

THE SEA IS DEEP

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Rollin W. Workman

The ocean is wide, but the gray sea is deep.
The edges of earth are the- ocean's far tips.
While deep underneath it, the sea waters keep
All those who go down to the sea in doomed ships.
The dead cannot comfort the living who weep;
From drowned ones the fish quickly steal tongue and lips.

In 1950, my parents moved from Urbana, Illinois, where I grew up, to Calgary, Alberta, In Canada. My father was a geologist and was offered a job by one of the many new companies being formed in response to the recent discovery of oil In Alberta. It was the beginning of an economic explosion which transformed Calgary from a relatively small, grain and cattle shipping center into the sprawling metropolis it is today. My parents bought a one story house in a section of Calgary called Mount Royal. Across the street was the American Consul, in whose front yard flew an American flag. From my parents' west window, one could see, across the plain, the hazy foothills of the Canadian Rockies, some 40 or 45 miles away. Just behind the front row of mountains lie Banff and Lake Louise.

In those first years, I visited my parents once in the summer and again at Christmas- I got there via the young Trans-Canada Airlines (now Air Canada). My route went from Cincinnati to Chicago, to Minneapolis, to either Winnipeg or Regina, to Calgary, with stops and plane changes at each point. If I were lucky, the plane was a DC6. But often the flight from Winnipeg or Regina to Calgary was on a DC3. I mention those planes for the nostalgic memories of the long-retired members of the Club. The Winnipeg and Regina air terminals were converted barns, cold and drafty in the winter. The Calgary terminal, built for the purpose, consisted of a waiting room about the size of these Club rooms, with a small restaurant stuck on the back. The only plane runway was separated from the front walk leading into the building by a waist high garden type fence.

To me, the most impressive thing about Calgary in the summer were the myriads of flowers everywhere, nurtured by the 20 hours per day of sunlight. In winter, it was the cold. The temperature regularly fell to 20 or 30 below. I could never comprehend how the kids could be out playing ice hockey after dark in such cold. Calgary experiences a weather phenomenon called a Chinook. Wind coming across the mountains from the west is siphoned into the east-west valleys

between peaks. There the air is adiabatically compressed. That is, air is compressed with the heat thus generated unable to escape. As a result, the air passing by Calgary can raise the temperature from 30 below to 60 above in an hour. Once the winds die down, the cold returns. There were a couple of curious symptoms of the climate. When the temperature rose to 32 degrees, the postmen went around in shirt sleeves. And, when the temperature occasionally rose to 80 in the summer, the city closed down, because human beings cannot be expected to work in such heat.

Calgary is renowned for the Calgary Stampede, a week long celebration of the old west in the form of a long rodeo. The culmination of the Stampede is the chuck wagon race reminiscent of the chariot race in Ben Hur. Somewhere in the 50's, the Stampede organizing committee decided to change a tradition. Up to then, the Indians from the local reservation were admitted free to the Stampede events. The organizers decided to charge them entrance fees like everybody else. The Indians declared that they would boycott the Stampede and hold rain dances instead. Calgary summers are quite dry. That year, it rained all day every day of the week. The Indians have since had free admission again.

All that may have some intrinsic interest. But it is peripheral to the title and subject of this paper. Rather I intend to tell about four individuals whom I met in Canada. All of them were connected in one way or another with the sea. I encountered three of those individuals as acquaintances of my parents. As will be seen, the three knew each other and can be said to have followed one another around.

The first was a man named Geoffrey Evans. He lived across the street and a few houses to the west of my parents. Mr. Evans was born in Calgary about 1880. He used to tell stories about the western outpost days of the city when he was a youth. At the age of 16, he became an assistant to his father, who owned a moderate size grain elevator. Mr. Evans gradually assumed the operation of buying and selling grain as his father aged, and became the owner of the elevator when the father died. In the 1950's, he himself retired from active business, but the elevator still provided him a substantial income. By the time I met him, his wife had been dead for a few years. But, in 1912, the two of them went on a month's tour of Europe. On their return, they booked passage on the passenger ship, The Carpathia. Mr. Evans had a clear memory of being awakened one night by the sudden shift of the ship's engines into a high speed throbbing, coupled with the centrifugal force of a sharp change in direction. The Carpathia was the first ship to reach the scene of the sunken Titanic on the morning of April 15. He and the other passengers watched as the Carpathia's lifeboats picked up scattered survivors and brought them aboard the ship. The

lounge and dining room were converted into receiving rooms where women, a few children, and, as Mr. Evans recalled, ten or twelve men were wrapped in blankets commandeered from the passenger cabins. The temperature in the passenger areas was noticeably increased, while the smoke from the stacks grew in volume and blackness.

There was little communication at first between the Carpathia's booked passengers and the Titanic survivors. The latter were mostly too exhausted and shocked to talk. Mr. Evans and his wife did eventually become acquainted with one of the hardier women. Her husband, who had once escaped from a burning house when he was a child, made her get into the second Titanic lifeboat to be lowered. She said that, at that moment, most of the Titanic's first class passengers still thought there was no real danger, though the few people from below who had made it onto the deck were in a state of panic. The woman thought that her husband was on the forward part of the deck when the Titanic split in two and plunged from the ship into the sea. She said that she understood why he had not entered one of the only partly filled lifeboats that pulled away from the Titanic after her's did. But in later years, she came to admit to herself that she was still angry at him for his failure to do so. The Evans couple and the woman came to like each other; and the Evanses invited her to visit them someday in Calgary. She never came, but Christmas cards and occasional letters were exchanged for several years until the woman died.

I will have occasion to refer to Mr. Evans again later. Now I will turn to a second individual. Her name was Victoria Crawford, and was always called Vicki. She frequently came to supper at my parents' house. Vicki was English, born and reared in London. I suppose that she was in her 50's. She was a large, buxom woman, with a formidable demeanor, and a voice that was a bit too loud. When I first met her, I had recently seen the movie Khartoum, and I had fanciful visions of Vicki striding out of the gate of the besieged city, umbrella at the ready, and making her way to the tent of the Mahdi, whom she flailed about the head and shoulders with that umbrella. My fancy always stopped there without telling me what happened next. Vicki had one curious and remarkable taste in food. She loved beef fat. My mother and I, who didn't like beef fat at all, would surreptitiously put the fat from our plates onto Vicki's. She gobbled it up with great relish.

During the war, WWII that is, Vicki worked for the British Admiralty in a section dealing with petroleum allocation. She was rather vague about her exact duties; but they must have been fairly Important- She was part of a group of nine Admiralty employees who once made a round trip to Canada via British destroyers which were escorting convoys of war supply ships' On the

way to Canada, nothing much happened, Perhaps that was because the supply ships were essentially empty, and the German submarines were spending their time on the eastbound, fully laden, convoys. On the Admiralty employees' re-turn trip, they were- split into two groups and assigned to different destroyers. Vicki's ship was almost hit by a torpedo, which missed because- the ship made a sharp zig zag course- alteration at Just the right moment. Vicki supposed that the sonar had picked up the- submarine, leading to the defensive maneuver. Unfortunately, the torpedo hit a cargo ship which blew up in a huge explosion. It must have been carrying ammunition. The destroyer dropped depth- charges, and evidence indicated that the sub itself was torn apart. The one cargo ship loss was statistically light compared to what happened to convoys later when the Germans had developed their wolf pack tactics. Vicki didn't feel the statistics, however. She still felt the deaths to which she had been so close.

Vicki's business in Canada took her on a journey by rail across the continent to Edmonton, the capital of Alberta, and then south to Calgary. She stayed in Calgary for two weeks, thus gaining some acquaintance with the city. Later that acquaintance influenced her life.

The- war was unkind to Vicki personally. Her only relative, a younger brother, was killed in North Africa during Rommel's great offensive which almost reached Cairo. While at work one night during the blitz on London, the building in which she had a flat was completely gutted by fire from incendiary bombs. She lost everything except the clothes and small possessions she had with her. Fortunately, a secretary who worked under her had a spare room into which Vicki moved. She stayed there, for the rest of the war, paying rent, and gradually turning from lodger to friend and companion of the secretary.

I must say a word about the secretary before returning to Vicki. When the women became friends, they talked to each other about themselves, as friends do. One unusual fact about the secretary, and one oddly coincidental to this account, was that she had a great aunt who had lost her husband in the Titanic disaster. In occasional letters from Canada to the secretary's father, the great aunt frequently mentioned the Evans couple. That name meant nothing to Vicki and the secretary. But, when Vicki was in Calgary on her war time trip, she searched out Geoffrey Evans and his wife, and visited them one afternoon for tea.

Now back to Vicki. When the war ended, so did the jobs of Vicki and her friend. The latter moved back to Bristol where she was born. Vicki stayed on in the flat. She found two or three positions In various business firms, none of which she cared for. Then, a bit like my father,

she was attracted to Alberta by the oil boom, and to Calgary because of her momentary contact with the Evanses. Being formidably self-confident, she sold her household goods, packed her personal ones, and set out by ship and train for Calgary. Upon arrival, she contacted the Evanses again. They introduced her to my parents, and my father got her a job in the company where he worked. That is how she and my parents came to know each other.

I turn now to Edna Brigham, the third person whom I met at my parents' house. Edna was the secretary referred to above. Edna never had any great sea adventures like those of Mr. Evans and Vicki. But, in a way she was more intimately related to the sea than the other two, and for a far longer time, until she died in fact. Edna was anything but formidable. She was tall, angular, and somewhat fragile looking. As mentioned earlier, she was born and reared in Bristol. She was 19 in 1939, when the war started. She had been married for a year to another Bristol native, age 20, named Arthur. Arthur was a mate on a British merchant ship. He made a good living. When, war came, his ship became part of the Atlantic convoys moving between Canada and Britain. Edna moved to London at Arthur's urging. He said that, if he were to die, she would need a job with greater income than any position she was likely to find in Bristol. Whenever Arthur's ship was being unloaded in Britain, he went up to London for a few days' visit in Edna's flat. Those visits were the only days on which Edna's fear for his safety subsided a bit. Arthur tried his best to lessen her anxiety. Perhaps he went too far in the attempt by declaring time and again that no matter what happened, whether he survived the war or went down to the sea, he would come back to her. "Believe that I will, and wait for *me*," he said; "I will come."

In the spring of 1942, Arthur did not show up for a month, then another month. When the third month came around, Edna, in panic, asked Vicki if the latter would use her connections with the other departments of the Admiralty to see if she could find out anything about Arthur's ship. Vicki succeeded, but the information was a hammer blow to Edna. On March 5th of 1942, Arthur's ship was part of a convoy moving supplies from New York to Scotland. The ship was torpedoed and sunk. The convoy did not dare stop to pick up survivors, so all aboard were lost. Edna never recovered emotionally from her husband's death. There is probably some psychological term which classifies her state and her actions. She disregarded Arthur's advice about a job with good income, and went back to Bristol in 1945. She had a purpose for doing so. Every few days, she wrote Arthur a letter, wrapped it around a stone, and flung it as far as she could out into the ocean. After a while, she often tipped a fisherman to carry the letter out farther and drop it into the water. That went on for several years. Meanwhile, she believed and waited.

She supported herself by clerking at a store. Her income was low, and so was her living standard. She was too emotionally worn out to want company with others. So she stayed to herself. The resultant element of loneliness added little to that she already felt. Virtually her only human interaction was with Vicki. Both before and after the latter moved to Calgary, the two regularly exchanged letters. At length, Vicki suggested to Edna that Edna move to Calgary. Vicki pointed out that Edna was obviously miserable, and perhaps a new life in a totally different place would bring some happiness along with it. Edna resisted the idea for a year. In large part because Calgary was too far from the ocean, and she did not know how she could get her letters to Arthur posted. Vicki overcame that objection by finding a tour boat operator in Newfoundland who agreed to throw paper wrapped stones into the water. He said that it was better to keep crazy women busy at harmless nonsense than have them dabble in politics.

Edna booked passage from Southampton to Montreal on one of the freighter ships that in those days carried a few passengers. On the third night out of port, the vessel was in the area of the north Atlantic where Arthur's ship had likely been torpedoed. Edna was in a state of deep depression. She went out on deck with the intention of joining Arthur. As she was deciding how best to get over the railing, she had a life-saving hallucination. She heard clearly and recognizably, Arthur's voice. He said, "Do not come to me. I will come to you. Wait." Edna went back to her cabin, feeling an emotional lightness she had not before even imagined. To me, the words sounded like a version of "Don't call us: we'll call you". But of course I never mentioned that to Edna.

Edna arrived in Calgary during the Stampede week of the great Indian rain. If she had had the money, she might have turned around and gone back to England. It's well she didn't arrive in the winter. Vicki had arranged for her to stay temporarily with my parents, where she remained for about three weeks. She obtained a job as a clerk at the Hudson's Bay Company, and found an inexpensive, but comfortable, second floor apartment near the business district.

Like Vicki, Edna became a regular dinner guest of my parents. My mother, who was something of a bridge fiend, taught her to play. It was partly self-interest on my Mother's part, because there was now an easy to gather foursome, consisting of my parents, Edna, and Geoffrey Evans. Vicki just refused to play. She regarded bridge as a great waste of time. Edna and Geoffrey came to be close friends. His Titanic experience and her loss of Arthur gave them a kind of empathy for each other. Once Geoffrey took it into his head that he and Edna should find a medium and try to contact Arthur through a séance. He located a woman who lived on the

northern edge of Calgary and somebody had heard somebody else refer to as a medium. The woman, when contacted, was not averse to reaching out to Arthur, provided that she were paid enough. She said that she was not in practice, so it would be unusually difficult. She did not offer any credentials or testimonials from satisfied clients. The séance was a fiasco. A presence from the grave appeared, according to the medium. But either it or she could not remember the name Edna, and it kept muttering bad love verses to Emma. Geoffrey finally told it to shut up, or whatever words Canadians use instead of that direct Americanism. The medium was insulted, the presence stopped muttering, and Edna was rather stunned by the whole drama. She didn't alter her habit of sending letters to Arthur via the Newfoundland tour boat operator. The frequency of the letters gradually declined, however. I learned that from my parents. They never asked Edna whether she was getting discouraged or tired or reconciled to a possibility that Arthur would never come.

Geoffrey Evans died a dozen or so years after Edna came to Calgary. The next year, Vicki followed him in death. They were both in their early 80's. Edna moved closer to my parents for friendship and emotional support. But she had the good sense to realize that she must not become an unwelcome intrusion in their lives. So my parents and she continued to enjoy the relationship.

In 1972, after my father retired for the fourth time, my parents left Calgary and had a house built in British Columbia, just over the continental divide. The area was a rapidly developing, as real estate people say, hillside between the Trans-Canada highway and a body of water called Shuswap Lake. It is two or three miles from Sorrento, B.C. Sorrento consists of a general store, a postoffice, a motel, and a dozen or so houses down by the lake. The nearest large town is Salmon Arm, 15 miles to the east via the Trans-Canada highway. The nearest airport is in Kamloops, 50 miles to the west. The airplane, from Calgary or Vancouver to Kamloops used to be so small that passengers were assigned seats on the basis of their weight, so that the plane would be as close as possible to evenly balanced. Once I was put in the co-pilot's seat.

A year after my parent's house, was finished, Edna moved to Salmon Arm. Hudson's Bay Company offered her a supervisory job there. My parents, who were her best and perhaps only friends, were in the area. By that time, Edna was entering which E. M Forster calls, "the twilight of the double vision," when one sees both this world and "Heaven, Hell, Annihilation - one or other of those large things" inducing "a spiritual muddledom". Edna saw herself in the world still waiting for Arthur to come to her, and an infinity of time when she would no longer exist for him to come to. She was beginning to think sadly and reluctantly that she had been living a dream.

Perhaps she gave up; perhaps she was simply worn out from waiting. She died in 1980 at age 60. My parents arranged for her to be buried in the Salmon Arm cemetery with an unassuming stone marking the place, with her name and years of birth and death.

I will now speak of the fourth individual with a connection to the sea. His name was Stephen or so he said. He did not want to be called Steve. He avoided telling me his last name. I met him during a visit to my parents in the same summer that Edna died. On my visits, I used to wander all over the Shuswap area. One of my favorite check points was a quite large meadow located above the houses which stretched up the hill overlooking the lake. The meadow's upper border is the Trans-Canada highway. On one side is the road by which one enters the development from the Highway. I came upon the meadow by following a path between two of the highest rung of houses, though of course I later realized that I could have gone up the road. The meadow still has not been built upon because there is no water up there and the development association refuses to let its water system be extended. The place was particularly fascinating to me because it evidently was once the location of an early 20th century homestead, probably the only dwelling for miles around when it was first built. There are still a number of short, elderly apple trees planted in rows to form an ancient orchard. On most trees, the apples have degenerated to useless, tasteless appendages to the trees. One tree, however, had, or maybe by now has, small, but tangy fruit.

Not far from the orchard, there was, when I first went there, the remains of what was either a barn or a stable. Little remained except a hitching rail and some remnants of walls. A few yards farther, there was a dilapidated two room cabin. The roof over the front room had fallen in. That over the back was still intact but obviously in the last stages of rot. The door was gone, though the doorway remained. Beside the cabin was a hole in the ground over which lay a round, wooden cover. I lifted the cover and decided that the hole was probably from a privy. Now I am not sure of that identification. The hole was just outside the front door, which is not a very good location for a privy. Perhaps it was a cistern. That makes more sense, given the distance down the hill to the water of the lake.

One day, upon emerging from the orchard, I was surprised by a man coming out of the remnants of the cabin with a tin plate on which were scraps of food. He was young, in his beginning 20's I guessed, taller than I, and rather lean. Since at the time, I was still cultivating a summer, skin cancer tan, I was struck by how white he looked. I would have thought him an albino, except that he had copious brown hair. I think that he was startled to see me. I doubt that

anyone other than myself ever ventured that far back into the meadow. The man and I exchanged tentative hellos, and I dared to ask incredulously if he were actually living in the cabin. He said he was, but for only a while he hoped. That vocal interchange put us both more at ease, and we spent perhaps an hour conversing. I told him who I was and how I happened to be in the meadow. In return, he told me his name, Stephen, and that he was getting along by doing odd jobs in Salmon Arm, which he reached by hitchhiking from the top of the meadow. He had a certain project he was pursuing in the area and was staying in the more or less cabin because it was free. Though we had numerous subsequent conversations and we became quite friendly, he never told me what the project was, and I was never able to elicit any hint. Stephen hoped to accomplish whatever he had in mind before the cold of fall set in, but I could tell that he was not making much progress.

I know now that part of the project was finding the Banff treasure. Even at the time, I knew that Stephen was fascinated by the Banff treasure hunt. He spent every weekend in Banff, which again he reached by hitchhiking. Here is what was going on. Over a year earlier, an anonymous person announced in the Calgary Herald that he had secreted five hundred silver Canadian dollars somewhere in the Banff area. The treasure would remain in its hiding place until found or for two years, whichever came first. From time to time, the Herald published a clue in verse to the location of the money. The clues may have been helpful, but the ones I saw seemed open to various interpretations. My parents got the Herald by mail a day late, so they had their own theories on where the clues pointed. They had been to Banff many times and had a good knowledge of the area and its buildings, terrain, roads, and trails.

A week before my visit to Shuswap was to end, the Herald contained an announcement that the Banff treasure had been found. By whom no one knew. The person who hid the money had received an unsigned note stating that the writer had removed the money from its hiding place, which the finder accurately described and pinpointed. The recipient of the note checked the hiding place and verified that the treasure was gone. As soon as I could after reading the announcement, I took the page from the Herald and went up to the meadow to inform Stephen. He was not there; and, though I made several trips in the next few days, I never saw him again.

The unknown identity of the treasure finder spawned much curiosity. Three days after the original announcement, the Herald in a medium size headline, stated that the mystery was partially solved. The owner of a gravestone manufacturer in Calgary supplied the information. A man had paid the owner 500 silver dollars to create as large a headstone as that amount would

buy. The owner said that he could not reveal what was to be engraved on the stone.

In an October letter from my parents, they mentioned that they had visited Edna's grave and found a new headstone. On it were written the rather odd, to my parents, words:

Edna Elizabeth Brigham
1920-1960
Loving and Loved Without Measure
Erected by Her Husband, Arthur Stephen, Who
Drowned at Sea, March 1942,
And Who at Last Came Back to Her.

I like to think that perhaps it was for me that he included his middle name.

The ocean is wide, but the gray sea is deep.
Widely the ships cut their paths through the wave, Deep
underneath them, the drowned spirits sleep.
A few wait a time they can rise from the grave,
In short death reversal, their purpose to keep
In love or in hatred a vow they once gave.

Now pity the living who grasp such a trust,
Grieving, believing he memoried past,
Dreams that time surely will grind into dust.
But yet there is comfort in dreams while they last;
And if to the dreaming, the real should adjust,
Sea deep sinks the grief, by love's ocean surpassed.