

Some War Recollections of Ruth Cobbett

“Our quarters in Gaspé were frightening when the winter set in. So much snow and ice formed outside our door that we couldn’t get out. The bedroom slowly froze, until there was 7 feet of ice in it. We then had to live in the living room, which was serviced by a Quebec heater. The town was so overflowing with Navy, Army, and Air Force personnel that it was impossible to get other lodging.

First David [her son] became dangerously ill, and then I succumbed, and was unable to look after him. David was cared for by the nuns in the Gaspé Tubercular Hospital. We had no other option. The nuns wrote to me every week telling me of his progress. He was about nine months old, and they wheeled him into the rooms to visit the patients, on the bottom of the breakfast wagon. He had a crucifix at the head of his bed, and the first word he learned to say was Su Su Su, short for Jesu. I was too ill to travel.

Christmas came, and Frank played the carols at the little church, after which the congregation threaded its way up the hill, and, with gentle snow falling, they stood outside my window, and sang carols for me. My parents called from Montreal, and Frank carried me to the telephone.

My life, now in danger, the Navy doctor, Dr. Flatt from Toronto begged the Air Force for a plane to fly me home to the Royal Victoria Hospital. Permission was not granted, however at midnight, there was a knock at the door, and there stood an ambulance to take me away, down to Gaspé basin, where a Canso amphibian plane awaited, stolen [*borrowed!*] from the base, and captained by a friend of ours, Ed Hale from Hamilton. I would like to describe our unheralded arrival at Dorval airport, and at the Royal Vic. because it was definitely chaotic.

Fortunately, for me, the sulfa drug had just been invented, for it is doubtful that I would have survived without it.”

Note: Ruth’s son, Tyler Cobbett, also remembers conversations how willingly his parents supported the war effort, including rationing silk stockings because the silk was being used to make parachutes. s