. Particularly for beer! Otherwise the men complain a lot.*]

Maud said "Yes, I forget where I heard it – possibly on the BBC – that the Americans say 'A pint's a pound the whole world round', which is clearly silly."

* * *

That evening we had a stew supper followed by the Treacle Tarte au Sucre as it came to be called. Fifty and Denise joined us, and they brought some beer. Ted found this thin but drinkable. Over time I've realized – I'm not a beer drinker – that most British people find North American beer not very interesting. But neither Ted nor Maud ever made this a big complaint, and they'd have Molson or Labatt's in the house for themselves or guests.

The cooperative effort on the supper was a success. By trying the two different forms of the tart – with and without breadcrumbs – the verdict was that the breadcrumbs allowed it to be less sickly sweet. Denise, in a mix of French and English, made this observation.

Maud responded “But I think the maple syrup – *érable* – gives a very special taste compared to Golden Syrup, which I think is just a form of dissolved sugar.”

The Canadian contingent reserved judgement on custard. Fifty said “Probably best with whipped cream when it's available,” and the English party seconded the suggestion.

During the meal, Ted asked about schooling for me.

Fifty said he'd gone to the Protestant schools through to school leaving. Denise, mostly in French, said she had managed 9 years, but that a lot of Quebec girls got less than 7. That did not seem a good omen for my education.

Marthe made a comment that none of us quite understood completely to the effect that she was a good Catholic, but the Church was too insistent that they controlled the lives of everyone, and that it was single men deciding how women would live.

Lise looked uncomfortable. Fifty explained that there'd been a bit of an argument with the local priest, who implied Marthe should lean on Lise to enter the convent. Lise thought she wanted to become a nurse, but more and more that career needed some formal education. The church thought nursing should be the role of nuns, as it had been historically, but medicine was becoming increasingly scientific.

“How do you feel, Paule?” Ted asked.

“All my school was in England. In English. My French is fine when I'm talking, but I've only written it with Tante Mathilde.” I laughed. “I just slipped back from calling her Aunt Matilda.”

“So you think you might do better in an English school?” Maud asked.

“I think so. We need to find out what is needed and where I could go.”

“Though I'm Catholic and fairly devout, I don't like the idea of the Church intruding on the lives of young people. Religion should be something

that one wants, not something imposed.” Maud said. She and Marthe seemed to be on the same page.

Marthe asked what Maud had said, and nodded when it was explained. “Le prêtre se plaindra, bien sûr.” [*The priest is going to complain, certainly.*]

“Well, we’ll have to do what we can. Possibly resurrect Paule’s Jewish side.” Maud surprised me when she said this.

* * *

Ted’s notebook now had SCHOOLING, POST OFFICE and BUS along with RATIONING, but the last was now stroked out, since Maud thought she had enough understanding of how things worked. Ted added LIBRARY – it would be sensible to have access to some information resources. Maud and I were going to look into that today while Ted was at TCA.

Gerard picked Ted up in his car as arranged. A large, 2-door car that we learned later was a 1939 Ford Standard Sedan. Apparently, talking to Mr. Lapointe about education for me, Ted got more or less the same story as we’d had from Fifty and Marthe.

In the evening, Ted told us he’d spent most of the morning with various documentation and other issues. However, he did get paid – in cash – for the train, hotel, and taxis. For the train and hotel he had receipts, but he learned that meals were on a *per diem* basis, which was for a Canadian standard and actually gave us more than he had expected.

Ted talked to a young man, Brian O’Neill, who would be working for him who said he’d missed having to decide how he felt about conscription. When Ted asked what he meant, he said that he was talking about the conscription crisis. Ted realized we knew very little of the local political and social currents and had better inform ourselves. LIBRARY was definitely going to be important.

Ted said “Brian went to the High School of Montreal. Apparently it’s considered pretty good, and Brian could possibly have gone to University if his widowed mother – not from the War – could have afforded it.”

Brian told Ted how to use the bus or streetcar – we called the latter a tram. One could put money in a fare box next to the driver, or a ticket. The tickets were cheaper, but you purchased a strip in advance. Streetcars worked the same way.

Ted also met the other members of his team. There was a young woman clerk/typist called Janice Armstrong, and a man of possibly 55 or 60, Remy Houle. Ted seemed pretty shocked that Remy had been with TCA since the start, and said it had been a good job. Ted felt Remy would know a

lot more than he did, but wasn't promoted. Apparently, it was a case that English speakers got the management jobs. Ted thought this was wrong and muttered something that included the word *stupid*. Still, he'd have to bite his tongue for now.

* * *

Ted took the bus back from Dorval. Brian's description of the bus turned out to be fine. Ted got a couple of strips of tickets. He told us about them that evening. There were different coloured ones, with different prices for adults, students and children. I'd travel for less.

It was about three when Ted got in. He used his key to make sure it worked – Maud and I each had one too, and we had each checked ours when we came back from the shopping trip the day before.

Since the house was quiet, Ted thought all of us – the women that is – were out, but when he came up to the bedroom, Maud was lying on the bed reading the Gazette for the day. I was in my room, reading *le Devoir*, or rather trying to, so I heard their conversation. I think Marthe was having a cup of tea with a neighbour, and Lise was not yet home from school.

"You're back. Did it go all right?" she asked.

"Yes. Fine. I even got our expenses money. A bit over actually because they work on a flat rate *per diem* for meals and incidentals and Canada is more expensive. And I took the bus back. Got some tickets which are cheaper than cash. But Paule will need to get some student ones, I think, once she's in school."

"Yes, I had a chat with the librarian."

"Good. You found it."

"Yes. We need some sort of proof of our address. Typically a bill or something like that. We'll have to think. But that's only to sign books out. We can still use the library."

"I had to fill in a whole lot of forms today about tax, so maybe a letter will come that way."

"Are they as bad here as in England?"

"If you mean in rate of tax, I think not. But I'm sure there's bureaucracy. It was implied that there's both Quebec and Canadian offices, so on that front maybe worse. We'll have to see."

Maud said "It's an awful lot to take in."

"I agree. But what is possible for us to have here should be very good once we get settled. The first few weeks will likely be the most awkward for us. I think Marthe is rather where you were last Winter. And Lise is so quiet, I don't know quite what to make of her."

“I don’t think she quite understands that Henri – her father – will never come back.”

“What’s Paule doing?” Ted asked.

“She was going to read. We bought *Le Devoir* so she can get more familiar with French. I don’t think Marthe has a newspaper, and even with the wireless – I guess I should say radio – I actually don’t think she listens to the news.”

“Possibly we should get a radio for up here. I’m sure our tastes are different, and I don’t want to ask her to change station for us.”

“Are they expensive?” Maud asked.

“We’ll have to look – you have the newspaper, after all.”

“Here’s an ad for one at about \$27 at Morgan’s department store.”

“Let’s give ourselves one for Christmas. Not necessarily that one, but we’ve some time to look around,” Ted added.

“Yes. But to change the subject, I’m thinking we need a chair or two in here. I don’t want to be in Marthe’s way downstairs. I think we’ll get along better if we can have some time to ourselves. That doesn’t mean I don’t like her, because the opposite is true.”

“Yes. Something like the wing-back chairs.”

“Pity we didn’t ship them,” Maud said.

“Have to see what’s available here.”

At the time, I’d given up temporarily on reading *Le Devoir*. It wasn’t too bad to read, but subjects like Québec politics left me flat given I didn’t know any of the context. And as I learned later, there was lots of context. Instead, I was writing in my notebook. I’d already been using it to keep a journal of sorts. Not so much a diary, though it eventually had a lot of that sort of thing, but more notes on what I was discovering or wanted to learn more about. Its entries so far were in pencil and quite short. I think that Agnes’ fountain pen was the little push I needed to write more meaningful notes. The journal has been key to writing this memoir. “For sure!” in the local sense.

* * *

We spent Thursday window shopping in downtown Montreal. We looked at some winter clothing and boots for each of us and noted what we liked and the prices. We did buy our own French-English dictionary, I think primarily for me as Ted and Maud felt I would need it. My old dictionary was French only, and very tattered. Neither it nor the new one likely had much of the local argot. There was a lot of local slang I thought, some of which I’d heard,

possibly in slurred form. But then there were parts of England where you needed to be a linguist to comprehend things.

Our outing was also useful to get to know the city a little. We also went in Woolworths on Ste. Catherine and got two dozen Christmas cards. That would be an activity this evening. While we could only think off-hand of about a dozen recipients, there's always someone else that you remember later. Maud said she would get stamps tomorrow.

In the late afternoon before supper we made a grocery list with Marthe, using the advertisements in the Gazette and La Presse, which I'd been bought to read. A bit less up-scale than Le Devoir.

The groceries had to be increased in quantity from Marthe's usual purchases. With five of us, more would be consumed. It was also clear that when Maud would cook, the choices would be different. This could be an issue, but seemed more likely to simply widen the food perspective for us all.

While the three adults were sorting out the shopping list, Lise and I were cutting into a pumpkin. In England I don't think any of us had ever seen this melon-like fruit or vegetable.

"C'est l'Halloween," Marthe said.

In their fractured French, Ted and Maud explained that it was new to us, since it was a Scottish rather than English celebration. I'd actually never heard of it. However, we all found the resulting "Citrouille d'Halloween" with a candle inside to light up his macabre face quite interesting. Later we learned that this was "Jack o' lantern" in English.

Ted was disappointed he would be working and could not join the Friday shopping as he wanted to become familiar with products and prices. Though Maud had told him about her experiences on Tuesday, he hadn't quite appreciated how shopping was very different from England, and being able to select the vegetables from the pile meant none of the bruised or mis-shapen ones. The barrow boys in the markets always had a good selection at the front of the barrow, but always took items from the rear when giving you a requested item. And they insisted that you not touch the produce.

* * *

Friday was a meatless day, and apparently by government decree as well as Catholic tradition. Today was going to be tuna casserole. That would be new to us, but it was apparently popular here. It turned out that we enjoyed it, and it was a dish tolerant of variation and, moreover, useful if time of eating were uncertain.

Ted started work this Friday, which was November 1. After dinner, when Marthe and Lise had gone out to visit a neighbour, we all talked of fish and

chips, and wondered where they could be had. They seemed to be unknown here. Surely not. We'd have to ask around. Actually, it turned out that they weren't that common. Even today, well over a half-century later, you have to look for them in Montreal. Not difficult to find, just not as obvious as elsewhere in Canada.

"Of course, we are almost a 1,000 miles from the ocean," Ted said.

"Really. That far. But the ships come here," Maud said.

"Think of a very, very, very long Southampton Water. Actually the St. Lawrence here is fresh water I think," Ted said.

I jumped in "Actually at the Ile d'Orléans just east of Québec is where the salt and fresh water meet." They both wondered where I had read that. So did I, actually.

"That explains some of the lines on the Plimsoll mark on ships," Ted mused. "Salt water is more dense."

I asked what a Plimsoll mark was, and did it have to do with shoes.

"No. Nothing to do with what they call sneakers here – I saw some in Eatons. It's a mark on the side of ships to show when they are fully loaded. The supercargo – the man who looks after loading – is supposed to make sure the ship doesn't ride lower than an appropriate level on the Plimsoll mark, which has lines higher on the hull for hotter, fresher water."

After Maud and I got groceries Friday morning, we had smelled baking bread and, following our noses, found a small shop that advertised and was clearly producing bagels. We didn't know what they were, but bought half a dozen.

Unable to resist, we each munched one going down the street, then I went back for another half dozen so we had some to share with Marthe, Lise and Ted. Ted said he could imagine they tasted even better hot. I'd agree with that.

Ted was tired after his first day at work, but it had gone well. He said he'd telephoned Michael McPhee, who was the other Canadian he and Maud had met in Derby. Michael was at Canadair, whose offices were over at the Cartierville airport. A car was needed to get there, and Ted wasn't yet sure how that was arranged, so he made an indeterminate future meeting promise. I wondered how I could get to go along. I rather wanted to see all I could of this new country.

* * *

We walked all over the "Mountain" on Saturday during the day despite the sporadic rain. It had rained on Friday too. Saturday evening we went to the cinema – correction "movies". We offered to take Lise, but she wasn't sure

she'd understand, and besides she and Marthe were going to visit a friend in Outremont and have dinner there. That we were on our own for supper was actually helpful, as Ted and I had a little present for Maud – it was her 35th birthday. And now she looked that age, not the tired and seemingly aged woman who'd rented Ted a room last February and who I remembered looking lost and at the end of her tether.

I had found some small cupcakes at a bakery and managed to make some tiny candles by melting some candle wax around some string. Just one on each cupcake, and they burned rather unevenly, but Ted brought them in quickly to the room that had the big table where we were eating. And we gave Maud a locket Ted had found at the crater of his old house. He said it wasn't one he recognized, so may have been lost by someone other than Agnes or Peggy. It was open when he found it and the hinge was bent and the chain broken, and he actually only found it when he dug up the raspberries to transplant. It was lurking beside one of the canes. The raspberries had given us some fruit in the summer – a bit of brightness against the grey. In fact, that garden had done rather well for us and improved our meals immensely.

Ted had fixed up the locket at work at Supermarine with a bit of advice from one of the machinists who had a lot of extra skills. Ted and I had had an extra copy of photos of Jeremy and Jenny made and we put them in the locket in anticipation of Maud's birthday. When we gave it to Maud, she was a bit weepy but it was clear she liked it. "I've a bit of Jenny's hair. I'll put it behind her photo. Thank you both for this."

At the pictures – I guess we should say movies now – we saw *Brief Encounter* with Celia Johnson and Trevor Howard. It was a good film, but I found it a bit dismal. Trevor Howard is good looking, but was he worth messing things up for? Perhaps I'm not old enough to understand that yet, or else I'm too calculating. Is that the expression. *Calculating* seems to mean *devious* or *evil*. I just mean that I add up the pros and cons. *Additive* doesn't have much to commend it, though.

We were starting to know our new city. And we were together, we had a roof over our head, Ted had a good job. We were going to have different lives than a year ago. I hoped everything would work out.

Differences could take you by surprise. Coming out of the movie, there was a policeman standing on the corner. Just a cop on his beat. But I found the gun on his belt to be a shock, even after all the guns and bombs of the past few years. In England, coppers didn't carry guns. It was a sort of strange honour system that almost all of the crooks respected too. Here was clearly different.

* * *

On Thursday morning Ted had telephoned Mr. Green at the bank at 9:30. He figured that it would be better to call before opening. He wanted to arrange to talk about schools for me, since Mr. Green had offered.

Ted – and later Maud and I – got a surprise when we learned Mr. Green was meeting a man named Nate Ronen – my surname – at 12:30 on Sunday at the *Snowdon Deli* on Decarie. It seems we could achieve two goals at once.

So there was an air of excitement on Sunday November 3. And there was wet snow! A lot, but it melted on hitting the ground.

The *Snowdon Deli* was an interesting restaurant, if it could be called that. We found Mr. Green outside and he ushered us in and we found a booth. Booths were new to us, with the leatherette benches and the smooth tables in what we learned was called arborite.

“I recommend the smoked meat sandwiches,” Green said.

However, before we could order, one of the men behind the counter came over and said to Ted “Don’t I know you from somewhere? I’m Joe Morantz, by the way. My brother and I set up this place when we got back from the War.”

“I’m Ted Newman. And you do look familiar Oh. I remember.”

At the same time, so did Joe. They both said “Teniers Square.” Loudly enough that other patrons looked at them. So did Maud, Green and I.

Joe said “You held that Belgian guy’s head out of the water so he didn’t drown while I and some woman got that light post off his legs, then we carried him up the street to where an Army medic was trying to see who he could save.”

“Yes. Do you think that man survived?” Ted asked.

“Dunno, but we did all that we could.”

“Yes. I’m afraid it still gives me bad dreams,” Ted admitted.

“Yeah. Me too. I didn’t see the bomb go off. Came up ten minutes later.”

“I was right behind the convoy. Saw more than I wanted to.”

“Well. I’d better get back behind the counter or there’ll be unhappy customers, but leave me your address and phone before you go. And your check’s on the house. Maybe we can catch up some time when this place doesn’t need my full attention.”

“Ted and Joe were witnesses to a V-2 strike on Teniers Square in Antwerp in Autumn 1944,” Maud said after he had gone back to his place behind the counter. “There was a convoy of vehicles going through when it blew up and many were killed and injured, and a water main broke so the street flooded.”

“I can understand the horror,” Green said. “I missed serving because I’m actually blind in one eye. The glasses tend to mean people don’t notice that I can’t see out of the left one, and it looks more or less normal.

Ah, here’s Nate Ronen.”

“Hi there Zack,” said a man in his fifties who had come in and was standing beside the table. Wiry, balding, with hands that clearly worked on something or other. He shook hands with Green. We were all introduced and Ronen sat beside Green, while the three of us took the opposite side of the booth. In England it would have been a squeeze, but these booths were quite large.

A waiter came and we all ordered smoked meat sandwiches. Maud and I asked for tea, Green, Ronen and Ted coffee. In London, I’d ordered coffee, but I found the Canadian coffee a little thin.

The minor drama with Joe Morantz was recounted for Nate, then the story of how Ted and Maud came to adopt me.

By this time, we had our sandwiches, which for those of us who had experienced wartime meat shortages were quite unbelievable.

Maud said “I keep expecting the police to arrive and arrest us for black market food. But these are so good!”

The approval was reflected all round.

Nate said “I’ll have to ask around, but I think Paule’s father is a second cousin of mine or something like that. Actually, it really doesn’t matter these days. Like Ted and Maud, we’ve lost people, and we’ll just make our families out of those of us who are here.

“I don’t know how much Paule wants to learn about her Jewish heritage, but I’m sure we can find people to provide information for her. I really don’t practise the rules, nor go to synagogue. But I’m hooked into the community. And if you need a suit, or need a suit altered, I’m a tailor.”

Green said “The other reason we’re here is to talk about schooling for Paule. She went to a Catholic primary school in England and would be starting what we call grade 8 in a secondary school there.”

“So you speak French pretty well, but all your schooling was in English, right?” Nate asked.

“Yes,” I said. “I find it hard to read *La Presse* or *Le Devoir*, but I think I should read them to improve my language. I only used to write with Tante Mathilde when we wrote to my parents, but that stopped in 1942 when I was about 8. And in any case, she would help fix my grammar and spelling.”

Ted said “We’ve got the impression that the French schooling here is not very well-suited to help young people in modern life.”

Green said “I hope I’m not showing prejudice, but I think that the Ultramontes – those who believe Catholic education is the sole route to maintain French-Canadian values – are mistaken. They even veered in recent years towards support of Nazism. But for Paule there is a serious issue of whether pursuit of French via the French schools here is worthwhile. That is, if looked at without any reference to language, is the education a good one. It may be more sensible to get as good an education as possible, then pursue French

afterwards, possibly in France.”

“And what opportunities are there in the Protestant system?” Maud asked.

Nate said “It’s more or less an English or maybe Scottish system. There is a Jewish People’s School, but it doesn’t cover high school, so the Jewish kids go to the Protestant ones and recite the Lord’s Prayer anyway. They do a bit of Anglican ritual, but don’t seem to push a religious line outside of that. I think some English-speaking Catholics send their kids there because otherwise their chances of good jobs are limited.”

Green added “If the priests know you’re Catholic, you may get some fuss from them, but I don’t think they can do very much about it.

“There is the Loyola High School, but I’m almost certain it’s not for girls. It’s kind of the feeder school for Loyola College which is for English Catholics. I think it grants degrees through an affiliation with the Université de Montréal. Most anglos go to McGill, of course.”

Ted said “I can claim to be Church of England if we need. Is that called Anglican here?”

“Yes. Anglican Church of Canada,” Green acknowledged.

Ted continued “I’ll still support Maud and Paule in whatever religion they follow. Well, as long as it espouses caring for all and leading a good life.”

“World would be a better place if more people felt that way,” Nate said.

Despite Joe Morantz’ offer of a free lunch, we left a enough to cover the bill – or should it be check?

* * *

Maud decided to simply go with me to the High School of Montreal. Perhaps this rather direct approach was the reason that I started there the following Wednesday. The girls’ section of the School was separate from that of the boys. I quickly learned how to get there by tram – I mean street car – and by the end of the week was starting to fall into a routine. The journey took about an hour each way, however. I’d spend a good bit of time travelling.

The School followed a 12 grade system, and, based on my age and past schooling, I was put into Grade 8. It seemed that there was no central ministry of education, so different schools had different curricula and books and grade systems. My teacher gave me a list of things to read, and actually lent me some materials. When I mentioned that I was trying to get a library card, the teacher, a Miss A. Rutledge, had the list of remedial reading typed

and sent by post addressed to Maud and I with reference to Paule Ronen – a form of identification that got all of us library cards.

I was determined to do well, and worked hard each evening with the remedial study. I even worked out a schedule in my notebook and was going to grind through it. A week or so later, Maud told me that Ted had said my tenacity both surprised and inspired him. I hope I could justify his confidence.

For me, a concrete outcome was that Maud and Ted looked in the Gazette and found a desk lamp. It wasn't cheap, but they got it for me so I wouldn't try to read in the imperfect light of the single central bulb in my bedroom.

Marthe was apparently impressed, too. I had my door open – it helped to circulate the heat from the furnace because the vents put air into the rooms, but it had to circulate back down the stairwell. With the door open, I overheard Marthe say “Paule donne un bon exemple. Lise a commencé à être plus assidue dans ses devoirs.” [*Paule gives a good example. Lise is starting to work harder at her homework.*]

* * *

November 11. Remembrance Day

Ted said TCA was going to start work at 1:30 in the afternoon, except for Brian, who manned the office in case something critical was needed. Ted was planning to go to the 11 o'clock ceremony at the Cenotaph on Peel Street. Unfortunately it was pouring rain. Ted had kept his uniform, but had used it for gardening, since the so-called blouse was warm. But it had been through rather a lot since before Normandy, and it wasn't presentable for a ceremony and was in one of the tea chests as working clothing. Ted simply had one of his RAF badges on his raincoat.

Besides the rain, it was cool enough on this day that Ted commented that he'd better think of a better overcoat for Canadian weather, and changed his mind about going to the ceremony.

Maud and I had previously decided not to join Ted at the Cenotaph. We decided instead, with Marthe and Lise, to listen to the ceremony on the CBC, actually the version with French commentary. Ted joined us and we listened quietly. Then he went out into the wet to catch his bus, which was on reduced schedule to add to the misery. We learned later that with the wait for the bus, he arrived wet and bedraggled to the office. However, Maud had made him some sandwiches, and despite arriving near to half past one, he did have something to eat. Most of the office "brown bagged it" anyway, he said. Unlike England, most people ate their main meal at night. That actually suited us. And there weren't the works canteens of the UK. There

was the possibility of finding something in the coffee shop at the terminal building, but it was some distance from the office. Moreover, the cost of lunch there – it was, after all, an airport coffee shop – would eat into money useful for other things.

* * *

On November 21, there was a message for Ted at work that our chests had arrived and could be collected the next day. We would need to bring our shipping documents and a means of conveyance. Fifty had already told us he'd lend a truck and a driver, and arranged we'd be picked up at 8 a.m. at home and get to work late. Ted told Remy to expect him sometime around 11, hopefully.

I went along, and Ted was glad I did. Ted wrote a note for the School that I was needed to help collect our belongings from the port.

The truck was let into the dockyard based on our showing the shipping documents and we were told to proceed to a numbered doorway on the long dock shed. Inside a customs agent looked at the documents and led us to the chests.

“What's inside that one?” he asked.

Ted had fortunately numbered the chests and had a list.

“Saucepans, cutlery, eiderdown, blankets, curtains, ...”

“Let's check.” The customs agent nodded to another man who had a crowbar and who roughly popped off the top of the chest. There was the eiderdown. The agent pulled at it and discovered the bottom of a saucepan.

“OK” He chalked it. Then under his breath “Encore un maudit anglais,” as he moved to another chest.

I was cross with him for that. I said “Pourquoi "maudit anglais" monsieur? Mon père est vraiment anglais, mais il m'a adopté après les allemands ont tué mes parents aux camps d'extermination. Et moi, je suis originalement française.” [*Why "damned English" sir? My father is truthfully English, but he adopted me after the Germans killed my parents in the extermination camps. And me, I am originally French.*]

“Alors, ma petite, je me trompe. Bonne chance ici à Montréal.” [*All right, dear, my mistake. Good luck here in Montreal.*]

And he chalked the other chests.

* * *

The next day, Saturday November 23, it was below freezing all day,

Nevertheless, we had made up our minds and were going to buy coats and boots. Ted had withdrawn \$100 from the bank to make sure we had enough to buy what we needed. Between Eaton's, Morgan's and other stores we ended up spending a good deal of that. We rode the street-car home with many others, all of us carrying several parcels. Maud and Ted had bought themselves galoshes. Ted had found some "dress" ones as well as some that were more like boots and had felt lining too. Ted considered getting some boots alone, but the overboots would be easier for the office. It was harder for us women to choose overboots that worked with different styles of shoes, especially different types of heels. We eventually bought me a pair of winter boots. I'd been talking to Lise and saw what she used, and my boots were similar to what I'd seen her wearing. We discussed getting me a second pair, then decided to get one pair now, since it might be essential, but to look for bargains in the newspapers or in some of the smaller shops.

We got Maud some overboots that fitted her low-heeled shoes that she had deliberately selected for today, she and I having had a conversation and "show and tell" with Marthe and Lise. We'd definitely want to look for some true boots for Maud if we were going to be outside walking. The heeled overboots might keep the snow off her feet, but would not be good for walking far. Canadians seemed to use their cars a lot.

Ted found a nice hat for himself when Maud picked it up and said "Ted, look at the ear flaps on this hat."

"Didn't have those in England. I'm going to get it."

That prompted toques for Maud and I, then we decided to each have one, Ted included, and decided to get them in in matching patterns as a family winter uniform. We already had some woollen scarves from England. A little old and faded, but still functional.

We got me a nice coat in a so-called "high-school" pattern in wool, but with a lining, and we got Ted a moleskin coat with a lining, called "sheeplined", but very unlikely to be a sheepskin. This coat had some leather in the sleeves to keep out the wind.

Selecting the size for me took some discussion. I was still growing, so we needed to allow for that, but also not have the coat so large that I was swimming in it. After a few had been tried on, we found one that had plenty of room but did not look like I was wearing a tent.

Finding a coat for Maud was our most difficult task. We looked at a fake Persian Lamb coat for about \$35 compared to the real thing at over ten times as much. Ted said that maybe later he'd get her a fur. I thought they looked really nice. Real fur was apparently very warm if the style allowed it to be closed against the wind. Maud said that she'd heard that furs had to be specially stored in summer, and cleaned. Lots of extra expense.

Before Ted bought the moleskin coat, he had tried on some Mackinaw ones, and Maud liked them a lot.

“Why don’t you try one on?” he suggested.

“But they’re men’s coats.”

“Let’s see if there are women’s versions.”

It turned out there were, but they were not as thick or well-made.

“It’s not fair that men’s things are so much better made and better suited to the outdoors,” Maud complained.

“So let us go back and, as I’ve suggested, try on one of the men’s ones.”

The men’s coats were too big for her, but I said “What about a boy’s coat? I saw some in Eatons.”

Back we went and found one that was a dollar cheaper than either the men’s or women’s versions we’d seen, and it was solidly made. It wasn’t as long as most overcoats. In fact, we heard someone call the length a "car coat".

“You may need slacks or tights when it’s really cold,” Ted said.

“Yes. I think we should get a pair of tights each for Paule and I. Will you want long underwear?”

“Let’s get me one pair, but not the all-in-ones that we saw in the newspaper advertisement. I can’t see myself with the rear flap.”

Maud and I laughed, but I don’t think we would have let Ted buy the old-fashioned undergarment.

Eatons seemed to be as good a source as any for tights, which were our last purchase for the day. We had some gloves from England, but had plans to get some gloves and mittens at Woolworths or some similar store soon.

That would be later. Now we went to the Eaton’s store restaurant on the 9th floor.

“What a place!” Maud exclaimed. It had a high ceiling and art deco design with a large mural at one end.

“Yes, quite a place,” Ted agreed. I was more or less speechless at the sight. After all, I’d never been in such a big store – the ones in Southampton were all blown to bits before I got to see them. I had seen a few buildings of the size in London – ones that escaped the blitz – but our tour was on a Sunday. So this was new to me, and I was more or less silent taking it in.

We had to wait a few minutes for a table. Like others, we had a lot of parcels. I had a grilled cheese sandwich and a malted milk. I’d heard about malted milk at school, and found I really liked it. Ted decided to have a hamburger. Very American. Perhaps North American? He found he liked it, and could put on relish and ketchup or mustard. Maud chose a chicken salad sandwich. Both Ted and Maud ordered coffee to drink. Here, what was called cream for coffee did not taste right in tea, and we hadn’t yet

discovered that many places would offer ordinary milk on request. Still, we were adapting.

* * *

Monday November 25, a truck (I used to say lorry) delivered the Merlin engine from Nigel to TCA at Dorval. Ted saw it come in, and later went over to the test area where it had been uncrated and put on a test stand. When he came home from work, he told us it looked to be in good condition, so much so that the head technician told Ted he thought initially it was brand new. However, it had to be tested on something called a dynamometer the next day before it could be accepted and Ted – I guess that really is all of our family – will be paid.

Thankfully, Nigel had done an excellent job, and the test was flawless. That Tuesday afternoon, Ted exchanged an invoice for 450 pounds for a cheque for \$1800. He even decided to take a taxi to the bank to deposit it. The taxi saved him waiting for the bus in the wet snow in Dorval and made sure he was at the bank before they closed.

That night Ted wrote to Nigel to tell him the good news, though there'd probably be a more formal letter from TCA, but likely direct from the engine technical department. At the moment, TCA had a few engines on hand for the Lancastrians, and it would be some months before the North Stars came into service. The North Star, or Canadair DC-4M, was the Douglas four-engine airliner with Merlin v-12 engines instead of Pratt and Whitney twin Wasp radials. Still, Nigel stood a good chance of getting more sales, though our family would not be involved. The North Star as well as its DC-4 twin proved reliable workhorses, though the Merlin made the North Star noisy enough that TCA developed a special exhaust system that made it quieter and which other operators adopted too.

* * *

C Rushworth
Solicitor
Woolston, England
Nov 30, 1946

E Newman, Esq.
687 25e Avenue
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Dear Mr. Newman,

Thank you for forwarding your address by air mail. It turns out to be timely, as our enquiry about reconstruction procedures has elicited a response from the Council asking if you would be willing to sell your parcel of land in Bitterne. They have been rather cautious and not suggested an amount, but I am relatively sure 100 pounds would be possible.

If you wish, I can act for you if you can get a witnessed signature to the enclosed document allowing me to act for you. There is a place to put the minimum amount you would be willing to accept.

So you will not be surprised, my fees and disbursements will likely be somewhere between 7 and 10 pounds. As you are aware, funds cannot easily be sent to you, but I can deposit monies to your bank account here, as we have already discussed. Indeed, we have your bank information on file, and you told me that Mr. MacKenzie had been informed.

My sincere best wishes for you and your family.

Yours sincerely,

C. Rushworth, Solicitor

* * *

C Rushworth
Solicitor
Woolston, England

Nov 30, 1946

Miss P Ronen
687 25e Avenue
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Dear Miss Ronen,

I have just written to your father, Mr. Newman, about his house, and was reminded of your background. This letter is to explain some work I am doing more from a personal than professional perspective. We already had you sign an (English) power of attorney about your parents' property and that of your late aunt.

My wife, like you, was born in France, and has some claim to certain property there. As with your case, someone has gained control of this property, and I intend to investigate whether it may be recuperated. This will entail travel and communication, with some administrative or legal proceedings and their costs. To be honest, it is quite likely there will be nothing to show for these efforts.

Nevertheless, I believe that cases such as these deserve at least an attempt to correct the wrong-doing. I will repeat here in writing what we discussed before. That is, I am prepared to add your case to that of my wife and (so far) one other person. To document the effort, I will be keeping a detailed record of my actions and costs, but will guarantee that my bill will not exceed half of anything I recover. This will, I will repeat as I do not wish to raise expectations, likely be nought.

I have prepared duplicate copies of a letter of permission that is in French to allow me to act on your behalf. I have signed both. Assuming you wish me to follow up your case, please sign both copies, and have either or both your adoptive parents do so as well, with a witness, and return one copy to me. The other is for your records. Note that I

already have copies of most other documents, but if you think of or acquire any useful information to aid the investigation, do write to me.

In any event, my best wishes for your future,

Yours sincerely,

C. Rushworth, Solicitor

All of us wanted to learn more about what had happened to my parents – Mama and Papa, not Ted and Maud. We signed the document with Marthe as witness, and sent it off Air Mail as soon as we could.

* * *

December 5, 1946

We'd been in Montreal just over a month now, and I was in bed at 10 p.m. when I heard Ted and Maud turn out the light. There was a low buzz of them talking to each other. A couple of times in the morning when I'd asked if they were ready for breakfast, they said "Not quite, but come in so we can plan the day," or something like that. When I'd gone in in my pyjamas and dressing gown, they were usually lying together, with Maud tucked into Ted's arm. They weren't kissy, which I suppose I would have found awkward and embarrassing like most kids my age. On the other hand, I'm not sure how many parents are comfortable allowing children to see their affection. I can't think I'd talk about this to any of my schoolmates. However, I found their obvious comfort in each other and with me very reassuring.

When I was at school, on the bus, or with Marthe and Lise or anyone else, I was careful to present as strong an appearance as I could. Inside I often felt very soft and jelly-like. My family – my biological family – had all disappeared. I wasn't quite sure what was left. Ted and Maud had been amazing. I was determined to show them a full measure of love and support. They, too, were dealing with this ghastly disappearance of people they'd loved. A sudden breaking their emotional foundation. They were probably putting on a strong front too.

I couldn't really make out what they were saying to each other, but I know Maud was trying to make some sense of our – particularly her – situation in the house. With Marthe as the chatelaine, Maud was, to use

the French that was coming back to me *de trop*. This bothered her, as she wanted to be useful but not in the way.

Since it was Marthe's house, she wasn't really a housewife, and figuring out who should do what wasn't easy? She wondered if she should look for a job. She and Marthe got on well. Their common experience of widowhood gave them an understanding and imperative of kindness.

Maud was also picking up quite a lot of French words and expressions, and it was clear that she'd be able to manage, though likely never truly be taken for *une Québécoise*. Still, she knew that the household didn't need two women in the kitchen most of the time preparing meals. It might be better under a different arrangement.

I was talking with Ted one day and we both realized we didn't really know what Maud had done at Thorneycrofts during the War. Ted had asked her one evening when I was doing homework and he told me later that she had been part of a team that made some components of the landing craft they built for D-Day and after. She apparently did measurements to calculate if the parts had the right strength. Things like the latches on the drop-down ramps. Some company engineers and a man from Southampton University College developed some templates for the different calculations, and they used some mechanical calculators.

When Ted asked if it were interesting or just tedious, Maud said "A bit of both, I suppose."

Maud was considering volunteer work to help DPs – displaced persons, of whom there were several millions floating around Europe in different camps and other situations. But I think she really wanted paid work, and also to work out an arrangement with Marthe to benefit us all, including Marthe and Lise.

Another matter that was occupying our thoughts and conversations was where to go to church. We'd been going with Marthe and Lise to Saints-Anges. The Latin Mass meant Ted and Maud didn't miss much, and I found I generally could understand the priest, even when it was the one with the strong accent. There was some concern that the priest might raise some objections to my going to the High School.

I think Maud was wondering if I were re-evaluating my Catholicism because I asked if they minded if I talked to Nate Ronen. Actually Nate wasn't devout at all. I was more interested in the cultural and historical aspects of the Jewish community. On the other hand, I was getting to be rather annoyed with the priests telling people what to do and think and generally trying to decide their lives for them. And, like Ted, I was starting to be prepared to decide for myself whether I believed something. I found I could understand how Ted accepted something like the Eucharist as a matter of belief for many people. He didn't need to believe in it himself to respect the

beliefs of others.

Maud even told me she was wondering about her own religious feelings. She said she liked the community at St. Patrick's in Woolston, but thought that if the congregation were a bit different, the Irish priests (Walsh had a pronounced accent) it might be a lot like here, where the priest is kind of a local dictator. Maud said she liked time to pray, and liked the liturgy. I felt the same. She also said "I can't get very exercised about different theological issues, though. Maybe, something like Ted, I don't have the gift of faith. But so far here I've not been to Confession, in part because of the language thing, but also because it doesn't seem so important any more."

Ted had pointed out that St. Pat's in the centre of town was an English church. I decided not to suggest it was actually Irish. Somehow we kept going to Saints-Anges, and the priests, at least for the time being, said nothing.

I did talk to Nate. Maud had noted that the telephone here in Montreal did not charge for local calls. It didn't cost per time as in England.

Ted said he found it hard to get his head around that. Yes. It wasn't second nature to us to telephone.

On the evening of December 5, we were talking about these things up in the front bedroom, and Maud said "At least the priest won't complain about Paule's missing a holy day of obligation on the 8th, since it's Sunday."

Ted answered "Yes. We'd better keep trying to treat Paule as a young woman who is capable of her own choices, not as a girl.

"You know, talking of holy days, tomorrow is St. Nicholas, where we get the Santa Claus from."

"Really?"

"Yes. The Dutch say Sinterklaas. It's when Dutch kids get sweets and presents, or when they did before the War. You'll remember I said there was a woman who wanted food for her kids."

"The one who offered to ... er ... be friendly with you?" Maud blushed.

"I know some women offered themselves to get food," I said. I was pretty sure Ted hadn't taken up the offer, and some months later, Maud told me he had been shocked at the woman's desperation and gave her food without a trade.

In any event, Ted skated over the awkward ideas and said "Yes. Part of the food I gave her was a bit of dolly mixture and barley sugar that somehow was on the lorries. Two years ago tonight. Seems a lot further away."

"Perhaps that's something to be thankful for," Maud said.

"Yes. You know, I actually committed a crime by giving away government property. Could have been court martialed. Well, if it meant those kiddies survived, I'd plead guilty a dozen times."

"Talking of crimes, I got the sovereigns out of the curtains," Maud said. I'd actually helped her, so I knew about the extra few pounds we'd smuggled

out. We'd put them in Ted's tin box where we kept documents. "I wonder if we'll need to use those thick curtains anytime soon. The double windows seem to stop the draughts. Never would have thought it would be so much more comfortable here when it's freezing outside."

* * *

Calgary, AB

Dec 2, 1946

Dear Ted,

It seems you are getting on very well in Montreal. I'm glad to hear this. Canada offers lots of opportunities, but it is very different from England. I know Caroline and I found it took us some time to adapt and discover the beauty and comforts of the country.

I (Joseph) have been busy with the change-over from streetcars, that is, trams, to electric trolley-buses. We also have a number of more or less standard motor-buses, but our fleet is pre-war, so we have a lot of maintenance, as well as some new buses on order.

As you will have realized, Canada is very large. I'm hoping either we can get east or you west in the coming year.

Caroline is going to put some news of the family overleaf, as I must run to a work meeting.

Best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

Joseph and Caroline

* * *

December 14, 1946, Saturday

Today was going to be a Christmas shopping day. That's how we referred to it, though in our little trio, we had decided that there was a \$1.50 limit to spend on presents for each other. On the other hand, we were going to buy a radio for ourselves.

We'd had a rather careful chat with Fifty about how Christmas would take place, as we felt that we were, in many respects, intruders. It turned out Marthe had talked to Fifty as well, feeling the same awkwardness. She and Lise had been invited to the house of Marthe and Denise's parents in Lachute, a town some miles away. Fifty and Denise were going to go there too, which posed its own diplomatic issues, given that Fifty was still waiting for his divorce. There were a number of other relatives – we had some trouble working out all the names and relationships – and there were going to be mattresses and cushions all over the large farmhouse. They would all go to midnight Mass then have the reveillon meal that featured a meat pie called *tourtière*. Marthe and Maud were going to make some, so we'd get to try it too, but probably not eat it at one in the morning.

The Gagnon's were concerned that we would be alone for Christmas, but we were actually relieved to be able to have a quiet Christmas, as we had found the last couple of months quite hectic, and a quiet day would be welcome. However, we did plan a bit of a private celebration with Fifty, Denise, Marthe and Lise on the 21st – the Solstice. And we'd use the occasion to set up a Christmas tree – just a small one, as there wasn't a lot of room.

As part of this Solstice celebration, Maud and I made some cheese straws and mince pies to complement the *tourtière* we would have as our savoury course. A real trans-national and trans-cultural mixture of items, along with some gingerbread that seemed to belong to everyone and no-one.

Ted suggested, and Maud and I agreed, that we would give Fifty and Denise the bottle of whiskey we'd got in London – Ted said single malt, which I'd have to ask him about so I knew how it was different from other whiskey. The brandy we would keep for ourselves. But Fifty had found us housing, and had helped us move the tea chests, and got us up and running in our new country.

Lise had seen us writing letters and seemed very intrigued by our fountain pens. In the whole house when we arrived, there were just pencils and a couple of old straight pens. Possibly no ink. I saw a Waterman fountain pen at Eaton's for \$2 and we got that and a bottle of ink and added in one of our Fruit and Nut bars. They weren't available here. Dommage!

When shopping for the pen, Ted noticed the new Eversharp pens that didn't have a nib, but used a ball point. These were pretty expensive – about as much as a regular week's wage. If they came down in price, they'd probably become more popular than fountain pens.

A suitable present for Marthe was a challenge. Though we'd been living in her house with her for over a month, we didn't really know her tastes. Maud said "She's where I was when you arrived in Southampton last February. Emotionally frozen and running on automatic pilot. We've probably stirred things a little, and we've provided some measure of financial security for her. But we don't know what, if anything, would give her a particular joy."

I said "Lise said she used to go to shows with a folk singer called La Bolduc, who made a lot of recordings."

"You mean we get a radiogram, or what they often call a radio-phonograph here, rather than just a radio, then get Marthe some records?" Maud queried.

"Yes. Would that be possible?" I asked.

Ted said "They're rather expensive, and we'd have to figure out where to put it so Marthe could use it. Then the radio part would not be usable by us.

"But the general idea is a good one."

We talked some more, but at the end of the day had not found anything for Marthe.

* * *

"I bought a book for Marthe," I said Wednesday night.

"What did you get?" Maud asked.

"It's called *Pieds nus dans l'aube* by Félix Leclerc. He's a writer and poet and singer, except here they say *chansonnier*, which may mean he almost talks the songs. But Lise mentioned Marthe liked his programs on Radio-Canada, so when I saw the book in a small librairie – that's a bookshop here, and library is bibliothèque – I thought I'd buy it. I hope that's OK. It's only just come out."

"It's likely the best idea we've had yet," Ted offered, and in the event Marthe was delighted with it.

* * *

We went to Mass on Christmas morning. It was less well-attended than the usual Sunday Mass. We had heard that it was difficult to get a seat at midnight.

It was snowing as we walked to and from church, and quite cold, but we had our winter clothing and boots and managed all right, though some hot coffee when we came back was welcome.

Though we had planned to have our own Christmas dinner, using a quarter ham rather than a turkey, since we thought the latter too much for just the three of us, we'd had a telephone call early on Christmas Eve from Nate Ronen. I had called him once or twice, and we got on well, chatting about where the Ronens came from in eastern Europe. Nate asked if we had plans for the 25th – he didn't say Christmas – and we said we were going to have just the three of us.

“Hannah and I generally have a very quiet day. Our daughters are both married and live in New York city and Princeton, New Jersey. Why don't you come and have a meal with us?”

Ted said “Let me check that Maud and Paule haven't planned anything.” I don't know why he didn't just say yes, because Maud and I were nodding furiously. There was just a moment when he put his hand over the telephone microphone, then responded “Yes. We'd very much like to. Can we bring something to contribute to the meal? I know there may be some dietary rules.”

Clearly Nate said something, then Ted answered “We'll avoid those things,” then concluded the call. Then he said “Nate said they aren't strict, but avoid pork and shellfish. And for some reason suet, so mincemeat and Christmas pudding are out. Though he also said they always smell rather delicious.”

* * *

The streetcars were running, but on a Sunday schedule, so we got a little cold waiting for one. We got to the Ronen's apartment above his small tailor's shop around 2:30 and shed our coats and boots. Maud now had a pair of boots, but had brought some slippers she'd knitted, as had I.

We were introduced to Hannah, Nate's wife, and gave her our small contribution to the day, some of the cheese straws Maud had made – the first since 1939 – and some rock cakes. Neither seemed common here. Maud said apologetically “I'm afraid I'll have to ask for the tins back – they belong to Marthe, the woman whose house we live in.”

“That's OK. Changing country, you can't bring everything,” Hannah observed.

We were ushered into a cosy living room.

Ted said “This time last year, I only had my uniform and a few personal items. My civilian clothing went up with the V-1.”

It turned out that Nate hadn't shared our story with Hannah, and it got related.

“So you’re almost newlyweds. My goodness. Well, we’ll wish you well, and Paule as well, of course.”

Nate said “Is what you’re wearing one of the British demob suits?”

“Yes, I got this last February 7. The day I met Maud.”

Nate came over and felt the cloth and looked at the lining of the jacket.

“Good material and well-made, but the style is almost Chicago gangster.”

“Yes, I’m afraid so. The only other suit I have is one of Jeremy’s – Maud’s late husband. It doesn’t fit me perfectly, but I can get away with wearing it if nobody looks too closely.”

“Come and see me with it and it can probably be adjusted,” Nate said. We realized that was true.

Through the afternoon we chatted. Nate and Hannah brought out some photo albums and found a few old photos that might overlap with my side of the family. At one point, I commented that a man looked very much like Papa, but he was of at least one generation earlier. Ted made some notes of names and dates, but it was all a bit uncertain.

We ate dinner around 5, a very nice roast chicken.

Hannah asked “How are you finding things, Maud. Will you be happy as a housewife here?”

“With Marthe around and sharing the household duties, I’ve time on my hands. I’ve thought of looking for a job, or doing some volunteer work.”

Hannah said “Nathan. I think you should see if Maud might be able to help you out. We had a young man as a shop assistant – if Nate is working on a garment, it is an interruption when people come in the shop. But he joined the army, and we heard that he’s going to move to Toronto now he’s back, as he has a girl there he wants to marry.”

Nate said that it might work. “Maud. Did you adjust Paule’s skirt?”

“Yes. How did you know?”

“It’s done well, but the thread is a shade off in colour.”

“Yes. I had trouble finding the one I did use. Things in England were – still are – in short supply.”

“Here too, but getting better quickly. And there will be men home from serving who will want new suits. I’m thinking of opening Saturday, but I might not show my face then to avoid talk from the rabbis.”

It was decided Maud would try a few hours each week on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. The pay was not much, and Ted commented on the way home that he was not sure if Nate hadn’t offered as a form of charity. We’d see.

* * *

Also, on the 18th, Fifty had phoned us and said he'd been offered six tickets for the Canadiens - Maple Leafs hockey game on Boxing Day. Would we like to go with him, Denise and one of her cousins? Ted agreed, providing he let us pay Fifty for the tickets. He said OK and that they cost around two bucks each. Up in the gods, but he said it was a real Canadian thing you had to experience.

He gave us the tickets at our little party on the 21st, and since they would drive in from Lachute before the game, Maud, Ted and I would meet them in the seats. Maud found out about buses at the library – the schedule was reduced, but the librarian said that after the game there were usually extra buses and streetcars, but to have warm clothes in case there were a wait.

Fifty was right that it was an experience. We were amazed how fast the game was. I'd really not watched many sports, but Ted said it made football look very pedestrian. And rough. Just one minute into the game and Toronto player Gus Mortson got two minutes in the penalty box for something called "roughing". Montreal then had an extra player, though both teams had sixteen players in uniform with skates on, with six on the ice at once. All but the goaltender – in football I think it would be *goalkeeper* – kept changing. That probably helped keep them moving so fast.

Montreal didn't score during the advantage. It seemed that you couldn't shoot the puck all the way to the other end of the ice normally. If you did, the referee or linesman – I couldn't quite figure out who was who – would blow the whistle and there would be a face-off in your own end. But when you had a man in the penalty box, you could get rid of the puck, which would let you change tired players.

Soon after both teams had six players on the ice – only 3 and a half minutes into the game, Montreal's captain Toe Blake – an odd name that, apparently a nickname – scored. The noise in the Forum was deafening. Maud noticed – she had to shout in my ear – that the men were mostly in suits and the women dressed up. At the break – we made a mistake and said "half-time" but there were three 20-minute periods – Fifty said it was a Montreal tradition to dress up for the Habs games. Habs was another nickname. Ted said like "gunners" for the Arsenal football team or "Saints" for Southampton.

Though we didn't need it, Ted went with Fifty and got hot dogs during the intermission. They would have substantially exceeded the meat allowance limit in England. Canada definitely had some advantages for us.

We learned from chatter around us that Mortson – the player who got the first penalty, then another at the 12-minute mark that also got him ejected from the game with a misconduct – was the most penalized player in the league. But apart from the misconduct, there were three penalties to each

side in the first period alone.

Montreal won the game 4-1. I found I enjoyed watching. Later on, Maud admitted she liked it too, and listening to her, Ted realized she had a better eye than he did for how patterns on the ice were developing that could lead to goals or to good chances. I enjoyed the game and the experience, and found it interesting, but I don't think I'll get to be a regular spectator or take a really strong interest. However, I did say I'd like to learn how to skate. That seemed like something we could arrange.

* * *

As we rode home on the streetcar, I said "The ring Fifty gave Denise was really pretty."

"Yes, it was nice. It must have been expensive," Maud added.

Ted felt awkward that he hadn't noticed. Fifty had told him that he and Denise were anxious to get married. He was waiting for the divorce proceedings to be completed. There were, it seemed, a lot of marriages that had broken down with men away fighting. Well, with men away. In Canada the conscription rules supposedly required consent to be sent overseas. Apparently only 12000 conscripts fought overseas.

Then also there was the HMCS Uganda vote. If Ted had the story straight, after VE Day, the Canadian government said servicemen had to re-volunteer for the Pacific campaign and would get 30 days leave before they were sent. But Uganda was already in action. Still the ship took a vote, and 2/3 of the crew said they wanted out. Some comments suggest it was because the ship wasn't set up for tropical service and things were pretty miserable on board. Anyway, they stayed on for two months, then were on their way back to Canada when a boiler broke down. In Pearl Harbour there was resentment that they were "quitters", as the War hadn't ended, though this was about the time of the A-bombs.

Canada had some awkward differences between the different factions. We'd have to tiptoe through a new sort of minefield to avoid trouble for ourselves.

No doubt Fifty and Denise had similar delicate matters to worry about. Divorce wasn't contemplated in French-Canadian families. Nor was living together. And an anglo and a franco under one roof? We were beginning to learn the sub-texts of conversations.

* * *

Saturday, December 28, 1946

Maud decided she wanted to lie in, but for some reason the rest of the household was up by 8 o'clock, and having some toast and coffee in lieu of breakfast. Outside it was cold and there was a bit of snow falling.

I said "Can we go and see if the river is frozen over?"

For some reason, Ted and I decided just to do that, but Marthe and Lise wanted to clear up some of the leftover turkey they'd brought back from Lachute. They also wanted to clear out other odds and ends to make space in the refrigerator. Ted and I dressed warmly and were out the door by 8:30. Another walk to water, like we'd done to Southampton Water last Spring.

"Look. It's mostly frozen over," I exclaimed.

"But I gather it's very dangerous to walk on, even when parts are thick ice, other parts are weak," Ted responded, not recalling who had told him that.

"Yes. We got a warning at school the other week. There are stories about people skating on the river, but now I think most skating is on prepared rinks like the one we walked by in the park."

"You said you'd like to try skating," Ted commented.

"Yes. Lise and I have started to look for skates for me."

"Have you got enough money?"

"Of course I do. You know I took fifteen dollars out of the bank the other week, and not spent five yet."

"Good for you, Paule."

"Maybe we should say 'Good for us.'" I think I sounded pensive or uncertain.

"Yes. I think we've done well. I hope you don't feel too ... oh, I'm not sure how to say this ... perhaps mixed up is the expression. What I mean is, all the changes in your life – our lives – in the last year could be pretty overwhelming."

"I suppose so." I said this softly, then we were quiet for a few minutes, just watching the river, which still had some open channels where moving water could be seen. Ted had captured exactly what made me feel wobbly inside.

I said "I actually think I'm more settled now than a year ago. Then I was worried about Tante Mathilde. You know, was she getting ... in England they sometimes say 'dotty' which sort of hides the sadness of getting ... is the word 'senile'?"

"Yes, that must have been worrying for you."

"It was. Especially as I'd heard nothing about my parents, but as I told you, I'd dreamt that they were dead, and somehow I'd accepted that. But I didn't know what would happen to me, and that had me very scared."

"I think both Maud and I realized that."

“Ted. Was that why you and Maud got married? For me?”

“Like we said when we suggested we become a family, it pushed the timing forward. I think Maud and I would eventually have got together. Your situation – or really lack of a situation – just advanced things. And, you know, it’s really been a good thing. I’ve found I really love Maud and get along with her.”

“Did you not get along with Agnes?”

“Yes. We had a good relationship. A good marriage. But each person is different, and I suspect each marriage. Each family.”

“I don’t remember my French family much. That bothers me – I think I told you before and you said how hard it was to remember voices and faces in detail. But with you and Maud I feel ... I belong. And that despite all the changes. With my French parents I now realize that I felt secure and loved. I missed that when Tante Mathilde took me to England, even though she was very kind and caring. Somehow a mother and father who love you is special, and you and Maud have given me something of that, but since I’m older it feels different.”

“Perhaps because all of us have more history and experience. We’re probably also afraid of the pain of losing someone we love. I know when you came into our lives I had a few moments where I wondered what would happen if we formed our family and then for some reason you were taken from us.”

“I didn’t tell either of you, but I had a couple of bad dreams where Mrs. Carbury came to say I had to go to the hostel because you and Maud were unsuitable.”

“That must have been upsetting.”

“A bit. Somehow I think all the preparations for coming here took all our time and pushed aside the time to think and fret about anything like that.”

“Do you like it here?” Ted asked.

“Oh yes. I still feel a little lost, but you have to remember that in Southampton Tante Mathilde and I were more or less camping in that awful room. After I was taken away from France until we formed our family together, I didn’t really have a home. Now I feel OK. Not perfect, of course, but I think I’ll be fine.”

“What about school? I’ve seen how hard you work.”

“School’s fine. I’ve made a couple of friends. And I get along well with Lise, so I’ve connections outside of school with people in her circle.”

“I hope there’s not any bullying at school. Kids can be nasty sometimes.”

“I think there was one girl who tried to be nasty, but I told her bluntly that I’d survived the Nazis coming into Paris, the fact they’d killed my parents and their bombing of Southampton. I told her that if she insisted

that I was her enemy I couldn't do anything about it, but I wouldn't let her push me around. She said she guessed I was OK. We're not friends, but we say hello and she doesn't bother me."

"Good for you, Paule."

"I was actually pretty scared. It was all bravado, but it worked."

In fact, Marcia Kennedy had upset me a lot for a few days. First it was "Oh, another girl with an English accent to put the colonials in their place."

When she found out I was born in France, she said "I guess we're all very out of fashion to someone with well-developed tastes." This said in a sneering voice.

I finally said something back when she came along and told Angela, a girl who'd been very nice to me and answered all sorts of little questions I had about the school and how things worked, "You'll have to get a new wardrobe and a new accent to satisfy our Mademoiselle Ronen."

I replied "Marcia. If you insist I'm somehow your enemy, I can't really do very much about it. But that isn't what I want. And I don't have a posh English accent, just a pretty ordinary one from the south of England as far as I know. I left France in 1940 when I was too young to know about fashion, and since then the Nazis killed my parents and the aunt who took me to England just before Dunkirk and looked after me died last Easter. I've been adopted by two really wonderful people whose lives were both shattered by the War – they both lost their spouses and their two children, and they advanced their wedding so they could adopt me before I was sent to a hostel. So that's who I am. You don't have to like me, but you should know I'm not trying to tell anyone I'm better than they are."

Angela looked really shocked, but Marcia, to her credit, said "Guess I got you wrong. Hope things work out." Then she rushed off. I think she was ashamed. Anyway, she started to say hello to me. I didn't think we'd get to be good friends, but we'd not be enemies anyway.

* * *

We spent a quiet New Year's Eve and went to bed right after a midnight toast to 1947 in a tiny drop of our brandy. I was even allowed a taste. I can't say I liked it much. Lise had already gone to bed, but Marthe toasted the New Year with us.

Then we all went to bed, all tucked up by a quarter past midnight. I heard Ted and Maud quietly talking to each other. Their bed was on the other side of the wall from mine. I couldn't make out the words, but the tone told me – I never verified if this was true, but I'm sure it was – that they were expressing thanks to each other for the changes they'd accomplished in

their lives this year and their hopes for the coming year. Of course, I wasn't taking much of a risk in this prediction, as those sentiments are, or were in that post-War time, almost universal.

School didn't start until the next week. Ted and Maud were working, but I went skating with Lise and some of her friends. I'd found a pair of second hand skates. My first tries were rather disastrous, but by my third or fourth outing I was getting around the ice all right. Rather clumsily, of course. It would be two more years before my motion was fluid.

In *Le Devoir* on January 2, I read that Newfoundland had changed from driving on the left, like Britain, to driving on the right like the rest of North America. I was about to bring this up at supper when I remembered how Jenny, Maud's daughter, had died. No need to mention something that could cause upset.

That Saturday we went to the movies to see *Night and Day* which was about Cole Porter.

Ted mused "I wonder how true to the real people the film story is."

I asked "You mean that a lot of the movie is made up?"

"Certainly, a lot of it is made up, but film-makers can create story lines that have a lot of fiction that still carries a mostly true message. There's also the possibility that the movie story is just using the names and the tunes, and the plot has nothing to do with the lives of the real people."

Maud added "Hollywood is interested in glamour. A lot of real life is laundry and washing up."

I laughed "I like how you put that!"

Still, Ted's comment did make me think about stories and their reality. Many years later, of course, we realized the extent of the distortion of Cole Porter in the movie we saw then. Still, it did feature Porter's irrepressible music. It's fun now to consider alternative interpretations of the lyrics of those tunes given Porter's homosexuality. That aspect of life was outside my comprehension in 1947.

That same night my period came for the first time. I noticed some small touches of blood when I was undressing and asked Maud if I could talk to her for a minute. She congratulated me and helped me put on my belt and we rinsed my panties in cold water and hung them to dry. It was good timing. I'd have to pay attention when I felt gassy and a bit out of sorts so I could avoid any mess.

* * *

For Ted 1947 started with some ups and downs. On the evening of Sunday January 12 Gerard Lapointe called at about 8 p.m. to ask Ted to

get to Calgary the next day by airplane to handle a crisis in staffing. Over the years I've heard the story in bits and pieces. For Ted, a big plus of this crisis was that it let him reconnect with his brother. And I think also that he began to see how he fitted in the TCA structure and plan.

Ted got back quite late on Friday night. We were glad to see him, and gave him a warm welcome.

"Do you want anything to eat?" Maud asked.

"No. We got food on the airplane, but a cup of tea would be very welcome. Then a bath and bed, though I've been sleeping on the plane."

"Do you have to be at work in the morning?" I asked. It would, after all, be Saturday morning, but given that Ted had been sent out to Calgary on an emergency basis, I wondered if he would have to go in.

"Whether I'm expected or not, I plan to get up when I wake without an alarm."

* * *

In the morning, January 18, Ted woke after Maud had gone to work at Ronen's.

Both Ted and I learned over the next few weeks that she was doing rather well. Hannah soon suggested, and Nate took this up sometime in April or May, that Maud should wear a tailored woman's suit – what in England we called a costume – to exemplify the shop's product. Later – it took a year or so – women who saw Maud in one of the two suits Nate made for her asked where they could get one. The suits had jackets, but could be worn without. The skirts had pockets so Maud could carry a notebook, pin box, and tailor's chalk.

At this early time, however, she was working in blouse and skirt, but the skirt had a pocket. Maud would handle greeting customers, getting them to try on the garments they had ordered, and doing sleeve and trouser cuff measurements and pinning. Nate would do the "gentlemen's measurements" when a suit was ordered, and call out the numbers for Maud to write them down.

There were some items that were off-the-shelf, such as underwear and ties. They weren't central to the business, but with growing availability in the post-war economy, Maud would talk to us about possibilities, and once she had convinced herself that an idea was good, she could share it with Nate and Hannah. At this point, these ideas were very much embryonic. I'd only just learned that word then.

This morning, apparently, Ted felt like he had a hangover. He'd had nothing alcoholic to drink the previous day on the airplane. I didn't know

much about drinking alcoholic drinks, though I'd somehow learned that drinking too much left you feeling poorly later. *Poorly?* That was a word not used here, though people seemed to understand it. Here people said *feeling sick* or *feeling bad*. Ted dressed and Marthe gave him some coffee and toast, and he went to the office to leave his report to be typed when Janice came in, likely on Monday. Ted had written this in pencil on the airplane.

Then he came home and more or less lazed about for the rest of the day, which was understandable, since it turned out he was getting a cold. This raised the issue of what we would do if one of us got seriously ill. Then Ted remembered that when he did the administrative work to join TCA when we got here, he'd had to fill in some forms for something called Québec Blue Cross, which apparently was a form of health insurance. In one of the brochures Ted had been given we found a bit of information. It looked like it covered some of the more serious costs for hospital care.

* * *

Despite his cold, Ted went to work Monday because he'd set up a meeting to consider how they could improve the parts management. He took several handkerchiefs. It seemed that some people here used paper handkerchiefs. They'd been introduced in the 1920s and gained some popularity among those who had money in the 1930s, but paper restriction in the War severely reduced use. Now there were advertisements for single-use paper handkerchiefs. It meant not carrying around a dirty, germey cloth one.

I went to school as usual, but came down with some sniffles on Wednesday and stayed home one day. Maud was also feeling a bit under the weather, but feeling well enough that she worked at Nate's on Thursday.

That evening, all of us but Marthe having been at school or work, supper was a bit later, and Ted had stayed an extra half hour at the office. Marthe had home-made baked beans waiting for us, but they were tolerant of delay. Marthe and Maud had divided up the work so when Maud was at Nate's Marthe would cook. Maud would handle the other four nights with my assistance. We – Ted, Maud and I – also took on some other jobs. That more or less meant me learning to shovel snow with the wide shovel specially made for clearing the drive and sidewalk. *Sidewalk*. Another new word for us. In England *pavement*. Of course, we used *trottoir* with Marthe and Lise.

Over the supper table, Ted informed us he and his team would be busy over the next few weeks as one of TCA's Lockheed Electra's had crashed.

"Oh no!" Maud said "Were any passengers killed?"

"It was a training flight, but the crew died. I learned that there've been several of these planes lost of a rather small number acquired. I think now 5

of 16 have gone down. So we'll need to find out why if we can, and records of parts and engines will be important. It will delay our work on improving parts management."

Despite our colds and the crash, which dampened our spirits, the good meal of home-made baked beans improved our mood. Locally these were *fèves au lard* for the food, but *binerie* for a place that made them. After supper, Ted went to bed early. I wasn't far behind him, though I did a bit of homework first.

* * *

About two weeks later, my period came again. More or less on time. I began to comprehend why it was called the curse, but I had a lot less trouble than most women from what I've heard and read over the years. More nuisance than disaster.

At school that week, I got an unanticipated boost from Marcia Kennedy. We'd had a social studies class where the teacher had been presenting some topics about the people who made up Canada's population. Afterwards, some of the girls were talking about their origins. As a newcomer, I kept quiet when this sort of thing was going on.

One girl, Jennifer, said she was descended from a Scottish soldier who'd come to Canada with the British during the War of 1812. Another said her ancestors were United Empire Loyalists who escaped the USA in the Revolutionary War. Another's story had parallels with what Ted told me about Micheal McPhee, who had an Irish ancestor who was orphaned when his parents died on the way to Canada and ended up with a French-Canadian family.

Jennifer said "It must be terrible to be an orphan."

Sheila, the girl with Irish antecedents, said "The War means lots of kids have been orphaned. I was reading how there are thousands of Jewish kids in DP camps. One called Kloster Indersdorf is trying to link some orphaned kids to relatives still alive, or otherwise help them to get resettled."

Judith, who talked of a Loyalist background, said "I don't know how I'd be able to keep going if I lost my parents."

Marcia was there, and she said "There are those among us who know what it's like."

Jennifer said "Marcia, I've met both your parents! Don't play the old soldier."

"I didn't mean me," Marcia said. I felt really awkward, because I knew she meant me, and I thought she might be up to her old tricks. She continued "I know there's at least one girl in our school who is an orphan, but it's really

up to her how much she tells us. Some of the soldiers coming home will also have seen things that are awful, and they have to be allowed to choose if they tell us.”

Now I didn’t feel so bad. As we moved out of the lunch room, I said to her “Thanks for what you said.”

“No problem. What you told me the other day started me doing a lot of thinking. I’d like to know more about your story, but not until you’re ready.”

* * *

February 7, 1947

It was a Friday night, and the anniversary of when Ted came to Southampton and met Maud. They were going out for dinner to the Auberge St. Gabriel, which had been going for almost 200 years in the old town. Marthe, Lise and I had a tuna casserole, then Lise and I went skating while Marthe went over to a neighbour, M. Lefebvre.

I enjoyed the skate, and was finding I didn’t tire as quickly because I was getting more efficient in my movements. We came home and I made us some cocoa.

Lise and I usually speak in French, but I’ll report our conversation in English or this memoir will get far too clumsy.

Anyway, I set the cocoa on the kitchen table with some oatmeal cookies – store ones, not home-made unfortunately. While we sipped the hot liquid and nibbled on the cookies, we were quiet for a minute or so. Then Lise asked “Do you remember your Mama and Papa – the ones who were killed?”

I answered “It’s actually been bothering me that I have trouble remembering them. I was talking to Ted about it, and he said the same thing about Agnes and Peggy.”

“Yes. I have to fight to remember my father. I’m still half expecting him to walk in the door each evening, but I know he was killed in that place whose name is so hard for me to pronounce.”

“It’s difficult. Perhaps all of us in this house are having to work very hard to keep our memories alive.”

“True. Maman is very sad. She looks a lot older than she is.”

“How old is she? It’s hard to guess. Perhaps I shouldn’t ask.”

“30. She married young. Papa was 10 years older. But she looks much older now than she really is.”

“Maud looked at least 10 years older than she does now after Jenny was knocked down and killed by the motorcycle rider. She had her 35th birthday a couple of days after we got here. It’s really been quite a transformation from

when Ted came to Southampton a year ago, and even since they married. I think they've each fallen in love."

"And both were married before. Do you think they weren't so happy with their first spouses?"

"No. They've both talked about Jeremy and Agnes and their daughters Jenny and Margaret. I think they were happy and the loss of the people they loved hurt them a lot. But perhaps because they both had experience of family life they have been able to work together so well. I'm so, so, so awfully grateful to them."

"They just took you in. No questions?"

"More than that. I sometimes think they got married so they could keep me with them – look after me so I wouldn't be sent to an orphan's hostel."

"Mon Dieu! That's generosity."

"Yes. Good job it seems to have worked out so well. I think they both are surprised how much they like being together."

"I sort of hope Maman finds someone, but I know I'll find it difficult to accept someone as a new Papa."

"That's sort of why I call them Ted and Maud. In fact, they were very good in encouraging me to choose for myself. They're my parents now, but not Mama and Papa. And that isn't lessening my love for them, just recognizing that we all came together at a different stage in life."

"Yes. That's a good way to think. If Maman ever finds someone, I hope it works out half as well for us."

* * *

The next day – Saturday – Maud asked me to meet her at Nate's shop. She had arranged with Nate to stop work a bit early so she and I could go shopping. The other night, she'd knocked on my door just after I'd got into bed.

"Paule. You've started having your period. I also notice you are starting to develop up top. You know. Breasts."

"They're still pretty small. If I wear a vest, it doesn't show."

"True, and I think that's what you should do most of the time. But with a white blouse or a summer dress, you probably should have some ... oh, I want to say camouflage."

We both laughed.

Maud said "We'll go shopping on Saturday afternoon and see what we can find. I think Eaton's."

Eaton's was where we shopped. Maud had already measured me. There were all sorts of fancy brassieres. This was the time of pointy conical ones,

which both Maud and I considered silly. Fortunately, we found a simple one of soft fabric. I didn't fill the cups, but they didn't have any wires or padding. We simply wanted something that would provide some modesty with a thin fabric in a blouse or dress. It was another year before I needed to buy another bra. Even today, I'm inclined to use a vest that has a relatively snug fit. In fact, I rather pity the women who need structurally engineered members of the supporting cast, to use the term a buxom friend of mine shared with me.

When we got home, Maud and I pitched in to help with the supper. We were having baked ham with pineapple, baked potatoes and tinned corn. This was new to us, but we really enjoyed it. Over dinner, Marthe wanted to know about the meal Maud and Ted had at St. Gabriel. Somehow I didn't have to translate much, yet there was a lively exchange.

Marthe was intrigued that Ted and Maud had only met a year before, and that I hadn't come into their lives for another couple of months, though we'd seen each other at Mass in St. Patrick's School.

"Je n'arrive pas à comprendre ça. Vous avez l'apparence d'un couple marié depuis longtemps." *I can't quite comprehend that. You seem like a long-married couple.*

Maud said "Yes. It's funny. But I feel like I've been with Ted a long time." She was sitting beside him, and leaned over and gave him a hug. Marthe and Lise clapped, and I joined in.

"Thank you," Ted said. "I feel the same way. I hope Paule has a similar sense of comfort."

"Definitely," I said. "Though if you'd asked me a year ago, I could never have imagined it."

Dessert was a lemon meringue pie. This was also new to us. Marthe and Lise explained that this one was from a packet. The real thing used lemons and egg yolks. Still, it tasted OK.

After dinner, Maud and I did the dishes, then Maud said she was going to take a bath then read. Marthe was knitting and listening to the hockey game on the radio. Even though the play-by-play was in French, Ted and I sat in the dining/living room with her, each of us with some reading. Lise was in her room. She wanted to get ahead on some homework so she could take time off during the week to go skating with some school friends. I think I'm a bit slow on skates. I could tell she was feeling awkward about not inviting me to join, so I said "You need some time to improve your own skating, and I'll slow you down, so make sure you get some time to skate faster."

After the first period, Ted and I went to put on a cup of tea. As Ted filled the kettle, he asked "Maud said you were shopping. Were you successful?"

"Yes. Maud thought it was time I had a brassiere in case I wore a blouse

or summer dress.”

“Good idea. Boys don’t have that problem.”

“Yes. They’re lucky.”

“They have other problems.”

“Oh, ...”

Ted said “Sometime when it’s a bit more private, you can ask me. I suspect Maud might not be as able to answer some questions, but if it would be more comfortable for you, we’ll make sure she’s there too.”

“Yes. I think I’d like to know. At school everyone gets very awkward about physical things like that. And a few of the girls have got quite big ... er ... on top, and some boys whistle and make crude remarks.”

“Sorry to hear that. There’s always some jerks.” Hmm. *Jerks*. That was another word you didn’t get in England.

“Yeah. It’s not nice the way they treat those girls. After all, they didn’t ask to grow so big.”

“A lot of the time, I think boys and men who behave that way are afraid to be honest and courteous with the girls or women they insult. In reality, they want to get close, to learn about the other sex, but are scared of being rejected.”

“Really? I hadn’t thought of that.”

“Unfortunately, some men are violent with women in order to get sex, and you need to be careful not to get into situations where you are alone – where there’s nobody around to help if some boy or man is behaving aggressively. Our society, and I’ll assume the Canadian situation is similar to that in England, is very bad in blaming the girl if something bad happens to her. Don’t be afraid to talk to me and Maud. In some cases we’ll possibly want you to have taxi fare rather than risk waiting for a bus on your own.”

“Some of the girls at school say they pin a dollar bill in their bra so they have taxi fare. Do you think that’s why Maud wanted me to have one?”

“Actually, no, but the option could be useful.”

* * *

Ted had talked to Joe Marantz a couple of times on the phone to try to set up a get-together. With the Deli hours, Joe didn’t get a lot of free time, but finally on Wednesday Feb 19, he had a chance of an evening off, and Ted and Maud invited him and his wife to come for coffee in the evening. They arrived about half-past seven.

When they’d come in and their coats were hung up, Joe introduced his wife, a quite small, dark haired woman with an engaging smile. “This is Naomi. We’ve only been married since last year.”

Ted said “Maud and I have only been married since the end of June.”

This prompted the full re-telling of our tale. Naomi, it turned out, had lost a pair of cousins in Belsen and there was clearly some overlap in the service experience of Ted and Joe, but only in Teniers Square had they actually come together.

Joe was suddenly quiet, looking intently at some photos Marthe and Lise had put on one section of the wall of our Living/Dining room. These were family photos, especially including Henri, plus a couple of him in uniform. Joe got up and went to look more closely.

“That’s Henri Gagnon. He was in my unit and bought it at Walcheren Causeway.”

Marthe had been in her room – the original front living room – and heard Joe say Henri’s name and came out “Est-ce que j’ai oui-dir le nom d’Henri?”

There were introductions and sharing of information. Marthe stayed to join in the discussion, which seemed to range all over the place. Joe said he knew a man who had been wounded when Henri was killed. “Philippe Larocque lives very near here, not more than 8 blocks away. He lost a hand with the mortar bomb that killed Henri, and has been getting treatment at St. Anne’s hospital out in Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue.”

Marthe said “Do you think he talk me? Tell me about Henri?”

Joe said “I have his phone number – he lives with his mother. Do you want me to call him and ask?”

“S’il vous plaît, M. Morantz.”

“Call me Joe.”

The evening was mainly learning about each others’ stories. Joe and Naomi had both grown up in Montreal’s Jewish community. They’d had to postpone getting married when Joe decided to enlist. He and his brother both wanted to fight Hitler’s evil. Fortunately both survived more or less unscathed. “More or less” covered up a lot of terrible things they’d seen, and both had suffered diverse injuries in training and some burns and scrapes from nearby explosions. Still, they’d come through, and were now doing well with the *Snowdon Deli*.

They didn’t stay late. We all exchanged phone numbers and addresses and I got a particular invite to come to see Naomi to be introduced to her youngest sister, Rebecca, who was my age, though it turned out she was at the High School, so I’d arrange to meet her there.

* * *

It was about 10 in the morning on Saturday March 8 that the telephone rang and I was the only person near it. Lise was out with one of her school

friends. Ted and Maud were starting to look at cars. There was still a shortage, but they thought they should begin to look. Marthe was in her room. I think she was saying the rosary.

I lifted the handset off the wall-mounted telephone.

“Hello. Résidence Gagnon et Newman.”

An accented voice said “Hello. My name is Philippe Larocque. Am I talking to the wife or daughter of Henri Gagnon. Joe Morantz gave me the number, but he said the house was shared with an English family.”

“No. I’m Paule Ronen, daughter of Ted and Maud Newman. Actually I was born in France. A long story. We live with Marthe and Lise. I’ll see if Marthe is here.”

I went and knocked on Marthe’s door and she came to the ’phone. I decided to go upstairs and add some notes to my journal, which I’d been keeping relatively faithfully.

That afternoon, Philippe came to visit. Marthe wanted to know more about how Henri had died. She and Lise set out tea and cookies, and Philippe arrived around 3 in the afternoon. Ted, Maud and I stayed upstairs – we were going to the movies later to see *Blue Skies* with Bing Crosby and Fred Astaire. Dinner was already in hand, Maud having made a steak pie. It was going to be steak and kidney, but it seemed kidney was going to be unwelcome to Lise and Marthe. Maud and I had prepared the pie on Friday night and it was in the fridge ready to be heated and served with potatoes and frozen peas. We also had made a trifle with some bits and pieces of cake, old cookies, some jam, some prunes and bananas with our version of Bird’s custard.

After about an hour, Lise came up to ask us to come and meet Philippe. His right hand was missing. In its place was a hook. When Ted was introduced, Philippe said in English – he mostly spoke in French – “Afraid I’ll have to offer you my left hand. At the hospital, they offered me a prosthetic hand, but it’s obviously an artificial hand. This hook has a cable to my left shoulder, so if I move my shoulder, you can see the two halves of the hook open and close. That lets me hold a fork, or pick up a pencil, things like that.”

Lise said “I’m sorry that I keep looking at it.”

Philippe said “Better that you say so. It will make it easier for me if you tell me. I think you’ll find it gets easier after a bit, but it’s not a hand, and I’m still getting used to that.”

Maud said “Will you be able to work? Make a living?”

“I was training to be an accountant, though when I enlisted, I was really just doing some bookkeeping. My main trouble now is that I was right handed. I’m having to learn to write with the left. Getting better, but it’s slow. I get really angry sometimes. However, I’ve been offered a probationary

job with the city of Lachine, and will start with them in a few weeks. I think it will go OK.”

Maud, who had been whispering to Marthe, said “Would you like to stay for supper. It’s steak pie, with trifle for dessert. We’re eating at 5 so Ted, Paule and I can go to the movies.”

Philippe decided to stay, and phoned his Mother to let her know. We told our story, there was some back and forth about who was where and when. Philippe had been in Southampton a couple of times, and we must have almost bumped into each other along the way during the War. At the table, it became clear why he chose the hook, since he was able to hold a fork between the two parts of the hook and feed himself efficiently, though with left and right reversed. After a bit, I found the hook no longer intruded on my attention. I’d have to ask Lise if she found the same.

We ate quite quickly, as we wanted to be away soon after 5:30, but Philippe stayed, actually until 9, we learned later. Apparently, Henri had talked to Philippe about how much he missed Marthe, and said he felt she was already a friend, even though they’d never met until today.

Marthe – Lise told me later – had also been told about Philippe in Henri’s letters. So they were getting to know each other.

* * *

It was only a couple of years later that I got even a rudimentary understanding of how important that telephone call from Philippe was for him, Marthe and Lise. Philippe was 26. He’d been 20 when he joined up in 1941, and he’d only had one girlfriend in his life up until then. She was mad at him for enlisting, said why fight for the English. He said he was fighting against the Nazis, not for the English. Lise eventually talked to him about this girlfriend, and she figures it was no grand passion. Still, I could guess that the break in the friendship added to the emotional stress of his military service.

Apparently, Marthe made Lise leave the room while she talked to Philippe about Henri’s death, though later she said Philippe didn’t remember a lot. They’d been part of Le Régiment de Maisonneuve in a bridgehead on Walcheren after Bruce McKenzie’s company D of the Calgary Highlanders had managed to take the causeway. A fierce German counterattack forced the Canadians back onto the causeway, and in this a mortar bomb landed next to Henri, who took the brunt of the blast, killing him. Shrapnel shredded Philippe’s right hand. He’d been on Henri’s left, and his hand must have been out of Henri’s shadow. The blast still knocked him over and he figured he was only partly conscious during some period of time before some other Canadians

and a surrendered German helped pull him back to the rear. That night the military surgeons took off his hand near the wrist.

Marthe told Lise that Philippe thought he would give up on life after losing his hand. He didn't think he wanted to live as an amputee, but then saw men much worse off who still had the spirit to go on living.

What I eventually learned was that Philippe felt his missing hand would mean no woman would ever want him as a man. Marthe was a few years older than he was. He found he could talk to her. She wasn't a date or a girlfriend, but a friend with whom he could share time. He came to dinner or coffee. They went for walks. One Saturday night to a movie, and Lise went with them.

The Victoria Day weekend – in Canada they celebrated Queen Victoria's birthday, or in French *la Fête de la Reine* even though we didn't in England – Philippe and his mother had Lise and Marthe for dinner on the Sunday. The weather was poor. Lots of rain on both the Sunday and the Monday. It messed up plans for Ted, Maud and I, as we hoped to go out on a couple of picnics to discover different parts of the city via the streetcar or bus.

Given the rain, we used our time to go through our clothing and make some lists of items we needed or would like. We were not desperate, but with the experience of some months, we recognized some differences in the sets of clothes we wore. Each of us could use at least one pair of new shoes. Talking to Marthe and others, we learned we would need clothes suitable for hot, humid days. Maud made a list, and added a note about clothes for dressing up.

Monday was still rainy, so we wrote some letters. Maud owed Enid Brownlow one. She felt guilty that it had been a month since Enid's last aerogram had arrived. I wanted to write to Carol and to Judy, my Southampton friends. So we kept ourselves occupied, though I found myself watching the rain some of the time.

Through June and early July, Marthe and Philippe found themselves spending time together. Marthe actually talked quite a bit about Philippe to Maud in their curious but apparently effective *franglais*. Apparently Philippe felt no woman could accept his arm without its hand. Maud hadn't, at that time, told anyone how she and Ted found a pleasant physical intimacy thanks to the ensuite bath in their honeymoon hotel. But somehow she revealed this to Marthe, possibly a sharing between two widows.

Lise was invited by her grandparents near Lachute to spend the last two weeks of August with them. We went away for the weekend before the Labour Day one. It was hot and sticky. Philippe came over to spend some time with Marthe and complained how the heat and humidity caused soreness and irritation where the hook was worn. Marthe suggested he take it off, as holding a beer bottle only needed one hand.

Whatever his misgivings, Philippe took off his shirt and Marthe helped him undo the straps and cables. Apparently she found the soreness caused by sweat under the straps more difficult to look at than the amputation stump. And the moisture between skin and equipment gave rise to a bad odour. Philippe noted this, saying he bathed daily, and used baby powder, but the heat and humidity were a challenge. The stories told years later varied as to who said what, but it seems one of them, likely Marthe, joked about sharing a bath.

Whatever actually happened clearly overcame a lot of fears and inhibitions. From that point on, Philippe and Marthe were a couple. This had, as I will relate later, some consequences for Ted, Maud and I as well.

Of course, that was all well after the early Spring of 1947, and was part of the periphery of my own life at the time rather than at its centre. I was, after all, not quite 14 at that time and had a lot of emotional baggage on top of the usual teenage turmoil.

* * *

Life on 25th Avenue continued in a fairly humdrum way through March.

At school, I was doing OK. "OK" seemed to be the common measure. Actually my marks were fine, to the extent I was getting a bit of a reputation as a brain. In England a swat. I didn't mind that, as I figured I needed to do well if we were to get ahead. "We"? Yes. I did mean "we". I was part of a small but tight family. My new family. Given the losses, we'd hang onto each other with an iron grip and work together. I was sure of this.

One weekend in March it had been warm enough to walk down to the river. That was something Ted and I did. Sometimes we'd talk. Sometimes just walk without talking. There was still the companionship. But this day, Ted asked

"School going all right?"

"I think so. I've found a few people I can chat to, and my marks are pretty good."

"You work hard enough," Ted said.

"So do you and Maud," I responded.

"It's part of being a newcomer. You feel you have to be better than most others.

"Are you beginning to feel at home here?"

That was a good question. I was silent for a moment, and noticed Ted looking at me with a slightly anxious expression. I answered

"I think I feel more at home here with you and Maud than I've felt at home since leaving Mama and Papa. But I still feel a bit ... lost, I suppose.

In Southampton, for example, I went to Mass with Tante Mathilde in the school and I sort of knew I belonged. I don't feel the same belonging in Saints-Anges. But I may also be changing in myself. Meeting Nate and Mr. Green has me wanting to learn more about my Jewish history, though I don't think I'm interested in the religious side, except to learn about it. Not to practice it."

Ted asked "I've suggested to Maud we might try St. Patrick's."

"Streetcars are less easy on Sunday, and it's quite a way. And maybe it isn't the churches, but me. Ted. You aren't a Catholic, but you go to Mass. I've wondered about that sometime."

"I think it's just that I don't have that faith – the belief – that the Catholic Church is the only path to ... er ... holiness, I suppose. I've seen good and bad people who have all sorts of beliefs. It's not that I'm saying that the doctrine the Church teaches is false. While I don't have the full faith, I don't disbelieve either. More that the whole ensemble is a parable or set of parables. And I find that taking some time to listen to them, think about them, helps me to get through each week."

We were silent again for a bit. I let what Ted said tumble a bit in my thoughts. Then I said "I guess I might be moving to a similar type of belief. Less 100% Catholic. Do you think Maud will be upset?"

"You aren't saying her beliefs are silly. Nor am I. In fact, I'd be very surprised if either of us made any comment that could be construed as a criticism. We'll support her, though it would be awkward if she wanted us to say we believe things we actually don't. I hate hypocrisy. But lack of belief isn't a good reason to belittle others' faith unless it is somehow hurtful or damaging."

"Thanks, Ted. I need to talk about things to try to get them straight in my head. Though they're not sorted out yet, I don't think."

"Talking like this helps me too. Adults are supposed to have things all worked out, but I can tell you they never are all settled, even though a lot of people try to pretend they are."

* * *

Rebecca Rothstein, Naomi Marantz' sister, called me one evening and we arranged to meet at lunchtime at school. It turned out we'd seen each other a number of times, but didn't know each other's names.

"Naomi says you escaped from the Nazis," Rebecca said.

"I suppose, though I think more that my Aunt Matilda took me to England before they got to Paris. But my parents didn't get away, unfortunately."

Rebecca looked glum. "Sorry. My big mouth and sticking my foot in it."

“Don’t get too upset. It’s better to be interested than try to sweep it all under the carpet,” I said. “And I think I’m doing OK now thanks to Maud and Ted.”

“Yeah. Hard to think that your parents only met you about a year ago.

“And Joe said how he and Ted met. Pretty hard to imagine.”

“I can sort of imagine the bomb – the V-2 – because we had raids in Southampton and some of the bombs landed not far away from our shelter. But I didn’t see ... er ... bodies and badly injured people. At least not until they’d been treated by the doctors and were bandaged up.”

“Around home, there’s some walking on eggshells because some relatives are still missing. We’re waiting for the Red Cross and other authorities to send us information. But I guess you know what that’s like.”

“Yeah. About a year ago I found out about my ... oh, I have such trouble saying ‘parents’ because that’s Ted and Maud.”

“You use Ted and Maud for your parents – your current parents. What did you call your Mom and Dad?”

“Mama and Papa. Yes. That’s good. Well, about a year ago I got the letter about Mama and Papa. But I already had dreamt they were dead. The letter was just confirmation. I suppose I should feel more upset, but somehow there’s just ... I don’t know ... emptiness, I suppose.”

“Naomi said Ted and Maud both lost their families too.”

“Yeah. Maud says we’re a trio of leftovers, but she points out that some favourite meals are made of leftovers. Black British humour.”

“You probably do whatever you have to so you don’t end up crying all the time.”

“Yeah. Suppose so.

“Tell me about you. Have you always lived here in Montreal?” I already knew a bit from Naomi, of course.

Rebecca told me about herself and her family, but time for lunch ran out. We started spending time together off and on, and Marcia would join us too, or maybe it was Rebecca joining us. Anyway, it seemed I now had a couple of buddies at school, and we’d occasionally do stuff outside of school time as well. Naomi’s parents were also in the deli business, but not the Snowden one. This meant I learnt more about some of the Jewish dishes and treats. Some I liked, others not so much.

As I mentioned earlier, we’d discovered bagels. Now I started to find there were other things: challah, babka, bialies, rugelach, blintzes. And I found ways to bring some home from time to time as a treat for the household. Those we liked, we found recipes for in the library. However, we found that some weren’t quite to our taste, and we modified them in French Canadian or English ways. One night Ted commented “Canada must be where dishes come to learn how to get along with each other.”

I translated for Marthe and Lise, though Philippe was already banging his left hand on the table in applause.

On this occasion, which must have been late April, Philippe asked “Ted, when you were in Belgium, did you have any of the waffles?”

“Yes. But only once I think. Why do you ask?”

“Well, I had them a couple of times, and some were like I’ve had here, which are made with a pancake batter. The Belgians call them Brussels waffles – gaufres de Bruxelles. But there’s another type – Liege Waffles – made with a bread-type dough. I liked them better, but I’ve never found them again.”

“Wait. Now you mention it, I remember having one in Antwerp, around the time of the V-2. We could smell them cooking and it near drove us mad until we found the place making them. I think we gave them a tin of peaches for two or three waffles. They said something like Lowkse Waafels.”

Philippe said “Liege is called Luik in Flemish – spelled L U I K but pronounced sort of like loud but with a K instead of a D. Yes. That’s the thing. And the smell of them cooking really is special.”

Marthe said “Une euphorie gastronomique! Mon Dieu. Mais n’attends pas que je le faire pour toi. Tu dois trouver une belle Belge.”

* * *

April 4 was Good Friday. Even though it was a couple of weeks until the anniversary of Tante Mathilde’s death, Holy Week seemed to be the time that I felt the weight of the memories most. On the Maundy Thursday – I think that was a name not used here in Canada – Marcia sat down beside me at lunch.

“Mind if I join you to eat my sandwiches?” she asked.

“OK with me,” I said rather carefully. I wasn’t completely sure where I stood with her yet.

We ate for a minute or so, then she said “What you told me when I was ... well, being nasty to you, it’s made me think a lot.”

I figured I couldn’t lose too much by asking, and said “What about?”

“It made me realize that I and most people here have it pretty good. I’ve both parents, though they don’t seem to be getting along just now, and my Dad has a couple of businesses that seem to be doing OK so we’re not filthy rich but we are comfortable. You seem to be doing all right at school, yet you had parents who were killed and your aunt died and you’ve been pushed around quite a bit.”

“I suppose. It’s been a while since Tante Mathilde took me from Paris to Southampton. That was 1940, just before Dunkirk.”

“Didn’t Southampton get bombed?”

“Yes. Lots. My school was only a few blocks from the Spitfire factory. Ted, my adopted father, used to work there, and Maud worked nearby on landing craft for Thorneycrofts.”

“You call them by their first names?”

“Tante Mathilde died Good Friday last year – actually it was April 19. Ted was a lodger with Maud. He was in France when a V-1 landed on his house in Southampton and killed his wife and teenaged daughter. Maud’s husband died on HMS Hood and Jenny her daughter was killed two days before the War ended by an American dispatch rider who was on the wrong side of the road.”

“Oh. Yes. In England you drive on the wrong ... oops ... left side. My God! So what happened when your aunt died?”

“It was Good Friday so the social services were closed. Maud and Ted took me in. There didn’t seem to be a good place for kids my age. Then they asked if they could keep looking after me, but there were stupid remarks about two unrelated adults of the opposite sex, etc. We went out one Sunday to have a bit of a break in Winchester. It’s really old. King Alfred – not Arthur as in the legend – had his capital there and the streets are all narrow. Anyway, Ted and Maud saw the three of us reflected in a shop window and thought we looked like a family. I don’t know which of them asked the other, but they asked me if I wanted to be with them, and then we all three went to see the priest and ask what he thought. Ted and Maud got married at the end of last June, and my adoption went through a month later. I think the authorities wanted to get rid of me – well, to get rid of a problem case. Then Ted met some people from TCA and Canadair and was offered a job, so here we are.”

“Wow! Your head must still be spinning,” Marcia said.

I thought for a moment, then said “Yeah. I think it is. I’m still sorting out who I am. I think Ted and Maud are too.”

“As I asked, you call them by their first names?”

“We talked about it, and Mama and Papa are my ... I don’t know how to say it ... real parents. The people who gave birth to me. But Ted and Maud are my parents now. They’re sort of friends too. They treat me more or less as an adult, which actually makes it harder to do stupid kid stuff that might be fun. On the other hand, I get a lot of say in what I do. I’m immensely grateful to them.”

Marcia said “Perhaps you bring something good into their lives. They must have had a huge hole in their hearts losing their families.”

“They sort of say the same. We work well together.”

“Did you manage to find somewhere OK to live?”

“Ted had a friend from the RAF or who he met while in the RAF. His

nickname is Fifty, and his girlfriend's sister is a war widow with a daughter a year younger than me and a house that we share. We've 2 bedrooms and a share of the living area and we get along pretty well. It's a funny house with French and English, and the bank manager found some of my Jewish family – well, pretty distant relatives – and we've become friends. So all mixed up. It'll take a while to settle.”

“Well. In my house it's hard to ask friends home in case there's a battle going in. Mom says Dad has a girlfriend and they're always at it. I try to stay out as much as I can, but I can't be on the streets at night.”

“I'm sorry to hear that. If you're near Lachine, you could come over to do homework together.”

“That'd be nice, but we're in Côte-des-Neiges. Maybe a Saturday or Sunday, though.”

“Yeah, I think Côte-des-Neiges is about an hour by streetcar or bus. We don't have a car. I think Ted is hoping we might start looking in a month or so, though they're pretty expensive with none made during the War.”

“Thanks for this, Paule. Unless you say I can, I'll not repeat your story.”

“It's not really a secret, but I think best to say nothing. I'm not looking for sympathy, just being allowed to get on with things at my own pace. And I'll say nothing about what you told me.”

“Yes. Thanks.”

“Oh. By the way, the other day you asked if you could use my rubber.”

“Yes. I needed to erase some pencil lines on a geometry drawing, and I remember I lent mine to Lise at home and forgot to get it back.”

“Except here we say *eraser*. From what I understand, “rubber” is used for something else. I think it has to do with something medical and probably not polite to mention.”

I remembered in England hearing people talk of Rubber Johnnies, which were something to do with sex. I'd have to ask Ted. But I said “That's interesting, because Lise calls it a *gomme*, which means rubber. But thanks. I'll remember to use *eraser*.”

Macia said “Oh. Look at the time. We'd better head to maths class.”

* * *

We had Denise and Fifty to Easter dinner. Maud and I said we'd do the dinner, but Marthe and Lise made some cookies and a jelly salad. That was new to us, though Maud said she remembered having an aspic some years ago. But that, apparently, used meat jelly, while what Marthe made used Jello. And here the package contained a crystalline powder. I'd only seen jelly made once, but in England it seemed to be rather dense blocks of jelly

that made a somewhat less dense wobbly solid after you dissolved the blocks in hot water and let them cool and set.

The meal was a roast beef with Yorkshire pudding – traditional English. We had carrots and frozen peas as veg. Ted had got in some beer, and when Fifty and Denise arrived, out came the beer and some crackers and cheese.

In response to Fifty's questions, the first quarter of an hour was a run-down of how we were doing in a raucous mix of French, English and "franglais".

"But how are you two doing?" Maud asked of Fifty and Denise.

Fifty responded "Well, my divorce should go through this year. Hopefully sooner than later. Good job Thora and I got married in Ontario."

"Why is that?" Ted asked.

"There's no divorce law in Quebec. You have to get a special parliamentary – federal that is – act of divorce. A lot of fuss, bother and expense. But Ontario more or less follows the British laws. Thora and I were married there and I've a room I rent in a house in Cornwall, Ontario. I claim it as my residence. Actually let an army buddy live there for free. He checks mail and calls me if there's anything. I'll probably have to go there when it comes up in court. But Thora's as anxious as I am to get things sorted out. She made a bit of fuss about having all the furniture. I bit my tongue and said yes."

Denise asked what he meant by "bit my tongue" and I had to try to explain. Marthe said she thought the same idea existed in French but wasn't used much. This led to quite a discussion – all the way to dinner actually – of idiomatic expressions in both French and English. Some of the French ones – by that I mean French from France – came back to me. And here in Montreal there were lots of local expressions.

I rather liked "Avoir du front tout le tour de la tête" for having a lot of nerve. Saying "Tire-toi une bû", literally "Take a log", meant "Have a seat". There were more logs here. Ted looked uncomfortable when "Faire le boss de bécosses" was explained as "To be the boss of the privy", in other words, someone whose self-importance exceeded their actual authority. I guess privies were more common here. I hadn't ever had to use one then.

* * *

Our house had one more occupant I've forgotten to mention. This was Lise's cat Tom. Despite the name, Tom was female. Short for Tomasina, I think, but that got onerous to say.

Actually it wasn't until Christmas we actually saw Tom. One of the previous tenants had kicked her – another reason Marthe was not happy

sharing her house before we came. I hope she wasn't pretending with us, but it would be pretty good acting for her to keep up the friendliness if she was.

Anyway, Tom gradually came to realize we weren't going to kick her. Around Easter-time she crept into my room while I was reading on my bed. She hopped up onto the bed and curled up next to me. Soon I heard purring. All this was new to me. We'd not had any pets in France when I was little, then with Tante Mathilde our room was too small, and the War meant pet food was non-essential anyway. It was good that I found I liked Tom making herself comfortable beside me. I guess some people have difficulty with cats giving them trouble breathing. Or else some other aspect of the cat's behaviour upsets them.

For me, it was a sign that I was accepted as part of the household. Not that I talked about it with Maud or Ted. In fact, Tom and I seemed to just find ourselves in close proximity quite frequently, though Tom also spent time with Lise. She tended to give Marthe, Ted and Maud some distance, as if she didn't quite trust them, though she didn't run away.

Later in life, I found I liked having a cat or dog as a pet, but at this time the experience was novel. I didn't mention to anyone how I felt. Perhaps I thought that it would be silly to do so, though somehow I know interacting with Tom was important for me. It was part of how I or my world was changing.

* * *

About a week after Easter, Marcia was eating lunch with me at school. I asked "Did you have a good Easter?"

"I got several Easter eggs, but Mom and Dad had a shouting match. Kind of spoiled things."

I think I remember a couple of quarrels between Mama and Papa. It was as the War started, and if the fuzzy recollection of a small girl is correct, they were arguing over whether to flee from France. Mama was saying we could not trust the right-wing in France. They might decide that Britain was the traditional enemy and throw in with the Germans. Papa said that was silly. How many were like him and now dead?

I said "So far I've not heard Ted and Maud have a quarrel. There've been a couple of times when they get cross about something and grumble at each other, but I think having lost so much, they're afraid to let things get out of hand."

"When you think about that, it makes sense. Wish my folks could see that their fights aren't going to have a winner."

“I’m a Catholic – well, that’s how I’ve been brought up – and we’re supposed to believe in marriage for life, but I think people change. With the War, there’ll be lots of people who’ve lived apart and seen and experienced stuff that’s different. I’m not saying they shouldn’t try to get along, but I can see that for some of them it doesn’t make sense that they be forced to live together.”

“That isn’t how my folks came unstuck, as far as I know, since Dad’s business meant he wasn’t required to serve in the Forces. I think the reality is that they married because Mom was pregnant with me, but really they didn’t know each other.”

“Would it be better if they separated?” I asked.

“Possibly. Their fights mean I don’t like spending time with either of them. They’re becoming so bitter.”

“Maybe you have to tell them that. You know. That you don’t want to see them fighting, because when they do, you feel forced into taking sides. Whatever their quarrel, they shouldn’t dump it on you.”

“My luck, they’ll probably end up both turning on me.” Marcia laughed, then said seriously “Actually, I should let them know I’m angry with them. And hurt. It’d probably be a lot better if they were to separate.”

“Would your Dad keep supporting you and your Mum?” I asked.

“Yeah. I think so. He’s not mean except when Mom goes after him. And I don’t think he hates her or anything. In fact, I think in some ways he’s quite fond of her, just finds they don’t have a lot to say to each other and they don’t enjoy the same things.”

“Does he really have a girlfriend?” I suppose I was being nosy.

“Dad’s businesses supply material and tools for making shoes and boots. He did well with the War making boots for soldiers. And one of the companies he supplied was managed by this woman Jacqueline Jones. She’s older than Dad. Dresses in plain suits. Glasses. Hair in a bun. One day last summer he said I could come with him on his calls, and we went to her company’s office. It was kind of strange. They didn’t do anything ... er.... inappropriate, but it was obvious they were comfortable with each other. It was lunchtime, so we went to a diner together. Everything was very correct, but it was relaxed and friendly. So I guess he has a woman friend, but whether there’s any hanky panky going on I’ve no idea. Jacqueline’s not what people mean when they talk about a floozy, that’s for sure. And she didn’t talk down to me or try to be artificially friendly. In fact, I liked her.”

“We all need friends. From what you say, your Mum and Dad can’t really talk to each other.”

“Yeah. Mom is all about having the house just so, having the right stuff and the right way of doing things. Dad is more interested in watching sports, going fishing, and he likes to read all kinds of books. Mom only reads

magazines, and I think mainly to look at the fashion photos.”

I said “It sounds like they’ve very different ways they want to live.

“You know, I’ve no idea what Ted and Maud really share. Maybe they just like doing things together. I know the best times seem to be when we’re out and about together. Doesn’t seem to matter quite what we’re doing as long as we’re sharing it. Mind you, so much is new for us, we haven’t had time to worry about our interests being different.”

Marcia said “Changing the subject, do you want to come and see Bambi with me?”

“You mean the Disney cartoon film?”

“Yeah. Some of the other girls think it’s only for little kids, but I like it. I know you won’t tell me I shouldn’t see it.”

“No. And I’ve not seen it. When did you want to go?”

“I thought Saturday. Call me tonight and we can figure out the time.”

* * *

I enjoyed Bambi, and Marcia had invited me to her house first for lunch, so I got to meet her mother. Mrs. Kennedy’s focus was as Marcia had described, with much fuss on the correct plates and cutlery for our lunch sandwiches. As if it made any difference to two young women who wanted to pick up the bread and eat. The sandwiches were very good – roast beef with lettuce and mayonnaise.

Recalling what Marcia had said about Jacqueline Jones, I noticed Mrs. Kennedy talked to me like I was a five-year-old. When I answered her questions, I wasn’t sure she cared to listen to my answers. I think Marcia found her manner towards me embarrassing. Fortunately, we had to hurry off to the movie theatre. And it was a bit wet out, though not too cold. After the show, we both took separate streetcars home so we’d get there before dark. When I came in, I went upstairs to where Maud was writing a letter. We’d now got an electric kettle, and there was tea in the pot and she poured me a cup.

“Did you have a good day?” she asked.

“Yes. Apart from the rain. Very nice. The movie was a bit predictable, but I enjoyed it.”

“How was Mrs. Kennedy?”

“I’m not sure.” I answered sincerely. Then I told her what Marcia had said a few days before about Mr. Kennedy and Miss Jones, and my feelings about Mrs. Kennedy today.

“It’s a pity Marcia has to be burdened with the troubles between her parents,” Maud said. “She probably needs your friendship more than she’ll admit.”

I hadn’t thought of that. Then, thinking of what I’d said to Marcia about Ted and Maud, I asked “Maud. What interests do you think you share with Ted?”

Maud looked puzzled, almost worried, so I continued “Do you think that your similar background and experience is important? Or maybe that you seem to like to do things together?”

There were a few quiet seconds, then Maud said “I think more that we like sharing experiences. It’s not a whole lot of common hobbies or activities, though I think we do find we like similar things, but more doing what we do together – including you – to build a new life together, that’s very ... emotionally rewarding.”

“Yeah. I know what you mean,” I said.

“Me too,” Ted said. I hadn’t seen him slumped in the armchair that faced the window. Both he and Maud liked to sit and look out. We’d acquired the chair second-hand somehow, I think through someone at TCA who had a friend moving.

Maud said “Oh. You’re awake. Better get washed up for dinner. Marthe’s cooked a roast of pork.”

* * *

After dinner, we listened to the hockey game on the radio. Marthe and Lise were going to a friend’s place where it would be in French, so we got to listen to Foster Hewitt call the game. I don’t know where we learned that he was considered the master of play-by-play, but it was clear he could capture the excitement.

Montreal was playing Toronto in the third game of the Stanley Cup final, and this game and the fourth were in Maple Leaf Gardens. The second game in the Forum on Thursday had been very rough. Uncharacteristically Maurice Richard had knocked out two of the Toronto players, Vic Lynn and Bill Ezinicki, with high sticks to the head. That got him over 20 minutes in the penalty box, a game misconduct, a suspension for game three and a fine of \$250 from Clarence Campbell, the league President. With all the penalties, Toronto won 4 to nothing.

Tonight wasn’t a lot better and we lost 4 to 2. I must be getting used to being here by saying "we" lost. In England I’d never got excited about sports. Well, a lot of them were suspended during the War.

Toronto won the Stanley Cup in the sixth game about a week later here in Montreal. Somehow I don't remember listening to that one. Maybe they didn't broadcast home games here. There were lots of things that were new to us.

* * *

One Saturday in May – it may have been May 10, the day before Mother's Day – Marcia's Dad invited the three of us to a Montreal Royals game at Delorimier Stadium. Marcia had given me the invitation in a note for Ted and Maud – she'd had to change Ronen to Newman on the envelope. We met Marcia and her Dad outside the stadium which was in a more or less residential area. It took a while to get there by streetcar.

Mrs. Kennedy hadn't come, though Marcia told me her father – Arthur as we learned during the afternoon – had asked her. Marcia also said that the evening after we'd seen Bambi, there'd been a shouting match and Marcia, rather than hiding out in her room, had gone and asked them to stop. She said she told them she didn't want to be referee, nor to take sides. When we talked the Wednesday after Bambi over lunch, Marcia said

"I told them that if they couldn't live together without fighting, then maybe they should figure out how to live apart. There was a long silence after I said that. Then Dad asked Mom if she would prefer to separate, and she said that maybe they should consider it. I think she's mainly concerned about appearances, and doesn't want people to regard the marriage as a failure."

"Will they be able to work something out?" I'd asked.

"They're talking about arrangements. It looks like Mom and I will stay in the house, but there's a small apartment, really just a room with a small bathroom, over the garage. It was meant for a chauffeur, though we've never had one, and we used it as a room for guests. So Dad's going to use it. Fortunately there's enough money that Dad can give Mom a monthly allowance that will be enough to keep her comfortable. I know she has some money of her own, as Grandad and Grandma are pretty well-heeled.

"For public occasions, they'll appear together, and both of them have told me they'll try to make sure life is peaceful at home. I think they've agreed they can otherwise live as they please as long as they don't create gossip."

Anyway, Katherine Kennedy – that was her name – didn't come to the baseball game. Arthur had a box, and the next box had been taken by Jacqueline Jones and her sister and brother-in-law, Mary and Thomas Craig. Much later I learned Mary and Jacqueline were the owners of their company,

though Thomas was often assumed by outsiders as the boss. There was also another woman – Ann Sheridan – who was a librarian at McGill and who lived with Jacqueline. She was quiet, but not unfriendly. At one point Ann asked me about Paris when I was very small. Apparently she had visited there when I was about 4 or 5, and we tried to figure out if we could remember some of the landmarks together.

By the third innings, the men were in one box and the women in the other. Oh well, that happens. Still, we exchanged life histories in capsule form and those of us new to baseball were told bits and pieces of the rules of the game.

As at hockey, we had hot dogs and popcorn. It was a good afternoon.

After the game, Arthur and Marcia gave us a lift to the west end of downtown to a convenient streetcar stop. Ted and Maud thanked Arthur profusely, but Arthur made the interesting comment “I think you and Paule’s story has actually helped Marcia and I, and I hope Katherine, see that we have to find a way out of a nasty fight, so maybe thanks are due both ways.”

We got a streetcar pretty quickly, and even though it was fairly full, found a pair of seats. Ted had me sit on his lap so none of us had to stand.

Ted asked “Did you enjoy it?” It wasn’t clear who he was asking, but Maud said “I think I like hockey a lot more. The baseball was pretty slow.”

I said “Yes. I think I like hockey. This was interesting for once, but I don’t think I’ll become a fan.”

Maud said “I liked Jacqueline. She’s got a lively mind and asked lots of questions about Southampton during the War, but not from ignorance. She’d clearly read a good deal.”

Ted added “Yes. She wanted to know how Supermarine organized their management. I can see why Arthur enjoys her friendship.”

Maud asked “Do you think she’s interested in him?”

Ted said “She lives with Ann. I suspect she enjoys sharing ideas with Arthur, but probably not anything domestic.”

Maud said “Some people say nasty things about women who live together. Given how much trouble we’ve seen in the last few years, I’m happy enough to let people get on with their lives as long as they don’t cause harm to others.”

I wasn’t quite sure what Ted and Maud meant, and it was two decades later before Pierre Trudeau made his famous remark “There is no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation”. Not that I ever figured out whether Jacqueline and Ann were more than just room-mates.

* * *

It may have been the week before the baseball game that Lise and I cooked dinner for Mothers Day. It was a nice day, and we were able to open the windows and have some fresh air. Ted and I had taken off the outer storm windows a few weeks before, which took some careful climbing of a ladder for the second floor windows. This was new to us. In England there was just a single pane of glass. The double windows made sense here when it was cold.

Also new were the screens we replaced the storm windows with. Later in the year when the mosquitoes were active we realized what a boon to comfort the screens could be.

Anyway, Mothers Day was a big success. Lise and I made spaghetti and meatballs, with a really nice cole slaw we got from a place recommended by Rebecca. For dessert we fell back on Treacle Tarte à Sucre as we'd come to call it, but with ice cream rather than custard.

In the morning I'd given Maud a card that I'd spent some time making. I found some magazine pages with simple maps of England and Quebec and pasted these on either side of the fold in a construction paper "card". Then I glued a braid of several colours of wool between Southampton and Montreal. On the front I carefully drew large letters to say "Best Mum Ever", and inside I wrote a simple message to say thanks for everything in the last year. As I should have anticipated, Maud burst into tears when she opened it, then gave me a big hug.

Later in the day, Ted and I took a walk after we'd all come back from church, and he said "Maud was really happy about the card. I know she got all weepy, but I think that's because she hasn't had a true chance to realize she is a mother again."

"I didn't mean to make her cry, but I wanted her to know how much she means to me too. Both of you do."

"Yes. Things happened so fast, we've not had time to absorb them. It's been hardly more than a year since your aunt died."

"I try to say a prayer each week to keep her memory alive. You know I've only got a couple of photos of her, and none from the time after we left France."

"That's a pity. I assume no camera."

"Yes. The one Tante Mathilde had got lost or stolen when we left France."

"I think mine got blown up by the V-1. Maud has one. We should take some photos or we won't have much record of this time. And maybe you'd like a camera for your birthday, which comes up soon."

"Ooh, yes. I'd like that."

"Perhaps we should shop around so you get one you'll be able to use for a while. Or maybe you'd like one that's simple and easy to use."

“I hadn’t thought about it. But it would be fun if you came with me to look around.”

“Yes, it would, wouldn’t it,” Ted agreed.

* * *

Over the next few weeks we got out shopping for cameras just twice. It became clear quite quickly that there were really two groups of cameras. The everyday family cameras were not too expensive – \$10 to \$20 seemed to be the general range. But the more "professional" ones, which seemed to favour 35 mm film, were around \$80 and up. Having one would invite attention and be attractive to steal. Eventually we were leaning towards a quite nice model that used 127 film and would fit in my handbag or satchel.

However, we were in a little shop that sold new and used cameras and also repaired them. It was a one-man operation in a tiny space in a rather run-down building, but while we were in the shop, the phone rang twice and three customers came to drop off or pick up cameras or films. The owner explained

“I don’t do developing, but I act as an agent for a friend who just does developing, and he’s really good.”

We asked him what he recommended for a camera that would serve for a decent number of years, and he said that for snapshots, you might as well use a cheap box camera. “For professional work with portraits or landscapes, you need a large format – a big negative – and that gets expensive both for the cameras and the film or plates. For journalism, decent pictures, and a lot of scientific work, it’s going to be a 35 mm camera. They tend to be in the \$100 range for the professional ones, but there are some decent ones for quite a bit less, for example the Kodak 35 or Argus C3. They’re in the \$50 range with case and strap. More with a flash. But I don’t deal in them new – the department stores can get a better price and the margin is too thin for me.”

Ted said “That’s a pity. It’s clear this is a place people trust for their photo needs.”

The man said “Actually, if you are prepared to consider a second-hand one, I’ve an Argus C3. It was bought less than a year ago by a guy who got really interested in photography and has been up north working. So now he’s some money and decided he wants a Leica, which I sold him. I can let you have his Argus C3 for \$20. It’s even got a case, but not the flash, but you can get that separately later. Flashbulbs can get costly and it takes care to get good results with flash. I’ll give a three month warranty for anything but obvious damage like dropping it.”

We decided to take the Argus and three films, one Kodacolor print film and two Ilford HP ones. The Kodak film was expensive, as the price included its processing, but not prints. Still, we wanted to get some colour pictures. We chose 20 frame films. Ted paid for the camera, but I paid for the films, and I said I'd pay for processing. My bank balance would take a bit of a dip.

We didn't quite wait for my birthday, which is June 5, but got it about a week before and celebrated on Saturday May 31. Since Lise's birthday was June 4, it was a joint celebration and we had a mob of girls. Actually, the mob was about half a dozen besides Lise and I, but at the age of 13 and 14, we could make a lot of noise.

We'd talked to Marthe and Lise, and there was a decision that presents be limited to \$1. Everyone seemed relieved that we sorted that out. I got Lise a simple set of math instruments that she had mentioned, but I sewed a small bag to hold the tin box that had a loop of strong ribbon so she could carry it over her wrist, or tie it to her book bag.

Marthe and Lise gave me a nice wash-bag and a nail kit. I didn't really have a proper wash bag, and had always borrowed a nail file or scissors, and my few other things were always loose, so these were welcome. Some people like frivolous gifts, but I value the practical. People forget that practical gifts that you use regularly are a reminder of who you got them from. Ted and Maud got Lise a nice scarf – a dressy one, sort of like the pictures of the Liberty ones that sometimes showed up in magazines. When I asked Maud where she found it, she said that Hannah Ronen knew a woman who made them, but that this one was second-hand so fit the price limit.

With the party and having a new camera, we took a number of pictures of ourselves, Marthe and Lise, the house and the river and well, we used up all the film and by a fortnight later I had to go and find an album and special ink to record the photos. Still, it was good to make sure we had a record. I wonder how many people have no pictures of their new life here.

I don't use my C3 any more, since there's now digital photography, but I still have it as a reminder of that time. It took thousands of pictures for me over several decades, and I learned how to develop my own pictures – well, the black and white ones. For a while I considered a career in photography, but that was several years later.

Canada gave me a birthday present too, in a way. Rationing ended on June 10.

* * *

News around the end of May about airplane crashes were of concern to Ted. On May 29 a US Army Air Forces Douglas C-54 Skymaster crashed on

approach in Japan. All 41 on board died. The same day, a DC-4, United Airlines Flight 521, failed to get off the ground at LaGuardia Airport in New York City. It ran off the runway and hit an embankment, killing 42 of the 48 people on board. At the time that was the record US aviation death toll. But the record lasted just one day, as on May 30 an Eastern Air Lines DC-4 disintegrated in flight at an altitude of 6,000 feet and crashed near Baltimore, killing all 53 people on board.

Ted was upset by these. TCA was going to be flying the Canadair North Star, which was a derivative of the DC-4 and C-54. The mood around the house was grey for a few days.

* * *

Two weeks after my birthday, I got a letter from Mr. Rushworth.

C Rushworth
Solicitor
Woolston, England
June 7, 1947

P Ronen
687 25e Avenue
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Dear Miss Ronen,

I have twice travelled to France to investigate several cases similar to and including your own.

There are documents of which I have managed to make partial copies that show your parents' and your aunt's property were transferred to a M. Charles Mauritz, who is apparently a cousin of your mother Maria. A source who did not wish to be named has indicated M. Mauritz was the person who denounced your parents. There may -- it is a small chance -- be documentary evidence, but it could be difficult to find or gain access to it.

Given that your aunt's property would pass to you, and that M. Mauritz would have no reasonable claim to it, I am commencing an action to have this restored to you. This

will take time, and the outcome is, as always, uncertain. The UK government has recently made strenuous complaints to the French government regarding property of UK citizens such as your aunt that has been misappropriated, and the French have accepted to aid in restitution. There is a minor possibility that Mauritz will also be penalized for his cooperation with the Nazis.

Quite separately from the matter of property, I have discovered that your maternal grandparents, Aurelie and Paul Richelieu, are still alive and I include their address after my signature below. I have not tried to contact them, as I am not sure whether you wish to do so. They broke contact with your mother when she married as far as I can determine from my informant, whose situation is delicate and wishes to remain anonymous.

Finally, my best wishes on your recent birthday.

Yours sincerely,

C. Rushworth, Solicitor

Ted said "In a way it's good news, but there's a sour side too."

I answered "That one of Mama's own family sent her to her death makes me really angry. Do you think my grandparents may be sympathetic to Mauritz?"

Maud said "It is horrifying if they are, but given that you never knew of them, we cannot be sure. However, it may always leave you wondering if you don't at least write to them to offer them a chance to know you and you them. But I would hope that you do not suffer hurt if they never reply."

"Yes. I shall have to write, but be ... detached."

Ted asked "How is it that your Aunt is related to you? The names are all different. For some reason we never talked about that."

"Charles Bonin was an older brother of Aurelie Richelieu, my grandmother. Tante Mathilde told me they came from Rennes, which is where they seem still to be. I got the feeling Charles and Mathilde were not made welcome by the Richelieus, possibly because they were prepared to accept my father. So it is possible they may never reply."

That very evening I drafted a letter in pencil. Maud and Ted helped me to edit it, then Marthe and Lise helped me to get my spelling and grammar

correct in French. The English version was as follows.

Paule Ronen
687 25e Avenue
Montreal, Quebec,
Canada

June 14, 1947

Dear M. and Mme. Richelieu,

I have been sent your address by my British solicitor Mr. C. Rushworth. He believes you are the parents of my mother, Maria Richelieu, who I have been informed died on October 31, 1943 in the Auschwitz concentration camp. My father died in Belsen two weeks after that camp was liberated.

My great-aunt Matilda took me to Southampton in England in 1940 before the German occupation. She died of a stroke last Easter. Two very wonderful English people who had each lost their spouses and daughters to hostilities took me in. Ted and Maud (Newman) married and adopted me as their daughter. We now live in Montreal at the address above.

My life is now here in Canada, and I do not intend to return to France to live. However, I believe I should at least inform you of my whereabouts and offer to exchange letters. If you have questions about my legal status, you may write to Mr. Rushworth at the address I include below. You may write to him in French.

Though I left France when I was young and have been in an English school since, I can read and speak French quite well, but my written grammar and spelling are poor.

Your granddaughter,

Paule Ronen

I posted this the next morning. Air Mail, of course.

* * *

June 20, 1947.

Ted came home quite excited that Friday night. He couldn't wait for Maud to get in, and as soon as she did, he said "I've something to discuss with both of you."

"Fire away," Maud said. She seemed to have picked up some local phrases.

"Fifty called me today. He saw a Ford Model B for sale, but says the motor is really gone. It likely won't start, so the price would be low. But he also knows a fellow in Cornwall who rolled his Model B and it was wrecked but has a decent engine as far as he can determine. It's a bit of a risk, but do you think we should try for them. It will mean doing some work, but I'm willing to give it a go."

"Do you know how?" Maud asked.

"I think so. But let's find out how much things cost, and if Marthe is willing to have a car in the driveway that is in pieces, and if we can put parts in the basement."

We told Marthe what we were thinking. She didn't have a car, and Maud mentioned that perhaps it would be a chance for all of us to learn to drive. That got a smile and definite approval. Ted asked if it was OK to use the 'phone and pay for long distance, then called Fifty to get the numbers of the two people with cars. I had to help talk to one, and we arranged to see the car with poor engine on the Saturday morning. Fifty said he'd give us a ride. That turned out to be important, as it was raining buckets. We also confirmed the wreck with the engine was available. And he got the impression the man's wife wanted it gone soon. How to do that might be tricky, but when Ted talked to Fifty, some options seemed possible.

Maud and I came along, as well as Denise. And it was a rotten day. Still, it showed the Ford was not leaking. Ted still got very wet checking the car as well as he could. Maud had thought to bring a small mirror she used for make-up – something she now used from time to time – as well as a flashlight. Oh. We used to say torch.

In any event, we haggled the car to \$100. Then Fifty seemed enthusiastic and said "Let's go to Cornwall and arrange the engine."

So that's what we did. The wreck really was, but Ted had seen plenty of crashed airplanes and he could see that the car had been rolled, likely in a ditch, so the motor hadn't apparently been impacted. Some haggling and \$40 plus removal of the wreck were agreed and we gave the man \$20 as deposit and would arrange to take things away within 10 days, but preferably before. Fifty happened to know a tow truck operator who'd take the wreck to a local scrapyards, and if Ted helped the man would lift out the engine and

bring it to Lachine. That would cost us a bit. Fifty had already thought of that, and said \$30 would cover it and Ted could ride with the tow truck. Another \$10 would bring the car with the decent body.

Ted took the next Wednesday off work as part of his vacation time and by evening we had a car and an engine at the back of the driveway. The engine was on a couple of pieces of wood – here called 2 by 4s – under a tarpaulin.

* * *

It took us about four weeks to get the car in working condition, then another week to get all the paperwork. Some evenings Ted also went with a driving instructor to brush up his skills. He'd learned to drive in the RAF, but didn't have a civilian license. In mid-July he went one morning and took his test. I think he was nervous, and he had to pay to use the driving instruction car to take the test, but he came home with his license.

Maud did the runaround to get the car's paperwork, and by July 20 all was in order.

The work to fix the car was quite an effort. I helped Ted, holding a lamp and passing tools. We spent quite a bit of money on tools, but figured we'd have them a while. What we didn't have was a hoist, so we used a lot of 2 by 4s under the engines and paid to borrow a couple of jacks with wheels from a local mechanic for a weekend. We lifted the front of the car to drop the dud engine.

Ted had laid down some boards so we could roll the car back enough so he and Maud and I and a couple of teenage boys who got a dollar each to help could move the old engine to one side. Then we pulled the car forward – the jacks were set up each side of the car and Ted had tied them onto it with chains – so using pick-axe handles as levers we could move an inch at a time with the jacks supporting the front and the back wheels still on the ground. We lowered the car onto the new engine that we'd levered onto blocks and shimmed to position. The boys were eager participants, and so was I. I found I rather liked mechanical work. Also knowing how a car functioned and the parts.

In the meantime, the school year had ended. I wanted to find a job to make some money rather than stay at home. Talking to Marcia and Rebecca, I learned that some kids got jobs in dairy bars serving ice cream. I guess these jobs were in demand. When I went to see what might be available, I was told there was a waiting list, though my abilities in both languages would be an advantage if a space opened up.

Across the street from one of the dairy bars I tried was an auto parts shop where we got a few bits and pieces like gaskets and nuts and bolts. Ted had given me a note saying what he wanted, so after asking about a job at the dairy bar, I went to get the parts, which included gasket sealant.

When I got to the shop, it took a couple of minutes before the owner came out. He grumbled in French about people being away in the summer, just as it got busy.

I asked for the parts we wanted, and included “mastique de joint”, which seemed to be understood. I got the few bits and pieces and we folded them in some newspaper. On a whim, I asked, in French, if the owner needed anyone to help in the shop during the summer.

“Oui, bien sûr. Mais qui? Les gars ne connaissent pas les noms des pièces comme avant la guerre.” [*Yes. Certainly. But who? Boys don't know the names of the parts like before the war.*]

“Voulez-vous me donner un essai?” [*Would you give me a try?*]

I suggested I'd work for free for two days, but if I worked out I'd expect a proper wage for the summer.

He replied that he couldn't go too far wrong with a two-day trial, and I started the next morning at 8 o'clock. Mechanics often worked early. I'd finish at 4:30 in the afternoon.

One thing that I did was find some bits of card and cut them into one inch by two inch pieces. I prepared two sets and when I learned a new name I made up two cards with the French name on one side and the English on the other. I sorted each set alphabetically, one in French, one in English and put elastic bands around each set. This helped, and M. Fournier, my employer, remarked that it was a good idea.

Ted and Maud were a little concerned about my working with Fournier. He was a man of about sixty. Maud said “If you get any bad feeling, you're to leave right away.” In later years I understand her concern. Too many young women have had to deal with men trying to molest them. As it turned out, I think Fournier was rather interested in me as a young woman, but respected the appropriate boundaries. We'd seen him and his wife in church, and Ted and Maud made a point to say hello that first Sunday, and we always offered a greeting when we saw them.

After a couple of days, Fournier said he was surprised how quickly I'd taken to the work, and we agreed I'd get 25 cents an hour. We set up a time-sheet.

I liked working in the auto-parts store. I pretty quickly got to know the regular customers, and learned how to sell some extras.

“Have you seen this new inspection mirror?” I'd ask with a smile. Fournier said I could almost charm the dollars out of the customers' wallets. Well, I didn't force them to buy things. Tools, I learned, were easy

to sell, especially the ones that were less than a dollar or two. I made sure to know what we had, and talked to M. Fournier about which were new or different or things that got lost or damaged easily like drill bits or sockets or screwdriver attachments.

Grease and other lubricants, and things like the gasket sealant I'd bought were also easy to promote. "How are you doing for sealant?" was a natural question when a customer bought a gasket.

I also got to know some of the wholesalers who we telephoned when we needed a part. And I learned how to read the catalogues and the guides to select the right parts. Window wipers had to be the right length, and some had special ways they attached. I learned how to measure nut and bolt thread sizes and to note the occasional left-hand thread. By the end of the summer, my head was full of this knowledge. Rebecca and Marcia thought it was a hoot, but they also were a bit jealous of my wages.

* * *

Though the car was our big excitement, I'd not forgotten that June 29 was Ted and Maud's first wedding anniversary. It was a Sunday, but I suggested that perhaps they should take a couple of nights away, and they decided on Québec city.

Much as I wanted to see Québec too, I said they should book a nice hotel room and spend two nights, then come home for Sunday dinner when we'd celebrate together. Marthe and Lise already had planned to bake a ham, and I was going to try to make a simple fruitcake.

Ted and Maud both took time off from work to get away on the Friday afternoon. Nate was only too pleased to have them celebrate. Summer was quiet anyway. I worked in the auto-parts shop and Rebecca and Marcia came to fetch me at the end of my shift and we had lunch in a diner and then went to a matinee. It was a good day, though I was still a bit green that I didn't see Québec. Maud did give me a good description, and I did get there a year later with a school group. It was, of course, important for Ted and Maud to have some time for each other. We'd had a busy year.

* * *

Saturday 20 July, 1947, was the day we first took to the road in our car. In fact, Ted was going to drive me to work. Fournier opened Saturday mornings. He'd generally just operate the shop alone, since it was usually amateur mechanics who came on Saturday. However, he realized my add-on

sales could boost profits, so asked me to come. We didn't open until 9 and would work to 1 p.m. So I had breakfast at the usual schoolday time – there was anticipation about the car being used, and Marthe and Lise were excited too. Then Ted drove me to work. The car had already been started and driven up and down the driveway, so we knew it worked. In fact, it went well. Not a fancy automobile, but it would give us a lot of freedom.

I was picked up at one o'clock too. The day wasn't too hot and steamy. We'd found the humid summer days a shock at first. Ted had gone out and bought a pair of electric fans – Marthe and Lise already had them. The previous week had been hot, then there'd been a big rainstorm, but this day was nice.

Ted and Maud had decided we needed to take a drive, and they'd filled the tank with gasoline – formerly petrol to us, of course. We didn't go very far. Just a drive to L'Île-Perrot. Along the way we found a small diner and had hamburgers and chips – I mean French fries.

Maud had remembered my camera and we took some pictures. At a small park at la Pointe-du-Moulin we ran into a couple who were also taking pictures and we took photos of them together with their camera and they did the same for us.

For a while we sat on a blanket and watched the water. Ted had his arm round Maud. I felt very much at peace, more so than for a long, long time. I hoped Ted and Maud had similar feelings. We still had a long way to go to sort out all the loose ends. And perhaps some of the demons. I know I was still uncertain who I really was. English or French, along with Canadian. Catholic? Jewish? Or ... what? And I'd soon have to start thinking of a career.

Marthe was going to Philippe's for supper. I'm not sure what Lise was going to do, but I remembered that there were plans. We didn't have to be back for supper at a particular time, and the hamburger lunch was enough for our main meal of the day. Still, Ted didn't want to leave things too late. The car still might have some hiccups. So around half-past five we started back. It took us a bit over an hour, as we detoured once or twice to investigate something or other that caught our eye.

I helped Maud make a salad for supper while Ted checked the car, though I was pretty sure from the way it ran that all was fine, and it was. The excitement of the day meant we all were in bed by 9. We said we thought we'd read, but I'm sure we all fell asleep quickly.

* * *

On July 23 a letter arrived from France. It was in French, so I'll give a translation.

Rennes
July 15, 1947

Dear Paule,

I trust I may call you that.

Paul and I were quite surprised by your letter, and shocked to hear how your mother and father perished. I think we had pushed the idea that our daughter might have died to the very back of our mind, and now we must confront our grief.

Through family gossip we had heard how Charles Mauritz denounced your parents, but never realized that this would lead to so awful an outcome. We mourn the loss of a daughter, but for you it must be truly terrible. Enquiries have also suggested that Charles may have done so to get their property, now properly yours. We are writing to M. Rushworth in case our assistance is of use.

It is also, for us, a reckoning. No matter what our feelings about your father's origins, we should not have cut off communication. That we did so and have not had a chance to know you is a great sorrow. We hope you will at least let us know more about you and your life and accept our contrition.

Your grandfather Paul (I wonder if you are named after him) is not very well, which is why this letter is in my hand. I enclose a photograph taken in 1943, which may be the most recent we have.

I do not know if you knew of your uncle Robert. Sadly, he was killed in an artillery exchange between the Americans and Germans in the summer of 1944. We have one grandson, Julien, who is now 10. He and his mother Sophie live with us, as the battle that killed Robert destroyed their house.

For what it is worth, I can read English fairly well, but will be happy to overlook mistakes in French or the odd word of English.

Your grandmother,

Aurelie Richelieu

“How do you feel about the letter?” Maud asked.

“I’m not sure that she – or particularly my grandfather – really are happy I wrote. But I think it best if I take what she has written at face value and correspond with her on that basis. She may think I’m an imposter wanting to get something from them.”

“That’s possible. It may be why she is going to write to Rushworth,” Ted responded.

Maud said “Your attitude seems about right, Paule. Take the letter and what they say at face value, but don’t get drawn into doing anything. As long as you are courteous, there can be no complaints. But you don’t have to go out of your way to do them favours. And you don’t know what relationship they have with Mauritz. He could be working to try to block Rushworth from recovering your property.”

I said “I suspect that even if some of the property is recovered, there won’t be much to benefit me. All the European countries have exchange controls, and I’m sure there will be fees and costs all along the way.”

“That is unfortunately the case,” Ted said. “At least you aren’t holding your breath for a pot of gold.”

I waited a few days to write back to my grandmother. It wasn’t that I considered ending the chain of correspondence. However, I didn’t want it to become too important to my life, then have the Richelieus stop writing. And they were older. I didn’t know if they were likely to be around for very long.

When I did write, I gave a straightforward account of what had happened to me since Tante Mathilde took me to England. I kept the narrative to a minimum, but I did say that I cared deeply for Ted and Maud and that they were very good parents. I also gave a capsule of our life in Lachine, that is, home, school and church.

In closing my letter I asked if Aurelie would tell me something of her life. I didn’t think the sharing should be all one-sided.

Over time, we developed a regular but not frequent correspondence that was polite and interesting, but never veered towards affection. In part, I think the efforts of Mr. Rushworth were putting some stress on Mauritz, whose relationship to the Richelieus was an unknown. In fact, I wrote to Mr. Rushworth to let him know I was in contact with Aurelie, but that I would be circumspect about anything to do with his activity on my behalf apart from giving the Richelieus his address. In fact, he sent me a note that

Aurelie had written to ask him to verify that I was who I claimed to be. He said that when he wrote back, he had informed her that he had notified the British Embassy in Paris of his activities. I don't know if he was required to let the embassy know about his work in France. Perhaps it was just a way to appear more official.

My curiosity about Rushworth's anonymous informant was high, but talking to Maud I decided that pursuing that was unlikely to be helpful just now. Some years later I would be able to go to France and learn more, in fact that the informant was Sophie, Robert's widow. In that she had been taken in by the Richelieus, she felt her situation and that of Julien were tenuous. By the time Sophie was able to tell me herself, Paul had died and Aurelie was frail, with Sophie looking after her.

* * *

The first weekend in August – it was a long weekend in some provinces, but not Quebec – Marthe and Lise had gone to Lachute to see the family there. I forget if Fifty drove them. Philippe or his mother had a car, and in any case he had gone along too. There were a couple of households of relatives, and space to do things. On Sunday night, as planned, they got back after supper time, having eaten the big meal mid-day and just a snack for the road. I was just in bed when Lise knocked and came in.

“Ca va, la fin de semaine?”

I answered in French “Great. You?”

“Yes. Really good. There's a couple of ponies to ride, and hay in the barn to climb on. If you fall you don't get hurt, well, as long as you stay in the area where there's hay below.”

“Did people treat Philippe OK? You know, not getting awkward about his hook?”

“Well, it was kind of like with us. Takes some time to get used to, then it's just Philippe. Though now I'm sometimes a bit ... unsettled.”

My guess was that Lise wondered if Philippe and Marthe would get together. I didn't get much of an intuition of that either way yet, but it wasn't a silly idea. Marthe was only 31 now – she'd married early, so she was five or six years older than Philippe, but that wasn't too much. Certainly since he'd been around she was brighter. Smiled more. Actually was easier to be around because you weren't so afraid to tumble her into tears. That never happened, but sometimes it felt like it was about to. I said “Are you worried your Mum might team up with Philippe?”

“I guess so. Though it's not that I would think that was a bad thing. Just that I'd wonder where it left me.”

“Your Mum really cares a lot about you. I don’t think that’s going to stop.”

“Yeah. I know that. Somehow knowing and believing aren’t exactly the same.”

“How true. I’ve had those feelings. Less lately.”

“Thanks for listening, Paule.”

“No problem. Sleep tight.”

* * *

The last weekend in August before the Labour Day weekend – the 23rd and 24th – Arthur Kennedy invited us to come to the family cottage in the Laurentians, not far from Sainte-Adèle. Marcia gave me written directions from the centre of Lachine. I told M. Fournier that I wanted the day off that Saturday, and he wished us a good weekend.

We were lucky the invitation wasn’t for the Labour Day weekend, when it rained a lot. We had a rather hot pair of days, but we could go in the lake and cool off. I’d had to get a swimsuit – English nomenclature "bathing costume" – and so had Maud. Ted had one, but Maud wisely checked for its condition, which turned out to be all right.

On the drive to the cottage, Maud said “Ted, you really surprised me in how you knew how to change the engine and get the car fixed up. I always thought of you as a manager, not a mechanic.”

“Actually surprised myself. I’ve never done anything like that before.”

“What! You mean it could have all ended up being hauled off to the scrap yard?” This was the most cross I’d ever seen Maud. And cross with Ted no less.

“I was pretty certain I’d be able to get the old engine out, and fairly sure I could put in the new engine if it had all the same measurements. My main worry was that the two engines would be a little different and the new one wouldn’t fit in the old space. In fact, the engines were different, but not where the nuts and bolts went, so I didn’t have to make too many adjustments.”

“I just wish you’d talked to me about that. It’s not like us to keep things from one another.”

“Sorry. Yes. I should have mentioned my concerns. I think I just really felt we needed a car. For instance, for doing what we’re doing today.”

“When you put it that way, I guess I can’t be too angry,” Maud concluded.

Katherine had accompanied her husband and daughter, and whatever had been said must have done some good, because everyone stayed in a good

mood. Katherine wanted to know about how our strange family had come together.

“Marcia’s told me a bit about you, but would it be too annoying to have to tell your story again?”

Maud acted as our main raconteur, but we all added bits and pieces. And we asked about Katherine too. It seemed her parents were quite well off, and she’d been raised, as she put it, “rather like a princess, which doesn’t serve me well now”. That struck me as ... what was that big word perspicacious. Not a good time to trot it out then, though.

I’d never learned to swim, so Ted set about teaching me. Maud surprised us by being rather efficient in the water. She swam out about 100 yards to a raft that was in the lake for swimmers to jump off or rest upon.

I got the hang of floating quite quickly. Actually moving wasn’t so good. I ended up swallowing a bit of water and coughing and spluttering. However, by Sunday afternoon, I was able to make a bit of progress for a few yards. I’d need more practice. Maybe it was worth going to the swimming pool sometimes.

Saturday afternoon, Ted and Maud had gone out for a while in the canoe that was part of the cottage equipment. They worked well together, as always. Katherine said “Amazing how well they paddle in unison. Arthur, we should try to do as well.”

Arthur, to his credit, said “Yes. Worth aiming for. And thank you for noting that.” Later Marcia and I walked up to the village nearby where there was a small shop. I don’t know if we called them *dépanneurs* at the time. We picked up some bottles of Coca Cola. As we walked back, Marcia said “Mom and Dad have said they’re going to try to make life more peaceful. It’s been a lot nicer in the last few weeks.”

“Have you told them – you know – so they realize you appreciate it?”

“Yeah. I know it’s important that they feel good about getting along.”

“I wonder if it’s like the Abraham Lincoln adage that people are about as happy as they make up their minds to be,” I mused.

“Did Lincoln really say that?”

“I don’t know. Apparently it was reported around 1916 or so by a columnist called Frank Crane. He may have made it up, but felt giving the name of Lincoln would make it seem more important. But the idea makes sense. If your folks make an decision and an effort to get along, they probably will find that it’s easier to get along. You know, positive reinforcement.”

“Sure hope so. It’s much, much nicer when they’re comfortable with each other.”

“Yeah. I think I’d jump in the St. Lawrence in December if Ted and Maud were fighting all the time. I’ve had my life foundation ripped away twice already, once in 1940 and once in 1946. I don’t think I could handle a

third.”

“Looking at your life that way, it must be like walking across a wobbly trestle.”

“A bit over a year ago, that would be pretty much how I felt. Now I kind of feel OK. I’ve a family, a strange, odd, loving family. And I love them. I don’t need them to get me fancy things, but small, thoughtful gifts are a great boost. And I want to do the same for them. We’ve got a place to live, jobs, and now a car. Not a great one, but as Ted says, four wheels and goes are the important features.”

Marcia laughed. “True! Who needs a Rolls Royce or a Cadillac that’s only parked.”

We were about to skip down the driveway to the cottage when I cautioned “Better not shake the bottles.”

“Oops. Yes. Big mess if they blow up. Happened at a party last month and all the chairs nearby were sticky and had to be hosed down.”

* * *

Labour Day weekend the weather was wet, as I’ve said. There was lots of getting ready for the new school year. Lise was going into grade 8. Some girls left school at this point, so she was going beyond the what many considered regular schooling.

The news had reported on violence in India leading up to partition and afterwards, but the scale of this grew as people migrated urgently towards where they felt they would be safe. On top of World War II, we now had more bloodshed. The British were exhausted, and were not about to step in and act as police.

On the Saturday afternoon, the doorbell rang and it was the new Curé, Father Vachon. We ushered him in and took off his wet things and put his umbrella on the back porch. It was a furiously wet day, ending up with an inch of rain by the time the weather system passed.

In French, he said “Hi, I’m Father Vachon the new curate. Just came to introduce myself and get to know some of the parishioners.”

We introduced ourselves, and offered a cup of tea. He switched to English “I never realized that you were an English couple, though the name Newman is English. And I’ve heard your daughter Paule speak French, and I think the accent is a bit European, but ...”

We tumbled out the story, with some French and some English as Marthe and Lise came into the living/dining room.

Ted said “You speak excellent English.”

“Spent time as a youth with the Jewish kids. But it paid off when I was a chaplain in the War. Sometimes got shuffled around when things were messy. And one time I was assigned to some RCAF squadrons in Holland, so we had French and English and Dutch and with prisoners some German.”

Ted said “I know. I was in the RAF.”

“Perhaps at Eindhoven or Nijmegen?” Vachon asked.

“Eindhoven, yes. Though I wasn’t on the field on New Year’s Day 1945.”

“Afraid I was. Some rather scruffy ‘erks’ from a strange group who called themselves China Brits – 247 Squadron officially – pulled me into a slit trench that was impossibly packed. After the attack that left 141 planes damaged or destroyed they calmly made a cup of tea and brought out some brandy. I later learned about 20% of that squadron was ex-cons. Apparently nothing got stolen among the squadron, but the surrounding countryside was considered fair opportunity.”

We laughed, but I’d actually heard that from Ted earlier.

Vachon said “Now I know who you are, I’ll try to make sure those with great enthusiasm in the Church don’t pressure you to put Paule in French school. Truthfully, it would not be an appropriate place, and some people don’t realize that a quiet welcome achieves a lot more than leaning on people.”

Marthe, who was getting better in English, had clearly grasped the sense. In French she said “It would be nice if they stopped trying to get Lise into the convent. She wants to get more education, then decide what she wants to do.”

Vachon responded, also in French, “Yes. There’s always been this great energy to get vocations. I’ve seen too many drawn in who then leave and, worse, leave the church. We need to keep our community.”

I liked this curate, but I suspected that before long he would collide with the orthodoxy of the Quebec priesthood. Still, we could hope.

* * *

My journal entries are a bit less voluminous in the Autumn of 1947. M. Fournier still had me come on Saturdays. He said it was his best day for what he called "easy profits". I think he meant that the customers bought small items that he could order in quantity. A lot of the items sold in a parts shop are one-off, and you have to do all the paperwork, possibly more than for a gross of tire gauges.

I’d found a company that would put Fournier’s company name and phone number on a tire gauge that we normally sold for a dollar. With printing, they would cost 65 cents. I suggested that we put them on a card on the counter, with a heading “Regular \$1, Special \$0.79”.

“Small margin,” M. Fournier said.

“They have a pen clip, and people will have your phone number handy.”

“Well, not much to lose.”

We got them in at the beginning of October and had to order more by mid November. Somehow it seemed half the customers would be about to pay and see them and pull one off the card and add it to their order.

Later we did the same thing with a feeler gauge, though those were used only by people who got their hands oily on engines. Still, I was considered the ace salesperson. The pay wasn't big, but it did give me a bit of pocket money.

During the Fall, Maud took driving lessons and got her license at the end of November. This meant either Ted or Maud could pick me up or drop me off if it were unpleasant out or we felt it might not be safe.

Once Maud had her license, Ted and Maud suggested Marthe might like to learn to drive too. She surprised us, as she already knew, but had let her license lapse during the War. So with Maud she practised a bit and got the license renewed. Generally she didn't drive our car unless one of Maud or Ted were with her, but it gave us an extra driver in an emergency.

School was now quite comfortable for me. I had some friends, I knew the routines, and I was prepared to work hard. School work, my job, and my friends kept me pretty busy. We got to a few movies. I really liked *The Ghost and Mrs Muir*. Lise came with Rebecca, Marcia and I for that one. Her English was improving and she said she understood most of it.

Ted didn't say a lot about his work, but I think it was going well. There'd been a couple of panics at the start of the year, but he got to see his brother because he had to go to Calgary to take care of one of the problems. The other panic was a crash. Fortunately a test flight. Of course, "unfortunately" if you were one of the two pilots. Something had failed. Ted suspected engine trouble. Anyway, TCA seemed happy with him, and he with them.

Maud was still working part-time with Nate Ronen. She was gradually taking on a more active role. Nate had also made her a couple of working suits, as he called them. They were tailored skirt and jacket combinations, intended to be worn with a simple blouse. Both the jacket and skirt had pockets for notepad, pencil, tailor's chalk, etc. so that Maud could take down measurements or do similar jobs.

They had set up a sturdy stool with steps to its platform so she could measure trousers for hemming, and she would actually do the work if Nate were busy. The business was largely bespoke suits, but Maud persuaded Nate to start to stock some easy-to-sell items, much as I had in the parts store.

Interestingly, some women who saw Maud's working suits asked about them. Nate wasn't sure how well he could add women's suits to his offerings. Maud found a solution in teaming up with a local woman who ran a dress-

making shop. The two shops shared the orders and the work for the suits. It wasn't a huge business, but Hannah Ronen said it did allow for some extras during the holidays.

* * *

When Halloween came round we realized it had been a year since we arrived in Canada. Wow. I found myself thinking a lot in the few days just before the Friday night, though at that point I wasn't quite clear on what was bothering me.

In any event, Ted and Maud said we were going out on the Saturday night. Ted had decided we would dress up – though not in the white or black tie required prior to around 1941 – and eat at the Ritz Carlton.

Ted had been to Nate Ronen and got a new suit made earlier in the year, and Maud had her new working suit, which fitted her very well and had a definite look of class. The main panic was deciding what I was going to wear.

However, Maud had taken me shopping in late summer for a couple of blouses, and one of these I'd not worn yet. But she surprised me with a new skirt and a matching sleeveless vest, like the waistcoat of a man's suit, even including the buttons and pockets. In some discussions about this outfit with Marthe, the latter had suggested some gold-coloured chains to give the appearance of a pocket watch. It looked very classy.

The icing on the cake was when she said "I've also got you a pair of nylons."

Ted polished up my shoes. There wasn't time to go shopping for shoes, especially as I'd not want to get a pair that was a one-event wonder. At least I now had two pairs of shoes that were presentable, and one of these looked all right with my new outfit. Tante Mathilde's handbag completed my ensemble. It was leather, so Ted put some dubbin on it, and we polished the brass clasp and fittings.

We drove to the Ritz Carlton. November 1 wasn't too busy downtown and we were able to park easily. As we walked into the hotel, there was a mirror, and I caught sight of the three of us. Possibly for Maud and Ted a flash-back moment to a year and a half earlier in Winchester. Except now there was a family that was smartly dressed.

I said "Did you see our reflection in the mirror?"

Maud said "Yes. Are we the same family as in Winchester?"

Ted said "Of course we are. And I even think we may be better dressed than some of the other people here tonight."

Ted's opinion was more or less correct. There were certainly some folk in fancier clothes, but when I looked around in the lobby and in the dining

room, I got no sense that we were out of place in our appearance and dress. On the other hand, most of the women were in evening gowns. Only a couple of the other women were in what the English call a costume.

However, between our main course and dessert, I wanted the washroom, realizing as I had the thought that in England I'd have said lavatory. Maud and I went together to the very fancy "powder room". I'd used the toilet and was washing my hands and using my comb to adjust my hair when a lady at the next sink said "That suit's really nice. Can I ask where you got it?"

"Actually, my mother works for a tailor named Ronen. She made it there."

As I said this, it struck me that I'd hardly talked of Maud as my mother. In how she'd got this outfit organized for me, she really was being my mother. At that moment, Maud came out of the cubicle and I stepped aside so she could wash her hands. As she did so, she said "Thank you for your kind comments. It never hurts a young woman to be complimented on her outfit."

The woman said "Your suit's classy too. And pockets! How many times do I wish I had somewhere to put a tissue and not have to grab for my purse."

Maud proved the worth of the pockets by taking out a card for Nate's shop. "This is where I work with Mr. Ronen. We have an arrangement with a local dressmaker to tailor ladies' suits, but I don't have the phone number at hand. However, if you call the number on the card, we can provide it. Depending on the day, I might be the person to answer."

"Thanks. I may just do that. You have a nice evening now. It's been good to meet you."

Dinner at the Ritz-Carleton was really nice. They offered vichyssoise – cold leek and potato soup, and I asked if I could have that.

Ted said "Absolutely. In fact, I've never tried it, but I've heard it's very nice." We both found it wonderful.

Maud had the consommé with sherry. She let me have a taste in exchange for a taste of my soup. I think my choice was better, but the simplicity of the broth and sherry was interesting. Probably really good if you were feeling a bit out of sorts as it wouldn't upset your stomach.

I decided on the braised venison for my main course. When I saw it on the menu, it took a few minutes to get the image of Bambi out of my head. Then I realized I'd eaten mutton and particularly lamb from time to time, and I found lambs cute too. The venison really didn't seem so much different from beef. A little darker maybe.

Ted chose the roast rib of beef, while Maud had salmon. It was all very nice. In fact, eating suppressed conversation for a while. It was only after Maud and I came back from the washroom that we talked much.

Ted said "It's been quite a year for us all."

Maud replied "Think of the night you showed up at Radstock Road in

February '46, Ted. Juxtapose that image with this. And how Paule – we called her Paula then – looked when we took her in on Good Friday of that year. Well, she's a different person, and not just in appearance."

I said quietly "That's true."

Ted picked up on my mood. "Giving you pause? You know, making you think how much has changed. People come and gone."

"I guess so. Like Maud said, I'm not the same person, and I sometimes wonder a bit who I am. Don't the two of you get those moments?"

"Of course," Maud said. "But fortunately we're usually too busy to spend too much time worrying about it."

"I don't think 'worry' is the right word. I'm not unhappy about how everything's worked out. I love being part of this family. Love the two of you. Just if anyone asked me to tell them who I am, I'm not sure what I'd say. You know. French? English? Canadian? Catholic? Jewish? Child? Woman?"

Ted said "Paule has more sides to her story than Maud or I. But perhaps it's better to take that as a positive. You can slide into different groups more easily than Maud or I, though I've been finding myself using French lately in a few situations."

"Really?" Maud said. "I know that occasionally we get someone in the shop who speaks first in French and I answer them as best I can. It's helped to be around Marthe and Lise and their friends and family. But most people switch even if I'm prepared to continue and know the words and phrases. Still, responding right away seems to make for a smoother conversation."

Ted said "That's sort of what I meant. In a coffee shop the other day I ordered coffee and a doughnut. Even managed to say I'd prefer milk to cream, and did the payment. Had to ask if they could take a \$5 bill."

Maud asked "What do you think the next year holds for us?"

Ted responded with a question "Should we start looking at houses? We're not yet in a good position to buy as far as I know, but I'd like to learn about the market and where we might want to be."

Maud and I agreed. We decided we'd start looking at advertisements and perhaps inspect houses. Ted said he'd talk to Mr. Green about how mortgages worked here in Canada.

We ordered dessert. I couldn't resist Baked Alaska. Ted chose apple pie. Not very adventurous, but it was a good one. Maud ordered Peach Melba. There was tasting all round. We finished with coffee. Ted and Maud had ordered a cocktail before dinner, but wine would have meant a bottle, which was too much for just the two of them.

Maud said "It's a pity we won't have a photo of us."

But I'd had thought ahead, though in all the excitement, it had slipped my mind. "I've my camera in my handbag."

Ted said “I wondered why it looked so heavy.”

When the waiter came with our coffee, I asked him if he would take a picture of us. The light wasn't very good, so he'd have to hold the camera steady. But he said “I do some photography, and I know how to hold my breath. But when you leave, why don't I join you in the lobby. There's a well lit alcove with a floral decoration.”

That's what we did. The film was black and white, which was faster than the Kodacolor, which in any case I'd read was not set for artificial light so the colours would look funny, even with a flash. But I didn't have a flash. Anyway, we had our waiter take several shots, and while a couple were a bit fuzzy, two were excellent.

* * *

Ted was planning to go to the Remembrance Day ceremonies with Philippe and Joe, but once again the weather was terrible. And we'd had a drenching on November 8 too. Ted took the car to work. He usually took the bus, but didn't want to get wet like last year.

That Saturday, Lise and I went to a matinee film. I forget exactly which. It was something Lise had wanted to see that was now in rerun in the secondary cinemas, and Marthe had noted that the film was coming and asked if I would take Lise. She didn't want a 13-year-old alone. I could understand that. In fact, I liked having Lise with me rather than being alone, even in the daytime, if I weren't on a regular travel route.

Marthe's reason for asking wasn't entirely for Lise. She and Philippe invited Maud and Ted to join them for lunch at Philippe's house. Well, his parents' house. His father had married his mother, Michelle, later in life. In 1942, at age 62, he'd had a heart attack and died. Michelle was in her mid-fifties now, and ran a florist's shop. I never figured out if she had any ownership, but she clearly was in charge there.

The lunch had a purpose beyond socializing, as Marthe and Philippe wanted to tell Ted and Maud that they were planning to marry, and weren't sure what would be happening with Marthe's house. I learned this the next day, when Ted, Maud and I took a walk down to the river after we'd come back from church.

Ted said “We're not quite ready to buy. I think we need more money for the down payment than we currently have. As far as I can tell, houses we might be interested in are between six and ten thousand dollars, and we'd need to get furniture, stove and fridge. We've got a bit over 25 hundred in the bank now.”

Maud asked “It seems that renting is still difficult. We have a good situation compared to most right now.”

“Yes. We were honest in telling Marthe that we were going to start to look, but it would be awkward to be under pressure to find a place.”

I asked “Where do Philippe and Marthe plan to live?”

Ted answered “They’re trying to figure that out. The house Philippe lives in is quite similar to Marthe’s, though it does have a powder room on the main floor. And it has a bigger lot, as well as a garage. So I think it is the more attractive house, but they still use an ice-box, and I don’t think the heating is as modern.”

We were quiet as we walked. It was dry but cool. On the freezing point now when we were close to the maximum for the day.

Maud said “It’s really not our decision what Marthe and Philippe do, and if we were buying elsewhere they wouldn’t have a say in that, which would leave Marthe having to decide what to do.”

Ted answered “Yes. In some ways we should get busy looking so we don’t get caught having to move suddenly.

“Oh. You know I went to see Michael McPhee at Canadair in September. Now we have a car, I can get over to Cartierville. When I did I noticed this neighbourhood that McPhee says is called Norvick. It has a lot of housing that was built for wartime workers. Now they’re letting the tenants buy them. Pretty small, but maybe some are on the open market.”

“Isn’t it likely to be awkward to get in and out of town on bus or street-car?” I asked.

“Don’t know. In fact, I know very little about anything concerning the area, but it bears investigation. Apparently there’s similar housing near Dorval, so we’d better start driving round and spending some time in the Library.”

In fact, we took a drive that afternoon around Dorval. The next weekend we did the same in Cartierville. There weren’t many signs of houses for sale, but Maud took notes on what we saw and we started making phone calls to agents.

Our research on transport suggested that Cartierville was going to be awkward for me getting to school, Maud to Nate’s shop and Ted to Dorval Airport. We put Cartierville on the low-priority list.

* * *

On December 6 we had an appointment to see a house just south west of Dorval Airport. It would be more difficult travelling for Maud and I,

but easier for Ted, though there was a train station not far away, in fact, walkable. Whether services were convenient would have to be investigated.

The house we saw wasn't one of the Wartime Housing Ltd. ones. In fact, it seemed to be an old cottage or farm dwelling. It didn't have a proper basement, heating was with wood stoves. Someone had painted quickly, and there were some new curtains and some new fittings on cupboards, but when you opened them, they looked old. I spotted what seemed to be mouse droppings in one corner. When I tried flushing the toilet, it didn't work properly.

"I don't think I could live there," Maud said.

Ted added "The agent kept talking about the new decoration and the terrible cost of houses now. I think they're trying to pump up the price."

The conclusion was that we'd keep looking.

* * *

December 8, 1947.

It was a bit snowy, but not too cold. However, also the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Since it wasn't a public holiday, there was an evening Mass at 7 p.m. Ted got in late from work and begged off, but did drive us to the church, though the car slipped around a bit, so Maud said we'd walk back.

As we trudged through the snow I asked "Do you understand all the fuss over original sin and Mary's supposed immaculate conception?"

Maud laughed. "You like asking awkward questions! But I can't say I really ever think about original sin. The priests seem to love to argue over things that won't put food on the table."

"Yeah. And there's all this dancing around the subject."

"What do you mean?" Maud asked.

"Well, isn't it about sex? That Mary is supposed to be human, and how humans get made."

"Like I said, you ask awkward questions. Though perhaps our society makes them awkward. We treat how babies are made as if it is either sacred or dirty, rather than a straightforward physical reality. That makes it hard to talk about."

"Can I ask about you and Ted and whether there'll be a baby? You said something before, but I'm not sure I remember it correctly."

"I suppose that's fair. Actually Ted and I don't do anything to prevent a baby. In any case, as a Catholic, that would be forbidden."

"I'm not sure what you mean."

“Well, you said your aunt told you the facts of life. Did that include how the sperm and egg get together?”

“Yes. She was pretty detailed. And we’d actually seen some dogs mating, so I have some idea, though it seems a bit ... icky.”

“Yes. I’ll admit sex is "icky" as you say. But it’s also rather pleasant, fun even, as long as you’re with someone you like and who treats you with kindness and sharing.”

“Tante Mathilde warned me it isn’t always nice, and sometimes violent.”

“Yes, I knew a woman who’d been raped as a girl. And she got pregnant because of it. She gave up the baby, though she wouldn’t have had any way to take care of it. But she really was hurt. She said she wanted to love the child because it was innocent, but when she saw it, all she felt was hatred. Talk about original sin. I know it messed up her marriage when she met someone she thought she could get along with.”

“But you can prevent getting pregnant?”

“There’s some ways to block the sperm. French letters, though I don’t think they have anything to do with France, are rubber tubes that go over the man’s ... penis. I was going to say 'whatsit', which shows how much we are embarrassed to talk about sex. And apparently there are devices that are like a rubber cup that a woman can put inside to stop the sperm getting to the womb. But they’re not easy to obtain.”

“But you haven’t got pregnant?”

“No. I wouldn’t mind either way. But I had an infection after Jenny was born, and I think that’s blocked something. I think that’s what I told you last year.”

“But it doesn’t stop you and Ted ... er ... you know?”

“No. We enjoy each other. Not mad crazy people or anything like that. But Ted and I weren’t expecting much in that way when we got married, at least that’s the impression I have. We ended up chatting and talking about things, and somehow – perhaps because there wasn’t a lot of anticipation and expectation – we were able to tell each other when we were enjoying something, including sex. So now I think that side of things is better than I remember with Jeremy, and I think also for Ted. That doesn’t mean there was anything wrong with our previous marriages. We’ve just been lucky to find a bit of extra joy now.”

“I’m glad. And thanks for telling me.”

Maud said “I’ve realized that the embarrassment of talking about things like this could be an obstacle to you asking or telling about important matters. You are probably starting to notice boys and boys are probably starting to take an interest in you. So I’ll try to always be willing to talk to you about anything. I know it’s probably not easy for you either.”

“Thanks.

“Do you think there’s a kettle on? I’m feeling cold.” I said.

“Marthe made what’s referred to as a coffee cake, and there’s a piece each left.”

* * *

On December 13 – Saturday morning – Philippe and Marthe went to see the priest at Saints-Anges. I don’t think they saw Fr. Vachon, as he was just the curate. When they got home, they said they had an announcement. They were going to get married on December 27.

Ted got out the sherry and we toasted their future happiness. Lise didn’t seem surprised, so I think Marthe had talked to her in advance. Later Maud said she wasn’t surprised either. Apparently she’d heard Marthe being sick on a couple of mornings. When Maud told me, I said “Oops!”

Maud said “Well, that is one way to put it. However, I think they just got a bit ahead of themselves.”

However, that conversation was a few days later. After the congratulations, Ted asked the awkward question “Does that mean that you are going to want to sell this house, or else to have us leave to give you more room?”

Philippe answered “We haven’t quite decided what we want, but for the time being think the best solution for us is to add to the house on trente-deuxième Avenue. We think an addition at the back could be made for my mother. It’s close to the current powder room, and we could enlarge that into the addition for a bath or shower, and give her a sort of apartment. It might be possible to make it two stories high and get another room upstairs too.”

“So would you plan to sell this house or rent it out?” Maud asked.

Philippe again took charge. “We know we can’t build until the Spring, and Marthe has a double bed here. So for now we think I’d move in here with all of you. Truthfully, your rent is helpful, and the arrangement seems to work. I hope my presence won’t be too much of a change.”

“You’re here quite regularly already,” Maud said, laughing.

“That’s true, but not the same as living here with laundry and morning shaving and so on.”

“Well, you know we’ve been looking at houses ourselves,” Ted said.

Marthe, using her English rather well, asked “Is this house one you would consider?”

“I would,” Ted said. “But Maud and Paule should tell me what they think.”

“Don’t say anything today,” Philippe cautioned. “We’ve not had time to find out what it would be worth, and I can imagine that you need to figure

out what you can afford. There will be at least three to four months before we have to make decisions. Construction doesn't happen in winter."

Spoken like the accountant he was.

* * *

Marthe and Philippe were not the only ones getting married. Fifty's divorce proceedings finally took place in early November in Cornwall, then they had to wait some period before remarriage was allowed. Fifty and Denise got married in Cornwall – the Catholic Church would not marry them, of course – in a civil ceremony in mid-December, possibly the day Philippe and Marthe saw the priest, but they didn't have a reception and planned to have one over the holidays. Then when Philippe and Marthe announced their plans, the idea of a joint reception was suggested and accepted.

Thus the run-up to Christmas was preoccupied with wedding activities.

Philippe and Marthe wouldn't need a lot of the things most newlyweds require to set up house. Maud, thinking ahead, discreetly asked if some new clothing with room for adjustment might be welcome. Marthe, red-faced, admitted it would. Maud, with her new connections in the garment trade, was able to find some nice things for a wedding present.

On December 21, Ted, Maud and I hosted a "solstice party" where we put on a very English spread. Cheese straws, sausage rolls and mince pies. We were having Nate and Hannah for our December 25, and sausage rolls and mince pies would be off-limits for them. We'd managed the cheese straws last year and I liked them. This year we could get proper ingredients for the mince pies and sausage rolls. I really liked them. A very good reason for me to not revert to Judaism. Ted got a couple of bottles of sherry, which probably would be a minority interest. He also got in plenty of beer. We thought about trying mulled wine, but did something similar with apple juice.

Given the size of our "parlour", we couldn't invite many people, but we did include Michelle Larocque, who brought along a small bundle of holly. Her English was quite good. I think she needed to be able to sell to both English and French customers in her floral shop. She said "Holly isn't so easy to grow here, but I have a supplier, and I know how much it is associated with Christmas in England."

Maud said "Yes. We've missed it. Thank you."

Looking around, Michelle said "You know that Philippe and Marthe are thinking of living here until we renovate our house. But when I think about it, that puts 1 person there and six here. What if I moved here, and Marthe and Lise move there. Then I don't have to put up with construction!"

She repeated the statement in French to be sure Marthe understood. This caused the party to become quite serious. Fifty and Denise sat quietly while different possibilities were considered, but Fifty kindly offered use of a truck should one be needed for moving things.

Eventually, we arrived at a tentative plan that we'd look into more closely in the next couple of days. This would have Michelle move into the room that Ted and Maud had, and they would take over Marthe's room, which was actually what in England we'd call the "front room". I'd stay where I was. We'd leave Lise's room for storage and for Lise to use when construction started.

The elephant in the room was that Marthe was expecting, and we had to pretend otherwise. Actually it turned out that Denise was pregnant too, but even she didn't realize it until a few weeks later. Maud and I talked about this a few months later, wondering if they had used some form of contraception beforehand, or if they had kept to the straight and narrow. Maud scoffed at the latter possibility. I was still young and ignorant of a lot of such aspects of life.

* * *

My journal entries would become shorter over the next few months, even though there was a lot going on. I think life for all three of us in our little family was running smoothly. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that there were not so many new and different experiences. We were becoming part of the community. No longer exactly newcomers.

Michelle moving in turned out to be quite straightforward. She was businesslike and the domestic arrangements gave no trouble. For me there was the advantage of being able to improve my French with someone who had to use proper language in dealing with officials and suppliers as well as customers. Moreover, I learned the relevant English and French names of all sorts of plants. Some of those are in my journal, as the dictionary often had French rather than Québec usage.

One of the few awkward matters now was that she sometimes used the family car, and then we'd have to do what we called "musical cars" in the driveway. At least Maud could now drive, and if we had advanced warning of plans we could park our car on the street until Michelle's was in the driveway.

* * *

Philippe took Marthe, Lise and Michelle to Lachute for Christmas. We invited Nate and Hannah to join us this year. They drove over. The weather was Christmassy, with a sprinkling of snow, but not enough to make the roads too difficult. Maud, with help from Ted and me, cooked a traditional beef roast with Yorkshire pudding. The latter is often cooked in lard, but we used Crisco, a product we hadn't known in England.

This Christmas we had learned of the Canadian tradition of having Japanese Satsuma or Mandarin oranges, and we had bought a box of them. A Vancouver outfit called Oppy had managed to renew contacts with their Japanese suppliers. Later I learned that the Oppy name came from the Oppenheimer brothers who ran it. I wondered if they were part of Canada's Jewish community.

The Mandarins, also called Satsumas, were completely new to me, and I think Ted and Maud also. It was difficult to realize how little we had before coming here. The rationing here had been almost a joke by comparison with that in England where it was still in force. In fact, it would be 1954 before the last items came off restrictions.

The dessert this year, or Christmas Pudding Replacement if you will, was a selection of Jewish pastries. I actually ate too many and felt over-full. While we were eating them Nate said "We'll be getting another tailor in the shop in the New Year."

Maud said "You mean you found someone through the Tailor Project?"

"Apparently, yes. They won't be here for a while. There seem to be all kinds of bureaucratic and logistical hurdles, and we won't know even a name for a bit. I won't try to increase business until I know whether we can deliver. Your lady friends who want suits are keeping me busy. At least the dressmakers can help out with some of the frills and ornamentation."

Hannah said "You complain too much. Maud's brought in business and she pulls her weight with some of the sewing too."

Ted said "I've heard about the Tailor Project, but haven't much idea what it is."

Nate explained that tailors had lost a lot of their labour force to the Armed Forces, and the post-War expansion of business was being slowed by a lack of skilled workers. The government had agreed that 2500 tailors could be recruited from the Displaced Persons camps in Europe. However, a lot of tailors both in Canada and in Europe were Jewish, and there were people in the civil service who were anti-semitic. One had been heard to say "none is too many". The refugee ship *St. Louis* had been turned away, and many of its passengers ended up murdered in the Nazi camps. Still, the Tailor Project would get some of them to a safer place.

* * *

I should probably describe the wedding and the reception that took place a few days later, but I think you can imagine what it was like. What seemed important to me was that I saw people celebrating life. The church, the dresses and suits, the food, the wedding cakes – one for each couple – the corny speeches in a grammarian’s nightmare melange of two languages, all were a panorama of joy.

Frankly, I found myself moving to the periphery of all the socializing. The reception was in a hall that had previously been a church. There was the choir loft, and I crept up there and could look down on the crowd. My mind was unfocussed, just absorbing all the different people. I found myself wondering where they had all been two years previously, at the end of 1945. Or four years before. And how many ghosts might be hovering in the statue niches, today occupied with floral arrangements thanks to Michelle.

Lise had seen me sneak up the stairs. She came up with two paper plates, each with two pieces of cake. Speaking in French, she said “Bad luck not to have a piece of the wedding cakes. I brought you a piece of each.”

One of the cakes was a white cake, actually one called Angel Food which was new to me. The other was a chocolate cake – no prizes for guessing that it was for Fifty and Denise – and here in North America was called Devil’s Food. Clever. Actually I liked them both, but realized that in England it was almost always fruit-cake for weddings. And Christmas.

We sat, actually on the kneelers so we were hidden from view, and ate our cake.

I said “Don’t forget you’re coming back with us tonight.”

“Yes. They need to be alone for the first night at least. Then Monday they’re going to Niagara on the train for a honeymoon.”

“Don’t be shy if you need to talk. The phone here doesn’t cost an arm and a leg like in England.”

“You mean you had to pay for each call?”

“Yes. And by so much a minute. But not very many people there had telephones. It took quite a wait to get connected by the Post Office.” As I said this, I remembered using the phone box to call for an ambulance.

“They probably wanted you to write letters and spend money on stamps,” Lise said.

“That could be true,” I laughed.

* * *

I don't remember a big New Year's party for the start of 1948. My journal doesn't mention anything, but then I use it more to work out my feelings rather than record when I picked my nose. We probably had a quiet celebration at midnight then went to bed.

Let me give a summary of how I remember 1948 then go back and fill in some of the particulars.

One thing that was important was 1948 was the year I discovered boys. Or they me. Almost but not quite the same thing. Actually, not a lot happened because of this. A great deal of inner wondering and discomfort, and a certain amount of embarrassing awkwardness when actually trying to talk to them.

That isn't quite true. Ben Spencer I always got along with. At the time I didn't recognize that he was gay, though 'gay' would not take on its meaning of 'homosexual' until around 1980. Going through my own search for identity, and ignorant of most aspects of sexuality, I had no idea what he was going through.

The year was one of physical changes for me. I grew about 5 inches to my adult height of 5 foot 6. A bit taller than most girls in that era. I filled out a bit. Had to get a new bra, but more because of my circumference than my breast size. I've never been heavy that way. Not like Rebecca, who needed what Marcia called 'industrial strength' underwear. And Rebecca was only 5 feet tall.

Marcia was our amazon. 5 feet 9 inches and quite robust. Fairly trim, despite her frame, like me she can get away with no bra if she has on a vest that is close fitting. We made an odd trio.

This year I was also noticing the hair between my legs. Tante Mathilde had told me I would, but it still seemed odd. At one point at the beginning of summer I got a mirror and scissors and trimmed it so it wouldn't show outside my swimsuit. From what I've seen later in sharing rooms or changing, I'm not that bushy. Still, at the time, it was another source of teenage anxiety.

The first half of 1948 was a time when all three in the family ended up at the dentist. Maud lost two teeth. She was pretty uncomfortable for about a week. While she could have got false teeth to replace them, she decided not to because of the nuisance. Ted and I needed some fillings. Could be worse, I suppose. Well, now we had a dentist, and after some discussion decided to see him regularly so we wouldn't lose (more) teeth.

This prompted us to find a family doctor. Ted discovered that there was a TCA benefit that paid for at least part of our costs, so we all got check-ups. Ted was told to exercise more and reduce salt intake as his blood pressure was a bit high. Maud was a bit anaemic, so we were going to be eating things that would give her iron, and she went for tests regularly for a while. The doctor thought the problem was dietary deficiency during the War, and by

the end of the year her numbers were acceptable.

We got some benefit from Maud's diet change, as some new foods crept into our meals. Good job they were available here. Things like broccoli and peppers. Eggs we already ate, but we got more of them. Tuna was fairly uncommon in England at the time. Now we had tuna sandwiches, which was nice. And she discovered almonds were good. Ted and I agreed, and not for the iron.

I was glad Maud accompanied me for my check-up. I don't know if the doctor was a bit more touchy than he had to be, but he sure felt my breasts a lot. The pelvic exam was embarrassing and uncomfortable. The stethoscope was, characteristically, brought out of the freezer just before being put on my chest. However, it seemed I was in good health, though apparently I might need glasses. I'd been noticing that reading was a bit tiring. Anyway, it turned out I was mildly farsighted and astigmatic. In England there was not much choice in frames, but here I could pay a bit extra and get some I liked.

One thing about being far-sighted is that the glasses can act like a telescope if you pull them a bit in front of your eyes. Sometimes useful to read signs that are a little too far away. Another is that you don't need glasses to drive or do outside stuff. That means I can buy cheap sunglasses.

There was quite a bit of back and forth over the year about the house but we ended up owning 687 25e Avenue. Michelle was with us for the first half of the year, and Lise stayed with us during the messiest part of the construction.

My school work went well. In fact, I did well throughout all my studies. If there were any concern, it was trying to figure out what I wanted to do as a career. Also where I wanted to spend my life to hopefully enjoy that career. Quebec society, well the French majority, was firmly controlled by the Catholic Church, with Maurice Duplessis as their puppet civil ruler. Though that isn't wholly true, as he tended to give the anglo and American businesses whatever they wanted, as would be apparent in the 1949 Asbestos strike. And people said he would telephone the Pope if he didn't like one of the bishops, like Charbonneau. I had come to know some of the context of all the political articles in *Le Devoir* when we'd first come to Montréal, and if there was any aspect of life here that made me uncomfortable, it was this.

During 1948, we started to see the arrival of people displaced by the War. The Tailor Project brought quite a few to Montreal because we had the garment trade. And there were some arrivals under the War Orphans Project.

In 1947 the government had issued the Order in Council 1647 granting permission for 1,000 Jewish war orphans to enter Canada. Members of the Canadian Jewish Congress and the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation

Administration (UNRRA) worked to find orphans under the age of eighteen and to facilitate their immigration to Canada.

I'd see Nate and Hannah Ronen quite frequently, and Nate was involved somehow with the Canadian Jewish Congress in raising money, as it turned out there wasn't going to be any government help. In fact, I heard from a number of people and not only Jews that there were people in the civil service who were antisemitic. But Nate also grumbled that the Zionists in Europe were blocking orphans from coming to Canada because they wanted them to go to Palestine. That, moreover, in the face of an active British blockade.

So we had tailors and orphans. The nature of the latter group were often a disappointment to families wanting to foster children. Most foster families hoped for young children, preferably girls. They hadn't survived in most cases. I found out later that of the 1,123 orphans who arrived, seventy percent were adolescent boys and only 37 were under 10. Guess I was lucky I got taken to England.

* * *

It must have been late in March that I had an interesting conversation with Michelle Larocque. Ted and Maud were out looking for furniture. We knew that we'd need some. Marthe's decent stuff would get moved and the rest was pretty tired. The curtains were also getting tatty, to revert to one of my expressions from England.

Marthe's pregnancy was now out in the open, and that had spurred activity to make sure renovations at the 32e Avenue dwelling were done before the birth if possible. Ted, Maud and I offered to help. If the foundation, outer walls and roof were in place, along with some covering for the windows, we'd be able to handle a lot of the interior work. Philippe had learned that the Wartime Housing Ltd. buildings used drywall instead of plaster. It wasn't considered decent by a lot of people in construction and possibly generally, but it was easier to install.

Family connections led to electrical and plumbing people who would work for cash on the weekend. Working for the city, Philippe got a building permit without fuss. Even as early as the time of my conversation with Michelle, they were stockpiling materials and arranging for contractors to do the foundation and walls.

It must have been a Saturday afternoon. In fact, now I recall, it was Easter Saturday. Michelle had an assistant who could handle the shop, plus a part-time sales girl. It was miserable outside. The temperature was near freezing but lots of mixed rain and snow. A slush storm. I'd just got in from

my auto parts sales job when she came in and we helped each other hang up our wet clothes.

We spoke in French to each other when Maud and Ted weren't around.

"Shall I put on some soup," I asked.

"Please do! On a day like today, one needs warmth inside.

"Oh. I'll have to change my stockings. I seem to have a leak in my boots."

She disappeared upstairs. I opened a can of chicken noodle soup. Made it with milk to give it some body, and toasted some bread and cut some cheese. We'd discovered Oka cheese, made not far from Montreal by some Trappist monks.

"You're an angel. Just what I needed," Michelle said, setting two places at the table.

"Did you have any business today?" I asked.

"Actually quite a bit. With Lent over, there are weddings being arranged, and some women want flowers to wear in their hats to church."

"Easter bonnets," I said in English.

"Exactly.

"Was there much business in auto parts?"

"Pretty quiet. Not many ordinary people have garages suitable for working in. We still had a couple of guys looking for odds and ends, but it was almost like they were looking for conversation."

"Conversation with a pretty girl, no doubt."

"Possibly, though I've seen how some men get tongue-tied when they talk to women, and these guys were wanting to talk about parts.

"But I wouldn't say I'm pretty. Looking in the mirror, I know I look OK, but I'm no beauty."

"Few women are. And if you watch, you'll see that exceptional beauty often intimidates men. They want to feel accepted as men. Comfortable."

"I'll have to remember that."

"It's how Marthe caught Philippe."

"Do you feel she caught him? I got the impression that they each helped the other out of a hole. They were both in a place where their lives had been upturned. With Ted, Maud and I, we know about that."

"Yes, perhaps I shouldn't have said 'caught'. And I'm not in any way opposed to the marriage, especially now I'll get a grandchild. But I'm not sure if I'm happy that she was pregnant before they saw the priest."

"You knew?"

"Something about how she looked. And Philippe, too, he was so full of excitement."

"He wasn't upset that Marthe got pregnant?"

“No. I think losing his hand made him think he’d never be a father, and that’s something that I believe he wants very much.

“But here in Québec, a girl or woman can get into big trouble if they get pregnant out of wedlock. Duplessis has figured out that the federals will give him \$1.25 per day to care for orphans, but \$2.75 for psychiatric patients, and there’s a loophole in the law that lets what is called ‘social illness’ be classed as a mental disease.”

“What’s a ‘social illness’?”

“Corrupt morals, but more simply being pregnant without husband, and that even includes some poor souls who were raped. Or just poor. And especially the bastard kids who are the evidence that an upstanding family could have a wayward or simply abused daughter. I’ve heard rumours that some parents who could afford to take care of their daughters – even rape victims – preferred to have them locked away. It’s a dark time now in that regard. Not as bad as what your parents faced, but not in any way proper.”

“I guess that means girls like me have to be careful where we go.”

“Unfortunately. And also very sadly it means that it is difficult to build an open friendship with a man. It’s easier at my age. I’ve had the change, and the hot flashes are not so frequent. So now pregnancy is not a worry, though I’d still be worried about violence. So many men can’t learn how to be a partner and friend. You have a wonderful example in Ted. If Maud isn’t careful, I’ll try and steal him.” Michelle was laughing and clearly not serious.

“Do you want a husband, or a ... er ... boyfriend?”

“My husband’s been dead half a decade, and Philippe is now married, so not an emotional burden for me. So, yes, I think I’d like some male friendship.”

“Maud has told me she and Ted enjoy each other. Are you saying you’d like that too? Or am I being nosy?”

“Yes, you’re being nosy. But being older doesn’t stop those feelings. It probably changes them somewhat. I don’t know because I’ve not had the opportunity. But once I get my little apartment in the house so I can invite someone over and have a little privacy, I’m hoping that I can explore a little.

I’d like to take up some things I used to do before the War. We used to have a local choir group that wasn’t doing church music. Maybe that will get going again. Or some other activities where I can meet people, both men and women.”

* * *

My own social life was mainly centred on family or school. I palled around a lot with Rebecca and Marcia, and some other girls would join us

from time to time. Mostly we went to movies or listened to records. If we went to each other's houses, we were careful how we travelled, and at night Ted would come and get me if I didn't have a safe ride. Maud preferred not to drive on her own at night, but she did once come to get me. Things Michelle had told me hovered in my thoughts. Caution was a burden, but a necessary one.

Early in the year, I'd started talking with Ben Spencer in my maths class. We found we liked exploring the difficult problems that were in the textbook under *Further topics* or things like that. Gradually we got to be friends. Sometime after Easter, we went to a movie together.

One lunchtime, Marcia said "He's not bad looking. Do you think you'll try to go steady with him?"

"I don't know. He's not mentioned anything like that. We seem to get on together, but he's not ... you know ... tried anything." Actually I was glad he hadn't.

Rebecca said "I was at a Bar Mitzvah recently, and got introduced to this boy from Toronto who hung around me all evening. I was coming back from the washroom when he pulled me into a side corridor and ... well, his hands were all over me. You know, up top here. I had to threaten to scream before he'd stop."

"Boys don't seem to realize you might like it if you didn't feel attacked," Marcia said. I wanted to ask where that thought came from, but it was getting time to go to class.

I wondered whether I'd want Ben to put his hands on me. In one way, the idea was enticing. The issue was how to say stop, or even whether I'd be able to. While it was clear some girls got into trouble through being attacked, others jumped into the trap willingly. I couldn't be sure which type of girl I was.

* * *

Holidays hadn't been considered during the War. 'Leave' was generally a quick visit home or to friends before returning to the fray as far as I could understand from what people said about it. Tante Mathilde and I were poor, though I don't think I realized just how poor at the time. However, now we had been in Canada about a year and a half, the idea of a vacation kept popping up in dinner conversation.

After Ted's trip to Calgary a year ago, we'd talked quite a bit about going there to see Joe and Caroline. They'd also talked about coming east to see us, and the latter possibility was becoming more likely, with a train journey both ways in September.

Our own holiday was going to be constrained by our buying the house. I wasn't shown the details, though that was more that I didn't ask than that Ted and Maud wouldn't have shared them with me. However, I knew we'd made a pretty big down payment that more or less wiped out the bank account. Marthe and Philippe took back a mortgage, which the notary arranged. Ted found it interesting that if we wanted monthly payments we had to do a complicated calculation because the law said interest had to be calculated yearly or half yearly not in advance. This meant that to pay monthly, you essentially pretended that you were saving money in a compound interest account at the same yearly rate, but translated to months, so that you would have just the half yearly or yearly payment at the end of the appropriate period. Sounds complicated, right?

Actually I found it interesting, and Ben and I worked out how to do it, but you needed to be careful with keeping enough digits.

Normally Michelle would have paid us rent, but Philippe suggested that a slight lowering of the house price would avoid that, and it would mean Ted or Maud would not have to declare income. Last year we'd got a few headaches doing the tax forms for both Canada and Quebec. In England, as Ted joked, the government just took almost all your money, but you didn't have any forms to deal with.

Ted and Maud hadn't asked me how my bank account was doing. I'd been working steadily for M. Fournier. I'd started out with £ 40 or about \$160, and, though I'd bought some things for myself and some presents, I'd manage to add \$90.

"I've \$250 in my account," I said. "Why don't I contribute some of that to the holiday?"

Ted and Maud started off with horrified objections, then realized it would be a big learning experience for all of us if we arranged a road holiday that allowed us to see some of Canada. They said they'd let me contribute at most \$75 and lend a further \$75 that they would pay me back before the end of 1948. In the event, my account dropped effectively \$40 plus the \$75 loan, which was repaid at the start of December.

Having argued out the money, we then needed to work out what we could afford in the way of a trip. Maud and I spent time in the Library and she wrote to an Ontario government tourism office. They sent back some brochures and a map. Over Easter, we talked about this late one afternoon. It may even have been the Easter Saturday that was so wet and nasty out.

Ted said "If we took our chances and found motels along the way, then if we ran out of money we could cut short the holiday and come back."

"I'm willing to try that. But don't you think we might find things booked up?" Maud said.

"We could drive on to another place," Ted answered. "We have two of

us driving, so we can avoid one driver getting too tired.”

“We should still have a general plan,” I ventured.

This received unanimous agreement, and Maud found a big envelope – a previously used one, of course, given how our wartime frugality still clung to us – and put in smaller envelopes, also pre-used, with information on different places. We decided we wanted to visit Ottawa, Kingston, Toronto, and Niagara, with the possibility of adding Hamilton, London, Belleville, and Cornwall, with smaller places as we encountered them.

A discussion of the possibility of camping was raised, but as we were mainly going to urban areas, we decided to use motels, likely ones out of the centre of towns. The going rate seemed to be around \$5 to \$6, possibly a bit more in Toronto or Niagara.

Maud said “If we took some tinned food and dried things, we could save on eating in restaurants.”

This led to discussions of how to heat things. Eventually we bought Ted a Coleman stove for his birthday. With some fuel, we spent about \$15. It had two burners, so we could make tea and heat some beans or tinned stew.

Ted said “We still have our tin plates and mugs from when we were essentially camping on Radstock Road just before leaving. But we should perhaps look in some of the war surplus stores for some water containers and other stuff.”

That led to some interesting outings. We probably spent more money than we needed to, but the overall amounts were modest, and we acquired a couple of jugs for water and a big thermos besides some more, and nicer, travel dishes and cutlery.

We decided to start over the Victoria Day weekend to get an extra day of holiday for Ted. I’ll not give a travelogue. We had a good time, and managed to get to all our destinations. Our one upset was near Hamilton where a tire blew. Fortunately, Ted sensed something wasn’t feeling right and slowed down just before a bang and one of our hubcaps sailed off down the road. I ended up searching for it while Ted and Maud went through the rigmarole of emptying the trunk – no longer boot as in England – and sorted out the spare. Good thing Ted had pumped it up before we left home.

The blown tire was a total loss. We ended up getting two new tires so they matched in tread and wear, which was a bit of a blow to our finances. However, we’d found a couple of inexpensive motels by stopping well outside Niagara and Toronto and driving in. Gas (formerly petrol to us) was cheap, and we weren’t on a schedule. Moreover, picnicking using food from home augmented by a bit of local milk, bread and produce did not dent our wallets. Ted had made sure that the car was serviced before we left. The tire was not really something we could have anticipated. Apart from that, the car ran well.

We were lucky with the weather too. Only one day with a bit of rain. Of course, we did get wet at Niagara on the *Maid of the Mist*. We have photos to prove it.

The overall experience meant that we got to know more of Canada, and what we saw we liked. As we were driving back along the shore of Lake Ontario near Prescott, we stopped near Fort Wellington to eat. There was a road-sign for a picnic table just when we needed it. I got a great picture of Ted and Maud with a lake steamer on the river behind them. The following Christmas, we made some prints of that and sent them to England.

As I sat back down, I said “You know that last year Canada introduced its own citizenship. Do you think we’ll become Canadians?”

Ted and Maud were quiet for a few seconds. They used eating to postpone answering me. Then Ted said “If we make our lives here, I think it would be sensible to become citizens, though for most things, including voting in a lot of the elections, being a British Subject is enough.”

Maud added “I agree that it’s really about living here. Making a life here. Not becoming a citizen when you plan to stay sort of says you’re not sure about the country.”

“Well, we still have almost four years before we can apply,” I said.

Ted surprised us by saying “We’re possibly eligible now. At least I am because I served in the Forces. Should I look into it?”

We talked a bit about whether we should apply now or later. Eventually we decided that applying now might turn out to be awkward for Maud and particularly for me because we would depend on Ted’s status. Moreover, we still had money in the UK in Ted’s account, and Rushworth’s actions on my behalf might be linked to British citizenship that I now had by adoption as far as we knew. It was all very confusing, and we knew that bureaucracies were annoyingly illogical.

* * *

My birthday came up just after we got back. There was a lot going on. Marthe and Denise were all excited about babies and places to live. Fifty was working on acquiring a house, but his business was very active at that time, so they’d probably stay put in his apartment for a while. For Philippe and Marthe, the 32e Avenue house was progressing, and the roof was on the addition. Philippe found his hook let him do a lot of the work, and Lise was quite good with lightweight jobs, and exceptional on paint, putty and drywall jointing.

What this is to say is that we didn’t do a birthday party, but Ted and Maud took me, Marcia and Rebecca to a restaurant on Lakeshore Road in

Ste. Anne de Bellevue. It was nice. Ted had found a flash adapter for my camera. This was complemented by a piece of seeming junk I found when we were at one of the war surplus shops. It was a metal plate with a bolt through it with a knob on the end of the bolt. I recognized the thread as likely the same as the thread for a tripod. When we got home, that turned out to be correct. For 25 cents, I had the makings of a platform for holding the camera. Ted suggested a C clamp would let me fasten the plate to different surfaces. It worked pretty well.

Marcia and Rebecca gave me some lipstick and face cream. Nice. Rebecca hadn't had a party for her birthday. Not sure why. Though we knew both Rebecca and Naomi, we'd not met their parents properly yet. I think there was a lot of sorrow about lost relatives in Europe, and we'd like to ask but were trying to be careful. Still, I did give her some writing paper and envelopes for her birthday at the end of April. Nothing major, but she seemed to like them. And I'd have to think of what to get Marcia at the end of the month.

* * *

On St. Jean Baptiste day, June 24, it was raining. I'd agreed to go with Ben and Marcia to a parade, but by phone we cancelled that, so I'd asked Maud if I could invite Ben for dinner. We were having spaghetti and a salad, so it was easy to extend. And boys could get home on their own safely, but Marcia wouldn't come, though this wasn't an issue between us. It was just how things were, and it wasn't fair, but not much we could do about it.

It wasn't raining continuously, and Ben and I had some ginger ale and popcorn on the veranda in the afternoon. Ted and Maud were out in the car to do some painting over at 32e Avenue. Michelle was there too. Funny, I never called her Mrs. or Mme Larocque. I think it was because I used Ted and Maud and they used first names with her. Hadn't thought about that before.

I asked Ben "Are you happy with how you've done at school?"

"My marks are fine. I think you've beaten me though."

"We'll see when the report cards come out. I know some of the other kids call us brains or other names. In England the slang was 'swat'. But I want to do well. There are scholarships for University eventually that depend on marks, and I need to do well."

"Me too."

"Have you thought what you want to do?"

"A bit. I'd like something that uses a bit of math or science, but I'm not sure that a math degree is the right route. If I was a boy, I'd think of

Engineering, but I don't know how many girls go into that, and I sort of don't want to be the only one. Science would be bad enough. More girls go into biology, but that isn't my thing. So probably physics or maths. I'll have to do some looking into it.

"What about you?"

"Maths I think. I've been reading about some new electronic computers. There's not much written yet, as some were developed during the War to compute shell trajectories. Even some hints they were used to break codes. Could be really interesting. But I also like some stuff in radar or sonar. That could be interesting, too."

"It's a long road before one really gets to work, unfortunately," I said.

"Another decade probably. Girls can drop out and get married if they get fed up."

"Ben! That may be true for some girls. But also it's an attitude that means those of us who want to get an education and do real work are told to go off and have babies."

"You don't want to have babies?" Ben asked.

"Certainly not right away. Down the road, I'm not sure. In fact the whole boys and girls, birds and bees thing is confusing me right now."

"Yeah, I know."

"You mean you know how I feel. I doubt it."

"No, I meant I know how confusing it is. Especially for me."

"Why especially for you?"

"Well. I don't want this spread around. Can you keep it to yourself?"

"I won't repeat what you don't want me to. I promise." And I meant that.

"It's just that everyone sort of expects me to be getting all excited about girls. I really like the time we share. The friendship and things we do together are important to me. But I don't think I'm excited about you in the way people hint that I should."

"You don't find me attractive as a woman, I mean?"

"I know you're attractive as a woman. Just have to watch other boys following you with their eyes. You're not classically pretty, but you have a very strong, attractive appearance, and I think that's a magnet for many guys."

"But not you?"

"I ... er ... probably find the guys more interesting."

"Oh." My reply stopped with a very awkward pause. Sometime this year, Rebecca had shown Marcia and I an article about Oscar Wilde. It was pretty unpleasant. After a few seconds, Ben continued,

"I'm not sure, because I really haven't talked to anyone about it, and it's likely better if I don't. However, I suspect I'm what is colloquially called

queer, though I don't feel wrong in myself. I just know that if I do anything or anyone thinks I'm that way, it will go badly for me. One of the reasons I like spending time with you is that it deflects a lot of that sort of speculation."

I took a few moments to think, then said "Spending time with you has a similar benefit for me. It keeps away some of the guys who'd want to come on to me, I think.

"But it makes me sad to think that finding a life partner will be difficult for you. And maybe dangerous. If you manage to find someone and can be discreet, I guess it would be possible, though I've read it's against the law. Except it isn't against the law for two women to be together."

Ben said "There's a rumour Queen Victoria wouldn't sign that part of the bill against homosexuality."

"Let's hope that things change. People are always worried about children, what men might do who like little girls as well as those after boys."

"There seems to be a lot of mixing up of fears about sex," Ben said. "I like kids as kids, but not in ... you know ... that way."

At that point, Ted and Maud pulled up. They were all paint spattered and went upstairs to take a bath, actually together so they could help each other scrub off. I liked their confidence with each other. As Michelle said, good examples. If Ben noticed, he made no indication as he and I worked on the dinner companionably. And afterwards over dinner, they engaged Ben in conversation without giving him the third degree. I sometimes wondered how I'd ended up so lucky.

When we were working on dinner, Ben and I agreed we'd get Marcia a box of watercolours and some paper suitable for painting on. She'd mentioned she wanted to try that. I'd get the paint and Ben the paper. Affordable but still not junky.

* * *

M. Fournier was happy to have me back when school finished. Even upped my wage by 10%. I made sure to do my best to keep the revenue flowing.

The post-War economy was picking up, and while new cars were becoming available, people who had jobs, especially young men, couldn't afford them. What they did was what Ted had done – they found and fixed up old ones. That was good for the parts business as long as we could get parts.

M. Fournier had pretty good connections in Ontario, Quebec and the Detroit area, but I had noticed last summer that he often had to disappoint people wanting parts for European cars. I couldn't help much with French, German or Italian cars, the principal continental countries who made autos.

But I talked to Ted about English cars, and we wrote a few letters, including one to Nigel Hughes. We got three useful replies, one of which was from Nigel, though he wouldn't be a supplier himself. I showed these to M. Fournier and his eyes lit up.

The formal English of the letters was such that I had to translate for M. Fournier. He could read most of them, just got stuck on some of the polite phrases. In any event, we were able to order some parts that were the things that commonly wore out, and eventually Fournier became a go-to agent for a number of things. Montreal was a good place to be, as things could be crated and shipped there and he could go and clear them through customs himself. The local accent and mannerisms helped, as did the fact that a couple of the customs agents bought parts from us. They didn't break any rules, but they didn't try to be obstructive as I'd seen they could be if they were dealing with an anglo.

Our first crate of Morris and Austin parts came in early in August 1948. We sold most of them within the month, and at a premium since nobody else could supply. At least a few more cars got on the road.

Also in early July I first ran into Jean Tremblay. He was sixteen and working in a nearby garage as an apprentice mechanic. However, I learned by talking to the owner of the garage when he came in that Jean was very talented, and really had more skill than some of the regular workers, though he'd not finished his schooling properly. I guessed, but it took a while to confirm, that he had trouble reading. This would hamper him in using manuals and instruments.

He came round every couple of days. Sometimes he'd buy something small, sometimes bring an order from the garage. After a week, Fournier said, in French "That boy. He's always watching you."

"Yes, I'd noticed."

Actually, I'd been watching him. He was good looking. Tousled dark hair, very dark eyes. Good teeth, at least in appearance. Like most youth of his type, he smoked. That I didn't like, but it didn't stop my appreciating the view from a distance.

About the third week of July, he finally asked "When do you go for lunch?"

"I take my break more or less at one o'clock. It's busy 12 to 1 with people coming on their break to buy parts."

"You wanna go have a milkshake?" he asked.

"Maybe. But I bring my lunch. I usually have it outside at the back unless it's raining."

"Maybe I bring one – chocolate, vanilla or strawberry?"

"If you insist. But we'd better decide the day so you don't stand around with a milkshake getting warm. And if you're trying to please me, I like

malted milk. Just a small one – the big ones give me a headache from the cold.”

“Yeah. Too much ice cream too quickly does that to me,” he said with a smile. “OK. Today’s Tuesday. Thursday at one. If it’s not going to work, you have the garage phone number to let me know.”

“See you on Thursday.”

* * *

Since Jean was bringing the liquid, I made an extra sandwich and put two extra ginger snaps in my lunch.

He showed up on time, and I noticed he’d taken the trouble to scrub his hands. There were still signs of oil and grease in corners of his fingernails, but I knew that it was nigh impossible to get all of it out in a single session with the nail brush.

“I made you a sandwich and brought you a couple of cookies,” I said.

“Oh.” He seemed surprised.

“How far are you along with your apprenticeship?” I figured I’d make some conversation.

“Two more years and I’m supposed to get my papers. But I think there may be some extra stuff I have to learn for the newer cars, and I also want to work on big trucks, but this garage can’t teach me that. The boss says he’ll introduce me to someone who has a truck repair garage.”

“Good for you.” I meant it.

“Not many girls work selling auto parts.”

“Perhaps nobody asks them, or thinks they can. I find it interesting. Soon we’ll have some British auto parts? I got my Dad to write to some associates in England – he used to run the parts operation for Supermarine – and we found some suppliers.”

“You did that? I’m impressed. But what’s Supermarine?”

“The company that made the Spitfire. You’ve heard of that?”

“Yeah, sure. So you’re English?”

“You got half an hour?” Well, we didn’t have that long, but I gave Jean the capsule story.

* * *

As with Ben, I liked Jean’s company, but there was an extra frisson of boy-girl interaction. However, I didn’t like the smoking, but was a bit afraid

to mention it. As long as we simply met in the shop or outside, it wasn't too bad, but near the beginning of August he asked quite bluntly "Do you want to go out with me?"

"Can I say I'm not sure?"

"Meaning?"

"Jean, I'm just 15. So there's an issue of parental approval." In this I was sort-of lying. Ted and Maud wouldn't outright say yay or nay about any friend I brought home or went out with, but they would pose careful and polite questions and my own rational self would stamp on the brakes. I wondered if that should be the case now. I continued "I like chatting with you and sharing lunch. I think it's good to talk about what we want to do with our futures." Here, I had to exaggerate. Jean hadn't shown much interest in my future.

"So does that mean you want to go out? If your folks approve, that is."

I realized that I didn't know much about Jean outside of the shop. Caution!

"I'd feel more comfortable in a group. I pal around with some school-mates, a couple of girls and one guy in particular. Not a boyfriend, by the way, but a genuine friend. And I'd feel best if we each paid our own way. I think here people say 'going Dutch' but I heard a woman from the Netherlands get angry about that expression."

"I guess we could do that," he said, taking out his Black Cat cigarettes.

"Before you light up, I should tell you I find smoke a bit ... difficult."

"That's got to be awkward. Everybody smokes."

"Well, not quite. But I agree it's pretty hard to avoid, though I do my best.

"Don't you find it costly? Like setting fire to money?"

"Started when I was a little kid. Now seem to find I want it."

I'd heard it was difficult to quit. Well, I'd not pressure him, but I'd also not let him get my hair and clothes all smelly.

* * *

That night at dinner, I told Ted and Maud about Jean.

Maud said "You did the right thing to say that you wanted to stay in a group and to pay your own way. It seems you don't know much about Jean outside of work."

Ted said "Why don't you invite him for dinner. We can all get to know him, and he can get to know us and we take it from there."

Early in August, Jean came to dinner on a Friday night. He had on a shirt and tie, which surprised me a bit. It was warm, so we had a cold ham

and egg pie, which today would be called a quiche. There was also potato salad and a garden salad. A nice meal. Jean seemed to enjoy it.

Conversation was a bit stilted, as Jean's English was likely poorer than Maud and Ted's French. Michelle was helpful, and knew how to ask questions without seeming to ask them. Ted and Maud kept up their end in French, albeit a bit fractured.

Jean came from a farming family from near Hudson, but his parents moved into the city when they couldn't meet the mortgage payments during the depression. In this part of Canada, this was not as common as out West, but of course it happened. So they'd had a rough time for a while, but Jean's father, who was in his late forties so didn't serve in the Forces, was a capable mechanical worker and did well at Montreal Locomotive Works making Ram tanks. These were used mainly for training. In fact, the tanks never saw combat, but reworked chassis fought as Sexton 25 pounder self-propelled guns and Kangaroo personnel carriers. Jean had one older sister, already married at 19 with a little girl, and one younger sister who had left school and worked as a chambermaid at a hotel along with his mother. School seemed to have been a low priority.

Jean was very interested in Ted's work with Supermarine and now with TCA. Ted related, in French mostly, how he had been out to Calgary when there was an urgent need to hire an aero-mechanic.

Jean asked what one needed to do to become an aero-mechanic. Ted told him that the job was becoming, like many others, more technical. There were technical schools where one could train, though Ted would have to look up where they were, as he was in the parts system, which served the mechanics but did not administer their hiring or work. Ted did, however, point out that the RCAF might be a good place to train and get paid while doing so.

I could see Jean was interested, but also apprehensive. After dinner, we showed him some photos of us from our time in England. Ted offered him a lift home, but he had come by bicycle.

* * *

The next time Jean came to eat lunch with me, he seemed a bit thoughtful.

In English I said "Penny for your thoughts," then explained what it meant.

He said "I've realized that even more than working on trucks, I'd like to work on airplanes. But I think I might have to do school stuff and pass exams."

“Yeah. That’s true. You know I go to the High School. And I work really hard because I want to go to University.”

“I guess I’ve been so busy thinking about what I want to do that I didn’t ask you about your plans.”

“I’ve not decided exactly, but I like maths and if it weren’t so male-dominated, I’d probably go into engineering.”

“But you still work here, getting your hands on parts. I’ve seen you pick up all sorts of greasy stuff. Most girls go all stupid like they’re picking up worms.”

“Maybe most girls do. Not me. Though you might find I wouldn’t pick up worms,” I laughed.

“You’re quite something, Paule. You’ve had a tough start, but you’re doing OK.

“Now I’ve got to think what I’m going to do.”

“It won’t hurt to finish your apprenticeship. Then you have a trade to fall back on if the aviation mechanic training falls apart.” I was letting Ted talk through me.

“I’m still worried that there are things in the apprenticeship that will give me trouble.”

“Because you find it difficult to read?”

Jean sucked in his breath. “How’d you know?”

“More a guess. How you look at the ads for things in the shop, then ask questions that are answered on the ad if you read it.”

“It was always bad in school. Got me in lots of trouble. I quit as soon as I could.”

“I think reading is more learned than taught. But I’m willing to try to help, either directly or seeing who teaches reading.”

“I’d like that, but it will make me feel like I’m in grade 1 again.”

“Probably,” I said. “I’m sure it will take work.”

* * *

It’s sad to report that Jean didn’t follow up on learning to read. For a few weeks we’d meet at lunchtime. He said he’d started trying to read, but it was clear his heart wasn’t in it. I’d thought he might come and spend some time with my other friends, but for whatever reason, that didn’t happen.

When you’re young, or even when you get into your middle years, you have this idea that somehow you’ll find out what happened to someone like Jean. I never did. After I went back to school in September – Grade 10 now – I thought he might come in the parts shop on Saturdays. That’s when I realized he had never given me a phone number or address. He’d just said

he lived in the east part of Lachine. All our communication was at the parts shop. I didn't want to make a social call to the garage.

'Tremblay' is one of Québec's most common family names. No prizes for knowing 'Jean' is popular as a boy's name. Pity his parents hadn't been fans of a 1930s Johnny Cash and called him something like 'Sue'. So no real way to find out what he did with his life. Still, later in life, whenever I was in a garage or auto-parts shop, I'd look for the tousled hair and dark eyes. There was never a hope for a real future, but dreams are dreams, especially when you're 15.

* * *

Marthe had a baby boy on July 13. They called him Matthieu, I think after Philippe's father. Lots of excitement. Two weeks later, Denise had a baby girl. There were jokes that they'd call her *Cinquante*, but the reality was she was named Thérèse. So there was a lot of fuss and visiting, but baby stuff meant the visits were short ones.

Maud, who could be very observant sometimes, said to me in a quiet moment after one of the visits "I don't think you are very enthusiastic about babies."

"They seem a lot of work, and pretty messy. I hope that doesn't sound nasty."

"No. They're messy, noisy, lots of work. If you do the sums, it's hard to make a good case that they're worth it. But, of course, if you are the parents, it's all worthwhile."

I wasn't convinced, but then I didn't think I should say anything given how much Ted and Maud had given and continued to give me. Instead I said "You looked very nice in that new summer dress."

"Ted said the same thing. Michelle let me use her sewing machine, and I found the pattern in that fabric shop we were in a month or so ago, along with the cotton material. I'd love to have a sewing machine, but they're really expensive, and Ted says they are fussy to repair. Of course Nate has a couple, but they aren't here where I can work on my own clothes."

"How does Ted know sewing machines are fussy to repair?"

"Hmm. Good question. It's one of the things about marrying later in life. There's a whole lot of things you don't know about the other person, and some of them could be important, or as least useful."

"Like putting a new engine in a car?"

"Yes, but I came close to bashing him when I learned he wasn't sure he knew how to do it."

"He was driving at the time, so not a good idea."

We both laughed.

* * *

Joe and Caroline came in mid September. The first couple of days were rainy. We lent them the car to go to Niagara much as we had. I liked them, and Maud and I learnt a lot more about Ted's life in the time we called BM – Before Maud.

Caroline found my history fascinating. Before supper one evening, we walked down to the river. I think Ted and Joe were doing an oil change and tune-up on the car. Joe was pretty good with cars. Well, he did work for the Calgary Transit, and maybe that was his trade. I don't think we ever asked how he'd come to work there.

Caroline said "It must be strange starting with new parents when you are almost grown-up."

"I suppose. I didn't have much choice, of course."

"No. The War did so much damage to people's lives as well as to buildings and property. I've only recently started to realize how isolated we were in Alberta. We got the news, but not its meaning."

"I don't talk about this much to Ted and Maud, but I have to work to remember Mama and Papa. We talked about names, and I use Mama and Papa for my French parents who were killed. It bothers me that the memories are getting fainter."

"Sorry. I should have kept my big mouth shut."

"No. It helps that people let me talk about them. And Ted and Maud have said we're never to feel afraid to do so, because it will only make it more difficult for the three of us to be close. But I think we tend to be quiet about our former families. That may be because our new life takes up most of our energy, or perhaps we're still sensitive about the ... ghosts, I suppose."

"Probably a mix of those feelings. Do you sense the ghosts?"

"Sometimes. In dreams. Or once or twice there's been someone on the streetcar or in the street that reminds me of Mama or Papa. Especially Mama."

"Maud said your grandparents – your mother's parents – live in Rennes. Didn't a lot of the people who live in Quebec come from that region of France?"

"Yes, Normandy and Brittany, so no doubt there are people here with similar background to Mama. I hadn't thought of that."

"Well, I do hope you can keep the memories, particularly the good ones."

"The next few years will be busy and important. Geoffrey is now 20. He spent some time agonizing about what he wanted to do before he settled

on Engineering. I think he wants to work in the oil industry that's getting going since Leduc No. 1 last year. You know it was February 13. Thursday, not Friday."

"If there were more women in Engineering, I think I might like to study that."

"Yes. It would be hard to be just one or two in a class. And even the best of men can be pretty blind to women's capabilities. Still, you've apparently done well in the auto parts shop."

"I like it."

"Martha, our daughter, used to like to work with Joe on our car. But I think her girlfriends made fun of her for having oil on her hands. You know how difficult it can be to scrub it off."

"Did she go to University?"

"No. Met Reg, who was in ROTC at the University of Alberta. They got married before he had to report for duty, but then he got assigned to an armed fishing trawler on the West Coast. Supposed to chase Jap subs. He was pleased to get what he called 'a command', but he was really parked for the duration of the War. Not that Martha was unhappy that he was largely out of harm's way. She was able to live out there and see him pretty regularly, which explains the two children. Not many service wives were lucky that way.

Now he's working for the BC Ferries. Driving a boat, as he says."

"Ted says Alberta's really different in ... er ... the sky, the view. And BC must be different again."

"That's true. I hope you can get out to see for yourself. Canada's so big that it's not just an afternoon drive. Even here to Niagara needed some planning. It was good of Ted and Maud to let us use the car."

"Did it go well?"

"Yes, great. And Maud's suggestion to take the camping stove and some canned and otherwise non-perishable food was an excellent idea. Having to find restaurants is time-consuming and you spend more than you want for food you didn't really want."

It struck me that finding what you wanted and knowing that you had found it were important in life.

* * *

Michelle had moved back to 32e Avenue just before Joe and Caroline came to visit. The 'apartment' as they called it was really one quite large room with a doorway to a small bathroom. This had partly been the powder room before, but the doorway from the new bathroom to the rest of the house

was now walled off, and access was from the apartment side. There was a comfortable shower, an enlarged vanity and sink, and a linen cupboard, with plenty of towel racks and hooks for clothes. The apartment had a nook with a hotplate and a counter with a small sink. Not a kitchen, but usable for breakfast and making hot drinks. While there was a door to the kitchen of the main house, there was also a door to the outside, and this had a vestibule with a storm door and boot racks so the cold and wet didn't blow in. The pathway to this back door still awaited some sort of paving. I remember thinking they'd better do something about that before winter came.

The upstairs of the addition was only accessed from the front of the house. This large room became the master bedroom, though at the beginning it had a simple lino floor and painted walls and ceiling. In one corner there was roughed in plumbing. Philippe said he thought that an ensuite toilet and vanity, or even a full bathroom would be worthwhile, but for now they covered the stubs of pipes with a wardrobe. That left a large and two small bedrooms. Lise chose the smallest room. She said she liked it cosy. The middle room became the nursery, and they set up the remaining room as a study or office.

I found it inspiring that people were building and improving their world. Marthe clearly loved being a mother. So did Denise. Fifty was clearly a proud Dad, but somehow seemed confused by it all. What's the English word – nonplussed. That's it. Being a parent deflated all his devil-may-care persona. Ted said "Fifty has had to figure out how to deal with soiled nappies," failing to remember to use 'diapers' instead of 'nappies'. Well, he hadn't had to change mine.

* * *

C Rushworth
Solicitor
Woolston, England
Oct 10, 1948

Mlle Paule Ronen
687 25e Avenue
Montreal, Québec, Canada

Dear Mlle. Ronen,

After approximately two years, I have managed to find
and recover a part of the investments of your parents.

Also there are some ongoing proceedings related to your aunt's investments, the transfer of which is supposed to be automatic, but are suffering from bureaucratic delay.

I have opened a French bank account in your name. There are some forms for you and one of your parents to complete so you have access to the account. Of course, with exchange controls, it is not possible to transfer funds out of France at the moment.

When (and I should probably add if) your aunt's property is rendered to us, I will put the proceeds in the same account. My estimate is that there will be approximately £ 300.

My account record is attached. You will see that I have applied expenses I incurred in France, rather than convert Sterling for this purpose. However, I have not attached any fees because my efforts covered three other cases besides your own at the same time and disentangling the costs would be difficult. I am charging fees to the other accounts. I trust you will accept this as fair. It is well within my promise to keep charges to less than half what I manage to recover.

The balance in your new account translates to approximately £ 500 at the moment.

While it is not required, I would be most pleased to learn how you are doing in your new life in Canada, in which you have my best wishes for a prosperous and happy future. My regards also to Mr. and Mrs. Newman.

Yours sincerely,

C. Rushworth, Solicitor

Ted reviewed the accounting. He said "My God. The man's only charged

about £ 75 in expenses for all that work.”

I said “It feels odd to have money in France, and I suppose in England, and my life is here.”

“And you have money here, too,” Maud added.

* * *

I was happy to thank Mr. Rushworth and give a description of our life in Canada. In fact I filled 4 pages and had to pay extra postage. Well, we did have the bank forms to include. Ted took them to the office and had photostats made on the copier that they had so we had a record.

Writing to Mr. Rushworth stirred up the feelings I’d been having about myself. It seemed I had three lives. My French infancy, English childhood and Canadian adolescence. Add the language issues and two sets of parents plus an aging guardian, and I was like ... what? A trifle for dessert with all the odds and ends that one puts in. I almost laughed out loud at the thought. Actually, being thought of as a nice trifle wasn’t so bad. Lots of good things mixing to make something even better.

* * *

Around this time late in 1948, the two efforts to bring European refugees and particularly Jewish ones to Canada started to give evidence of their work. The numbers weren’t large, so it was only through casual encounters or conversations with Nate and Hannah or with Rebecca that I got to learn of some of the people who came.

As I’ve mentioned, the orphans were mostly adolescent boys. Later we learned some of them were actually in their 20s and used the papers of younger men who’d died, since the age limit was 18.

Nate had arranged to get a tailor named Isaac and his wife Ruth. Their last name was all consonants, or so it seemed, so they used Kozik when they were introduced.

To start with, they had to use Yiddish, and Nate’s Yiddish was weak. Hannah was pretty fluent, and I told them Rebecca’s family used it, and she came a couple of times to help. Nate’s shop had a store-room that wasn’t much used, and he got Maud to arrange for it to be cleaned out and set up as accommodation for them, at least temporarily. There was a small bathroom for the shop, and somehow a way to heat water was rigged up, likely not in an approved manner, but sufficient that the Koziks could manage. With a

hotplate and the various shops and restaurants around, they could make the setup work for the time being.

Nate made it clear that he wanted them to be able to at least function in English within the first month. They went to some classes set up by the reception committee, and managed to be able to talk in basic terms with Maud and Nate in that time.

Nate gave Isaac some sewing tasks, and they were done quite well. Nate was pleased, though he said Isaac wanted to work in the evening, and spend daytime learning better English. For a while, Nate went along with this, but one evening he came back down to get a letter he'd intended to show Hannah, since it had some personal notes. He was wearing his slippers, so Ruth and Isaac didn't hear him, and he discovered Ruth doing the sewing and Isaac preparing food.

Yiddish was needed to get to the bottom of the matter, and Hannah came down. Ruth was crying and Isaac was white as a sheet. They weren't robust anyway, having survived the Nazi camps then the DP centres.

After some coaxing, the story came out. Isaac was actually Moshe Stern. He was a baker. Ruth thought the real Isaac was dead, but there had been nothing reported about his fate. The Tailor project only considered men, even though Ruth had grown up and worked in a tailoring family. A bit of careful forgery and Isaac and Ruth came to Canada as a couple, but they were religious enough, or Ruth was, that they stayed celibate.

Now they were terrified that they would be sent back.

Nate and Hannah calmed them down and had everyone drink a cup of tea while they figured out what to do. Hannah had the good sense to call a local rabbi she knew. Swearing him to secrecy, they told him the situation.

After some questions, it became clear that the real Isaac was almost certainly dead. Ruth's sewing abilities had been recognized when she repaired a Nazi officer's uniform that got ripped on a sharp corner of the train taking them to Auschwitz. Isaac was pointed one way, Ruth another when the trains pulled into the infamous sidings.

The rabbi asked if they wanted to stay as a couple. After a short pause, the answer was yes. The rabbi offered to marry them. Their civil status was documented already. It was decided the ceremony would happen the next day with just Nate, Hannah and the rabbi present along with Ruth and Isaac. Moshe Stern was henceforth known as Isaac Kozik.

Nate was practical enough to accept Ruth as the tailor. He telephoned a few friends and a job in a bakery for Isaac was found, which gave the couple extra income and Hannah and Nate some delicious pastries. Maud, having to work with Ruth, got the story from her. The Koziks, like most but not all of the newcomers, eventually found their feet and made new lives in Canada.

* * *

I only really got to know one of the few orphans who were brought to Montreal. Joseph – I never knew his family name – was Polish from Lodz. I've left off the diacritics. It's really Łódź, and pronounced something like WUDJ, but I know that's far from right. He'd survived Auschwitz, and I was simultaneously desperate to ask him about what he might think happened to my mother but not to hear about the horror she must have faced.

Marcia, Rebecca and I were talking about the Wartime Orphans project one day at lunch early in 1949. Rebecca said "Our neighbours have one of them staying with them. They cleared out a walk-in closet for a cot. He's going to some classes in English the CJC set up." This was the Canadian Jewish Congress. I don't think they did the detailed operations, but they were the umbrella for the project.

I said "We could offer to help him with simple conversations."

Marcia agreed. "Sure, take him for a hamburger and a milkshake."

Rebecca said "Not if he's kosher. And no cheeseburgers even on their own."

"Oh. That's terrible. I love a hamburger and milkshake."

"He could have one but not the other," Rebecca said. "It's eating dairy and meat in same meal that's forbidden."

We decided to go for bagel and lox, and drank coffee or tea. Joseph was able to manage basic questions and answers if we didn't speak too quickly. He asked questions about words by pointing and describing things. I figured he'd need a few more weeks to be able to function in English. He wouldn't, of course, manage with the Québécois. Still, the Jewish community used English and Yiddish, and most of North America used English in the workplace, so it made sense to prioritize it.

Joseph met with us on a couple of lunch breaks and there was a quantum improvement on each occasion, then he was gone. Rebecca said he learned that a cousin had survived the War also and was in Toronto. After an exchange of letters, Joseph begged a ride on one of the last lakers going upstream in the middle of December. Or perhaps traded deck work for a passage to Toronto, where he and his cousin teamed up. I ran into him some years later, when I was studying in Toronto, and he was running a successful landscaping business. He and his cousin had spent the first winter – 1948 / 1949 – clearing snow from driveways and paths, sleeping in an abandoned truck that had no engine, in which the enterprising cousins installed a pot-belly stove so they didn't freeze and could heat food and drink.

Though it was important to the country, we almost missed Newfoundland joining Canada at the end of March, 1949. School, work, and personal life commanded our attention.

* * *

In the Spring of 1950, we took the train to Calgary, to visit Joseph and Caroline, then went on to Vancouver with Caroline and met Martha and Reg. We travelled in the regular carriage, which was a bit uncomfortable, but we broke our journey in Fort William and Winnipeg. Calgary was interesting as a city. It was an urban island in a sea of agriculture. The prairie cities were distant enough from each other that they had to have comprehensive services, because you couldn't have a particular service supplied from another city, at least not easily.

We were fortunate to get a good day for a majority of the mountain train journey, but there was still darkness for a part of the trip. We needed some early nights in Vancouver as a consequence.

From Vancouver, we took the ferry to Victoria, stayed overnight, and returned to Vancouver. Ted flew back on a planned ticket, though he got an employee rate, because he had to be at work on a specific date. Maud and I went standby at a steep discount. We ended up sleeping in Winnipeg airport one night as a consequence, but got home all right. The trip cemented our affection for the country, even as we saw but a thin, long ribbon of the landscape.

* * *

Maud was the instigator of our trip to France. It was at breakfast on New Year's Day of 1951, a Monday, when she said "Do you people realize I'll be 40 this year?"

"Is it upsetting to realize that?" Ted asked.

"Not upsetting. More a sense that I should take stock of my life."

"I hope you're not going to up and leave us. I might die of treacle tart deficiency," Ted joked.

Maud gave him a kiss. "No chance you get rid of me that easily.

"But I have thought that I'd like to go back to England to see what it's like there now."

"We could take a summer holiday and do that. I think TCA will give us special rates on tickets. Not cheap, but we could afford it, and we could use the money there while we're in England," Ted mused.

I'd not said much, but now asked "Would I be able to go to France? I've quite a lot of money there."

"I'll carry your suitcase," Maud said, laughing. But then we realized that there was no reason she couldn't come with me.

Gradually a plan evolved that we'd have 2 weeks in England with the three of us, given Ted's limited holiday time allowance. Then Maud and I would go to France for about two weeks.

We started writing letters right away. And thinking.

Almost immediately, there was the realization that I would need a passport of my own and that Ted and Maud would need to renew theirs. Becoming Canadian and travelling on Canadian passports was not a possibility. We would not have been in Canada for five years until the Autumn, and in any case it would likely raise fewer legal issues with banks in France and England to keep our British ones. This turned out to be relatively straightforward through the High Commission in Canada, though we used registered mail and got everything sorted out by the middle of March.

Several of our friends on the other side of the pond were enthusiastic. Grandma Aurelie was especially insistent that we come for a few days. Paul had died in early 1949, as we already knew. Enid Brownlow said she would make sure we had a place to stay, as Jack could camp out with friends for a few days. Nigel was insistent we come and see him. And there were colleagues and friends who all wanted to say hello and learn about Canada.

We finally arranged that Maud and I would leave in mid-July and fly via London to Paris. We'd take a few days to get over our flight and be tourists, then go to Rennes. We'd return to Paris after a few days, and go back to England and meet Ted, then see folks there. Maud and I would actually stay a few extra days to see a bit more of England – tourism!

We were talking to Michelle about this one evening over some coffee and dessert and she asked "Is there a reason you're going to France first?"

I answered "Apparently a lot of things close in August for holidays, like museums, but also some shops. We didn't want to get there and be disappointed."

* * *

We left July 10. It was Tuesday. The flight schedule was an hour quicker that day, as we went via Gander and Shannon rather than Goose Bay and Glasgow-Prestwick. We got to Heathrow at half-past noon. Then we had a 4 o'clock flight to Paris. We tumbled into bed in our hotel near the Madeleine just before 8 p.m. local time. Not too bad overall, but we were definitely not going sightseeing right away.

We had received a letter of introduction to the bank from Mr. Rushworth. Though we had an appointment for the Friday, he said in a letter that we could present ourselves earlier and would be received if they were not too busy. We actually woke up and had a nice breakfast of coffee and

croissants at around 9 o' clock. At 10:30 we were at the bank. Rushworth had clearly done his job in informing them of our coming, as the manager, M. Charlebois, wanted to meet us.

Maud's French was now passable, and we stayed in that language, sometimes even to each other, though more by inertia than intent.

The manager said "I am so pleased to be able to welcome you here in Paris. M. and Mme Rushworth have been working so hard to restore the property of those so unjustly robbed by the Nazis and the Pétainistes. And Mme Newman. What generosity of spirit to take in Mlle Ronen."

Maud said "I can set your mind at ease, M. Charlebois. Paule helped my husband and I recover from our own losses."

"Yes, indeed. Rushworth told me the story. Ah. Here is some coffee and a couple of my favourite macarons. Please!"

It was an unexpected hospitality. We arranged to have about 150 thousand francs, which was about \$450 Canadian. We split the money up, with most going into a couple of pouches Maud had sewn. M. Charlebois laughed when we asked to use the WC to put these under our clothes.

"I was about to lecture you about pickpockets, but I see you come prepared. Nevertheless do take care. I will ask my assistant to show you to the Ladies.

Now I will allow you to take your leave, and wish you a pleasant visit."

The bank gave me a chequebook, which had been pre-arranged. We would later use this to order things that we could have shipped to Canada. One way to get the money out. It might be a bit of a nuisance with customs, but I had already talked to M. Fournier – I still occasionally worked for him – and we could start thinking of Renault and Citroen parts. I suppose I could have pursued this during the trip, but there were too many other pleasures.

This first day – it was now July 12, a fine day, not too hot – we had decided just to follow our noses and not try to "do" anything in particular. However, we had a wonderful time just wandering. I had managed to find a map in a bookshop in Montreal, and I kept this handy. We each had quite large purses on over-the-shoulder straps. These served to keep things like the map, sunglasses, a small French-English dictionary, and string bags in case we made purchases, and so on. With the major part of our money under our clothes and the rest split in pocket and purse, we were reasonably comfortable in our meanderings, but we did avoid crowded places.

Outside of rushhour times, we learned to use the Metro. That proved useful when we got tired. It allowed us to sit while being transported to a new location, and to get back to our hotel when truly footsore.

Maud was like a schoolgirl when we looked in the shops. I don't think she wanted to really buy very much, but to explore the possibilities. Les Galleries Lafayette took about two hours, but did include a light lunch in

one of the restaurants.

We went back to the hotel to take baths and lie down for a couple of hours around 4. Then we sallied forth again at 7, but mainly to find dinner nearby. In fact, there was a small restaurant in the next street. It was rather plain, but the kitchen was visible from the tables, of which there were two columns with an aisle between for the waiter – just one waiter – to reach the clientele. The front was completely open. There was some sort of garage door across the whole frontage that went up in sections. It was possibly half full and we stepped in and were indicated a table.

I chose the wall – there was a tiny gap between the tables where I could just fit if we moved the table to one side. There wasn't a menu, but a blackboard high on the wall near the kitchen.

The waiter came and we ordered some mineral water and a carafe of white wine – the house choice. Without a blink, I got glasses for both. In French, the waiter asked if we wanted a few minutes to decide, and we acquiesced. We talked in French, perhaps again just continuing.

Maud asked “Do you know what the third item is?” It was ‘ris de veau’. As I was a kid when I left, and this wasn't much known in Canada, I asked the man at the next table. He explained that it was an organ meat. I took out our dictionary and said, in English “It says sweetbreads, but that doesn't help me at all.”

Maud said “Mois non plus.”

The man said “I hear two accents, one that seems French and the other I can't quite place. And you don't know some words. May I ask where you are from?”

“We live in Montreal, but my daughter was born in France but orphaned by the Nazis in 1940 when she was brought to England. I'm English, but we live and work in both English and French.”

“Ah. Now I understand. And I can comprehend you without difficulty. The accent is there, but not strong. Perhaps not as bad as a Marseillaise.”

There were some crevettes as a starter, and we both chose those. Then I had medallions of veal, while Maud had rabbit. I had to avoid thinking of bunnies. There were some potatoes and vegetables, which came in small chafing dishes for us to serve ourselves.

The desserts were mostly rather tame – ice cream or an egg custard – but there was also a bombe, and we shared that. We declined coffee, wanting to sleep.

As we walked back the short distance to the hotel, memories of similar streets came back to me. We had the addresses of Mama and Papa's apartment and that of Tante Mathilde, and we would go there tomorrow or the next day. Still, I could sense ghosts more acutely. I could feel the effect of the wine, though we had not consumed more than a quarter litre each, and

we had been eating, so we weren't inebriated. Of course, I wasn't of drinking age in Canada, so not used to alcohol. But altogether, the feeling was an odd one. I was somehow glad to be heading for bed. Whether Maud was affected in some similar way, I've never found out, but she also seemed to be lost in thoughts. We quietly brushed teeth, put on our nightdresses and tumbled into bed. I fell asleep with snapshot memories from all ages of my life flying in front of my interior vision.

* * *

After a few days in Paris, with excursions to Versailles and Chartres, we took the train to Rennes. Sophie met us in a car with Julien, now about 14, and drove us to the suburban house of my Richelieu grandparents, where they lived with my grandmother.

Aurelie welcomed us warmly. Whatever hurts and quarrels had poisoned the past, she clearly wanted to get to know me. It was also clear that she was not in the best of health, but she was close to 80. Mama had been a late baby. We spent four nights in Rennes, meaning three whole days for our visit. Sophie and Julien would take us places each day in the car, a battered Citroen. We made sure we paid for the fuel. We got to see a good deal of Brittany. Of particular note was Jacques Cartier's house near St. Malo, given our Canadian connections.

We made sure to breakfast with Aurelie and to have supper with her. Sophie had cleverly arranged that friends or neighbours would drop by for lunch or coffee to ensure Aurelie was OK. There were concerns that she was frail and needed help to move about without falling. In fact, we talked about the possibility that a downstairs room could be used for her, so she could get to the kitchen to get food or drink when she wanted. However, the bathroom and toilet were upstairs.

There was a toilet outside the kitchen door, likely put there for a gardener or workman. Having seen how Philippe and Marthe made an addition, I asked whether a small extension could be built to provide access to the toilet without the need to face the elements. Sophie found that idea interesting. We learned later that they had created an entrance vestibule and implemented the idea, and the back drawing room became Aurelie's bed-sitting room.

Late one evening, when Aurelie had been put to bed and Julien was reading in his room, Sophie confided that she was concerned about the future.

"When Grandma is gone, I wonder what I shall do to support myself. There is a little money that she has, and a modest pension. The house will pass to Julien, but it has upkeep costs. I was only ever a housewife, apart

from working in a shop as a young woman. I suppose we shall have to sell the house, then hope the proceeds are enough to get Julien through his studies.”

Around the house there was a delightful array of hand-painted bowls and plates. When I asked about them, Sophie said “There are local artisans who make them. When I can afford to, I buy pieces I like. Unfortunately, I can only afford a few.”

“So you know the people who make them?” I asked.

“Of course. I only like to buy from people I know, so I know the origin and it is not cheap imitation.”

“Can we see if we can find some for me? I’d want to have the names of the artisans and possibly a short description of their work and studios. I have some of the money from Mama and Papa and it cannot be transferred to Canada, but I could take some samples home and see if there is any interest in them.”

With Maud, we found about a dozen pieces we liked. They were not cheap, but were not expensive compared to items we’d seen in some of the fashionable shops in Paris. Sophie was knowledgeable and astute. She realized right away what I had in mind, and bluntly told me “If you do find there is a market, it might give me a source of income. But we will need to make sure we can ship things safely and without too much expense.”

We also bought some souvenir dish towels – they made good padding for the dishes, and I kept receipts in case customs gave us any trouble. We had to buy a bag to put them in, having decided we could share one case in Rennes and left the other in the hotel in Paris for safekeeping.

It took several years, but we did manage get a modest business going. With my studies, I wasn’t interested in spending a lot of time, but with Marthe and Denise who were largely at home, we got a nice sideline. It was initially financed with my French bank account, but the venture never actually lost money. After about a year, Sophie set up a business in the name of herself and Julien – Céramique Sojule – and Marthe, Denise and I created an agency, Bric-a-Brac Bretagne. None of us got rich, but there was some nice extra money, and we learned how to do business with quite limited input of our time, or risk to the housekeeping. Marthe and Denise, in particular, were able to charge to expenses some trips to different places, including outings in and around Montreal, whenever they needed to meet potential buyers. I expect Sophie did the same in seeking suppliers. We made a point that all items had a small card telling the buyer about the artisan, and we made sure that these also listed the exporter and importer as a way to drive potential new business.

* * *

In the year prior to our trip, I had worked even harder on my studies, trying to make sure I could get some scholarships to pay for university. With the High School having been associated with McGill, that's where I intended to go. The Jewish students like Ben always worked hard too – I accepted my Jewish heritage, but still went to church at Saints-Anges – as there was a quota in the medical school and almost certainly restrictions on acceptance elsewhere. That wasn't right.

We even got a letter when I applied to McGill in early 1951, querying my claim to be Catholic. Ted wrote back offering to provide a photostat of my baptismal certificate and giving its date to show I was Catholic since birth. He even put 'Flight Lieutenant, RAF (ret.)' behind his signature. There were places reserved for children of veterans, he pointed out, and I had noted that on my application.

In any event, I was accepted. I didn't get a full scholarship, but did get one that paid my tuition and a couple of smaller prizes that would cover books and some expenses. I was going to be living at home, and I planned to keep working Saturdays. Maud and Ted said I needn't worry about roof and food, and to ask if I needed money for clothes, streetcar or incidentals. However, I figured I probably could manage if I was careful, and that turned out to be the case. No big extras, but I could get my degree.

* * *

Ben and I started first year mathematics at McGill together. It was good to have a buddy as we navigated our new institution, and it didn't hurt as we did so that other male students assumed we were an item. Neither of us disabused them of that opinion. We could both get on with our studies in the important first year without having to cope with too many new and possibly awkward social situations.

Rebecca didn't go beyond high school. She started work in a deli owned by an uncle – not Joe Marantz, but someone on her mother's side. I'd just once been to her place, and that was to drop off some books. Her mother spoke to her only in Yiddish. It was a really odd experience. Naomi hadn't mentioned that, but then with Joe it likely hadn't been an issue.

Marcia had decided to go into teaching, but was doing so in Ottawa at the Ottawa Teachers College, also known as the Ottawa Normal School. She could have gone to the McGill Normal School, but we'd had some odd conversations over the past year. Marcia had a sort of sixth sense that Quebec would change in the next few decades, that people would reject the authoritarianism of the Catholic Church, would seek a new path, and that anglophones would find themselves in a less favourable position than at

present. At the time I thought she was a bit crazy, but over our working lives I see she was prescient.

The upshot of the choices Rebecca and Marcia and I made about our education meant that we no longer could get together informally. We now had to arrange to meet to catch up, and the silliness and spontaneity would be gone. We were, of course, going to make sure we kept in touch. Just that it wouldn't be what in later years was called 'hanging out' together.

I was going to take a three-year degree in mathematics, and planned to emphasize applied mathematics and possibly computing, which was not well-established at the time. It was more numerical methods, but even that subject often did not get separate courses.

Ben was now more interested in pure math, but in each term we always had one or two courses together. In some of my other classes I met a few people doing applied maths or taking applied maths for science degrees, including one other young woman, Charlotte Jackson, and we became casual friends. There was also a woman who wanted to get a physics degree before going into teaching, Veronica Marsh. A new and different trio came together, though our studies took enough of our time to limit the occasions we could just enjoy each other's company.

There must have been a lot more happened over the time I was at McGill than I'll describe. Perhaps I'll remember later, when something trips my memory.

* * *

There was one fellow I got to know towards the middle of second year. Victor Templeton was in physics, and we met in a mechanics course. At the start of term I managed to score a second hand copy of the text by Sygne and Griffiths, and I'd just picked it off the bookstore shelf as Victor reached for it. About six weeks later he asked if I wanted to have a coffee, and we got to chat.

I don't remember any sudden change from our being student colleagues to dating, but sometime in the latter part of the school year – probably March 1953, he asked me out to a movie. After that, we would do something together every few weeks. We double dated once with Charlotte and a friend and once with Veronica and her boyfriend Andrew. They were pretty serious, but needed to wait to get married until they had jobs and some road forward. They ended up waiting about four years. From what Veronica said, a lot of sexual frustration.

Perhaps I was lucky not to be in that sort of situation, but at the end of the summer of 1953 – as I was about to start my third year – Victor became

more awkward around me. Finally he admitted he wanted to go to bed with me, actually wanted to marry me. The admission came out in a big, confused and rambling speech.

“Hold on a minute,” I told him. “Let’s take a deep breath and think about what we need to do, what we want to do, and if possible how to get there.”

Over the time we’d known each other, our physical interactions had been limited to a bit of cuddling and some kisses. It was obvious both of us wanted more, but we’d been very cautious. I continued “I know we both want ... er ... sex. But what does that mean for us? Neither of us can afford to mess up things with me getting pregnant. Well, if you’re a cad, I suppose you could. You haven’t behaved like a cad, so we’ll assume that we take joint responsibility for our actions together. And I don’t want ever to think you’d behave worse than a cad.”

Victor laughed nervously. “No. I’ll take my share of the blame or credit for anything we do together.”

“Victor. I’ll be really blunt, though I’ll not use the crude words. I’m really curious about sex. I like you and find you attractive. If I knew there wouldn’t be the risk of pregnancy, disease or getting impossibly involved so I couldn’t function properly, I know we’d be ... er ... bouncing the mattress right now. But you and I know that we’ve still a long way to go to finish our studies to do interesting things, and there’s almost no second chance if we mess up and have to get married and look after a child.

“What are your career plans? You’ve mentioned some possibilities, but we haven’t really talked about that up to now.”

“There’s a chance of a scholarship to Cambridge to do a Ph.D. in physics there. It won’t be for another year, though.”

“And I’m looking at trying to go to graduate school – Masters or doctorate I don’t know, or one before the other. I’d like to learn more about the new digital electronic computers. There’s some work going on in Toronto, as well as some places in the States.”

“You wouldn’t want to be a housewife? Universities are setting up married accommodation now.”

That Victor would ask made for a sudden realization that a) he didn’t understand me, b) he didn’t love me for who I really was, and c) I didn’t care much about him any more. I could have blown my stack, but said, rather dejectedly, “Fraid not.”

We were having a milkshake at a little dairy bar, and the sun was starting to set at the time. I looked at my watch. “You know, I’ve got a busy day tomorrow, why don’t you walk me to the streetcar.”

I didn’t lie. I was busy the next day – I was always busy every day then.

* * *

Having settled a lot of the money issues in Britain and France. by the middle of 1952 Ted, Maud and I decided to become Canadian citizens and then get our Canadian passports. It turned out to be remarkably simple to get the citizenship for British Subjects. I don't think there was even a test. Or maybe Ted was excused on the basis of his military service, and I was as I'd come to Canada as a minor. Did Maud have to answer something like 'Name the capital city of Canada'?

We got our certificates and had a little party. Didn't wave any flags – the Canadian flag was well over a decade in the future. Nowadays historical movies show parades or stories of Canadian troops liberating towns in Europe, particularly Holland, and everyone is waving the red and white maple leaf. Rubbish! Robin Hood and his band of merry men with bows, arrows and walkie-talkies. Ivanhoe with a pastel telephone. Though I did once see an Ivanhoe episode and a jet plane was in the sky behind. Must have been a Caravelle because of the year and the two-engines at the rear. In those days it was difficult to edit the film, and digital video was years in the future. Even the analog Ampex tape decks were four years away.

* * *

I completed my maths degree in 1954. I had already arranged to start graduate school in Toronto in the Fall, nominally to do a Masters, but with option to go on to the doctorate. And I was planning to learn about computing. Ted and Maud were proud of me, and I decided to stay around for the degree ceremony. That evening – it was almost coincident with my 21st birthday – we went out for dinner in Old Montreal to Auberge St. Gabriel, where Ted and Maud celebrated the anniversary of their meeting. We decided there would be wine, so took the streetcar there, planning a taxi home. At the time people thought nothing of driving after drinking, but somehow Ted was a bit ahead of the rest of the world.

Maud said, her eyes brimming, "I'm so proud of you. You've become a fantastic young woman, and you got a Distinction."

"I wouldn't have made it without the two of you," I said honestly.

Ted, typically reserved, asked "Would any of us be where we are today without the others?"

Maud and I shook our heads. It was true. We were a real team and the strength was that team.

I said "And now I'm going to break up the team by moving to Toronto."

Maud said “It was inevitable, but we have a bit of an announcement too.”

“Oh!” I thought maybe a late pregnancy, or something like that, but Ted said “Canadian Pacific has offered me a senior position in Vancouver. They want me to start August 1st.”

That was a body blow. I’d assumed the house and home would be there to welcome me. After a few seconds of panic, I steadied myself and realized that I’d just said I was breaking things up, so I really couldn’t complain.

“Is it a big jump?” I said, trying to seem eager and interested.

“Almost double my salary, and quite a few perks, as they say in England.”

“How do you feel, Maud?” I could imagine she had mixed feelings.

“A bit ... awkward, I suppose. I’ve a lot of dear friends, a nice job, though it doesn’t pay a lot. I like the house, the neighbourhood. And it’s easier to get from Montreal to England if I wanted to. On the other hand, Vancouver is very pretty. We really liked it when we went out there a couple of years ago. The winters aren’t as cold, but they are apparently grey.

“I’ll likely miss you most.” There was a sign she was near to tears.

“We’ll get a generous allocation of flight vouchers,” Ted said. “And on standby, so you don’t take a paid seat, they’re almost free.”

“What about a job for you, Maud?” I asked.

“I’ve been thinking for some time about a women’s clothing business. Nate said he’s seen some off-the-rack suits from Hong Kong that are decently made, though there’s some rubbish too. I think I know enough now to detect the difference. Vancouver would be a good place to import them, and Nate said if it seems worthwhile, we can share an order to get some volume discounts.

“I also plan to keep in touch with Sophie. It wouldn’t conflict with Bric-a-Brac Bretagne if I only operate in the Vancouver-Victoria area.”

“I’m glad you’re not going out there without ideas,” I said. “What about the house?”

“Putting it on the market next week,” Ted said. “Though we might have a buyer already. One of Denise and Marthe’s family. If we can do things that way it’s more flexible for us, and we all avoid the fees for the real estate agents.”

“What about accommodation in Vancouver?” I didn’t want my parents homeless.

“One of the perks is three months in a fairly nice apartment on English Bay. That’s all arranged. It may be we want to remain in such a place, but I rather like owning.”

Maud added “So do I. But it’s also occurred to us that if we wanted an apartment, since there’ll just be the two of us, we could buy a small block of 3 to 6 which might let us keep one free for guests like you, as well as for space

for activities or an office or mixed use. And in such a place, we could offer a rent discount for someone who did the maintenance and garden. We'll have to see. It's a bit of an adventure. We may, of course, end up with a regular house. We've only really been there as tourists."

Ted said "You'll need to sell the Ford Model B."

They'd bought a 1951 Studebaker bullet nosed sedan in that year. Brand new. Very comfortable. I'd inherited the Ford, which still went well. It gave me quite a lot of independence and I loved being able to go to see friends. I didn't take big trips, but had intended to take it to Toronto. Panic!

"What! That's how I plan to get to Toronto and move my stuff," I spluttered.

"Well, you could sell the Studebaker. Didn't we tell you it was your birthday present?"

I jumped up with a squeal and gave them each a kiss. Ted continued "Another perk is a company car, apparently. There's supposed to be a choice of three models for executives in my position."

We'd only had chance to order an aperitif. I had a dry sherry, a drink I started off trying after reading some Stephen Leacock material. He mentioned sherry, and in particular dry sherry, quite a lot. It's different from the sticky, sweet version usually offered here. I rather like it before dinner. There's no danger of getting smashed on a single glass.

Maud liked scotch whiskey, and she liked it straight – neat as they say in England. A waiter one time made a fuss that women couldn't have straight whiskey. Tonight Ted ordered the whiskey, and Maud a rum and Coca Cola. When they came, the glasses were swapped. I liked how Ted and Maud were such a smooth team that way.

We ordered our meals. I was having a filet mignon – birthday special. Maud joined me, but ordered hers medium well. Very British of her. I decided a shade less done. Ted went for a cassoulet, but it was a Québec adaptation of the south of France dish with meat and beans.

After we ordered, Ted said "Does turning 21 feel different?"

"Let me think for a moment to get the words right."

A flood of different thoughts rushed across my consciousness. They swirled and danced then gradually organized into a picture – at least a sort of picture – in my mind.

"Over the past four or five years I've thought a lot about myself and how I fit into the world. I don't mean selfishly. More what would someone observing from outside make of me.

"I was born in France, grew up partly in England and became an adult here. I started out as Paule, became Paula, then Paule again.

"First I spoke French, then English, then a mixture, with some local dialect thrown in.

“I had a Mama and a Papa, then a dear great-aunt, then two miraculous parents who chose to care for me when I was alone and vulnerable, and who have given me more than any young woman could ever expect. And you know I don’t mean in money or material things, though you’ve done OK that way.

“I had a father whose lineage was Jewish, but I was raised a Catholic, but in the last few years I’ve come to dislike the authoritarianism of some parts of the Church and its attitudes towards women, so now I’m a not-quite- Catholic. And socially, I’m comfortable in the Jewish community, the English Canadians and the Quebecois. Almost a cultural chameleon.

“Here in a majority francophone society, I live among anglophones. In intellectual conversations, I use English. On the street and in shops and when I’m working at the auto-parts shop, I speak French, and even try to adopt the local dialect.

“Like many people my age, I have a job. But I do that in addition to my studies. And I have a business too, or at least a part of one. Did you know that Marthe and Denise and I decided on a 45 / 45 / 10 split now that I’ll be more or less out of the picture? Still, a little pocket money to reflect my original investment and participation.

Also I have money in the bank here, in France still, and in Ted’s account in England. Despite being pretty well-off compared to others, I find that I keep used envelopes, and pencil stubs, and empty jars, and pieces of foil. I look for bargains and question the price of things I’m going to buy. I’m not stingy, but I am much more careful than most of my friends and acquaintances in considering what I buy. The wartime frugality sticks to me like the grease and oil on a mechanic’s hands.

“While many girls my age have husbands or boyfriends, they’ve been transient in my life. I’ve a couple of men friends, but none who are candidates for the kind of partnership and closeness I see with you two. I know I’d like that. Victor said he thought we should get married when he goes off to Cambridge – that was about a year ago, and I hear he got the scholarship. He didn’t seem to want to consider what I wanted. There wasn’t the sharing I see with you. Maybe I’m too demanding or fussy, but I can’t see being the wife or boyfriend of someone who sees me as a stereotype or a servant.

“So I’m in this funny situation of wondering just ‘Who is Paule?’?”

Maud said “I know I’ve some of those feelings of a foot either side of the Atlantic, but you’ve got several additional dimensions. But you’re thinking about your identity. That’s better than trying to pretend that there isn’t uncertainty and confusion sometimes.”

Ted added “Makes me even more proud of you,” as he put his hand on mine. Maud put her hand on the other.

I saw the waiter bringing our meals.

Maybe I did know who I was.

* * *