

CHAPTER SIX



“MOM”

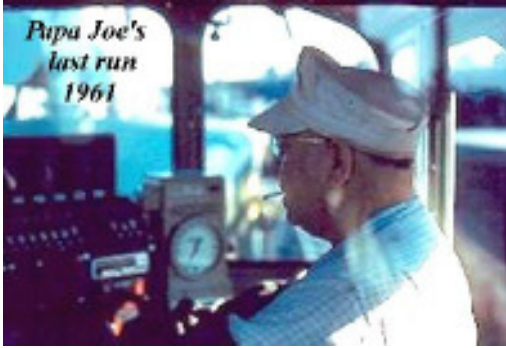
Verna Weir Boyd Baillie



**MOM AND DAD
OUR WEDDING RECEPTION WAS AT
513 BERESFORD AVENUE, WINNIPEG, MB.
(Nanny & Papa Baillie's home)
We eloped, and were married twice.
June 14th. and June 15th., 1945**

HOW I MET MOM

How I met Mom was predicated by a decision that I made on the front deck of the men's bunkhouse at Grand Beach in early May of 1941. I had purposely come to the beach that day to have another look at the old Grand Beach pier and the huge expanse of pure white



sand, which made up what is now called the "West" Beach of Grand Beach.

During the summer of 1940, I had been hired by Mr. Phillip Stark, the Assistant Manager of the Fort Garry Hotel in Winniepeg, to be the lifeguard at the fabulous CNR owned "Minaki

Lodge" in Ontario. While I thoroughly enjoyed working at Minaki Lodge, there was an element that I dearly missed. That was swimming and boating in very rough water. Minaki Lodge was situated on the Winnipeg River, and while the current of the river was very fast, the Lodge itself was situated in a quiet bay, thus the water was always calm. There was also the consideration of my salary. At Minaki, I was paid \$10.00 per month, and my board and room was included. Fortunately, the rich guests at Minaki were good at "tipping", and I could earn a couple of hundred dollars a month on my tips and swimming lessons. Mr. Stark was the General Manager of Minaki Lodge, and the top managers treated me as one of the "Professionals", like the Golf Pro and the Doctor and Nursing staff. But there was always a tender spot in my heart for Grand Beach. At Minaki, I had my meals in a select area in the main dining room of the Lodge. The meals were fabulous and we were given a new "keepsake" menu for each meal. Each menu had a superb photo of the surrounding Minaki Lodge area or of the lodge itself, or beautiful nature scenes of many of the lakes and scenic areas of the Lake of The Woods area.

I saved many of them and brought them back to Winnipeg when the season was over on the September long weekend. Somehow or other, I misplaced them and they were eventually lost. My room was in a better section of the employees' area along with the porter, head Bell-Hop, and some of the assistant managers.

At Grand Beach, I had been offered the job of Lifeguard by the Superintendent of the Beach, Mr. Phillip Jones. In fact, I had already



made up my mind to go back to Minaki, but my father "Papa-Joe", who was one of the regular railway firemen on the beach run, spoke to Mr. Jones at Grand Beach, on one of the days that Mr. Jones met the engine crew.

Papa Joe told him I was planning to return to Minaki for the coming summer. Mr. Jones pleadingly asked him to persuade me to change my mind and come to Grand Beach. Apparently the two previous lifeguards had notified him that they were not returning for the summer of 1941. They had been the lifeguards at Grand Beach for the previous five or six years, during the depression.

Leonard (Len) Tustin, the senior lifeguard had joined the Army, and Ray Fuller, the other Lifeguard, had joined the Royal Canadian Air Force. Thus Mr. Jones really appealed to Papa-Joe to have me change my mind. I did change my mind that day on the men's bunkhouse porch and came to Grand Beach. It was a decision that would ultimately change my entire life.

Papa Joe and I had talked about this for many hours. He hoped that my choice would be Grand Beach. A big factor that I had to consider, was how much I could earn during the forthcoming summer. In order to go back to University in late September, 1941.

My heart won out. I loved the rough water and boating at Grand Beach, and I had so many of my friends there. I could have made more money at Minaki Lode, but it was pretty much a “toss-up”. Also, I was sure of my income at Grand Beach, whereas, I had to depend entirely on how well the rich patrons of Minaki Lodge would tip. The many world famous people from Hollywood, and top USA government people were good at tipping. World War II was still being fought, and it was difficult to determine the future. I was also preparing to go to Camp Shilo to attend the compulsory University of Manitoba Officer`s Training corps (C.O.T.C) camp.

Later, when I was at Camp Shilo, I met George Ingham, who was a YMCA “TANKER” from Brandon, and was also attending Brandon University studying Geology. We became friends, and I told him about the possibility of his getting work as a lifeguard at Grand Beach with me. He was very hesitant about it because he had never swam in rough water, and he only had his “Bronze” medallion from the Royal Life Saving Society and was also working at getting his “Junior” YMCA Swimmers Certificate. He told me that he would only consider the job if I were to be the other lifeguard.

George Ingham`s father was also a Locomotive Engineer on the CPR, running west out of Brandon, Manitoba to Broadview, Saskatchewan. Thus we had a lot in common, both coming from railroad families. His father (Austin Ingham) had a lot of seniority, and was the regular engineer on the CPR “DOMINION”, which was the top of the line “Transcontinental” train of that era. Later, when I rail-roaded from the CPR, I met George`s father, Austin Ingham

When I returned to Winnipeg, I made a special trip to the Union Station to call Mr. Jones at Grand Beach. There were no telephone lines to Grand Beach, so I called him on the CNR private telephone line. When Mr. Jones answered, he was very caustic, and told me to just look after myself, and that he had already hired another lifeguard. Unknown to me, George Ingham had called Jones from Brandon, and they had already spoken to each other about the job, and he had agreed to come to Grand Beach. Being hot tempered too, I told him that was just great, and that I would then be returning to Minaki Lodge. I also told him that if we were to have difficulties before I even started working for him as a lifeguard, that I was not interested in his job. Fortunately, I had not informed Mr. Stark, the Manager of Minaki Lodge, that I would not be going to Minaki Lodge as the lifeguard for the summer of 1941, so I could still go to Minaki Edge.

I guess Mr. Jones was quite surprised at the way I quit as Lifeguard at Grand Beach, even before I formally started working for him. But I meant what I said, and I wasn't going to let him push me around, especially when I was really trying so hard to help him. Meanwhile, George Ingham must have called Mr. Jones again, to arrange when to come to Grand Beach. When he learned that I was not going to be the Lifeguard, and had changed my mind about coming to Grand Beach, he immediately told Mr. Jones that he wasn't interested in coming to Grand Beach, as the only reason he was coming was because he thought I was going to be the other lifeguard.

Mr. Jones realized he had made a mistake, and he made certain to meet Papa Joe, when he arrived at Grand beach on the morning rain at 10:40 AM. Papa Joe laughed when he repeated Mr. Jones's conversation to me, and had said. "Wow Joe, That son of yours sure has a hot temper". He asked Papa Joe to "patch things up", and persuade me to come back to Grand Beach.

Mr Jones and I quickly patched things up, and I began lifeguarding around May 15th, 1941. George Ingham had arrived earlier and had settled into our room in the men's bunkhouse. We were glad to see each other, and looked forward to working together. I showed him around the pier, and our lifeguard tower, as well as the newly painted Lifeboat. It was designed to be rowed easily, and swiftly. It was very suitable for just cruising around the swimming area, and if necessary it could quickly and easily be manoevered around the pier. Our job was to protect the swimmers in the area from the pier to the bath house (approximately 150 yards of beach). We also kept an eye on people swimming all the way to the channel. We were not expected to patrol the beach, as the Grand Beach Police looked after that. During busy period, we always kept one lifeguard in the lifeboat, right in the area where most people were swimming, and the other lifeguard stayed in the lifeguard tower to see the entire area and watch people swimming around the pier itself.

I also arranged to make some extra money taking tickets in the dance hall in the evenings. There were four gates to the dance floor, and each dance set lasted five minutes. The dance floor cleared and then a new group of dancers came onto the dance floor. I made one dollar for working each evening from 8:00 PM to midnight. There was an intermission from 10:00 PM to 10:30 PM, so people could leave the dance hall and catch the "moonlight" train back to Winnipeg.

I met Mom on the long week end in May 1941. I was taking tickets at the middle gate on the north side of the dance floor and it was a very busy night. Shortly after the intermission, two young ladies approached my gate and hung around. They were Mom and her older sister Doreen. Mom approached my gate and asked if I was related to Vic Guarino, because she knew him from Kelvin High School, in 1940. We talked a bit, and she was surprised that I was his older brother, and that I was the new lifeguard at Grand Beach.

When the dance ended, I suggested that I would love to “walk” them home to their cottage in the campsite because was a friend of Voc and they were alone. I had heard Vic mention her name several times in our conversations in Winnipeg. I had arranged with Mr. Stark from Minaki Lodge to have Vic as my replacement for his 1941 season, and I told Mom all about that. She wasn't aware that Vic was an excellent swimmer too. Both Mom and Auntie Doughtling thought it was a good idea. We ended up at a cottage located at lot 9, in Block “O”. I think it is now called #18 Fifth Avenue.

I was very surprised when Mom appeared “alone”, on the pier the next morning. She was wearing a white “crinkly” type bathing suit, and she had a white bathing cap. I introduced her to George Ingham, my lifeguard partner, and quite a few of my friends that used to hang around the pier where I was lifeguarding. Mom seemed to really enjoy meeting them, and quickly made friends with them as well.

We used to go swimming together (usually very short), when we used to try to get cool from the heat of being on the pier. We had a lot of fun together. When it wasn't too busy, I used to take her for a ride in the Lifeboat. It did not take long before I stopped taking tickets on the weekends, so I could spend my time with Mom in the dance hall, dancing to the Don Wright orchestra. She was a beautiful dancer, and we danced well together. One of Mom's favorites was leading the conga line. Often, there were more than 50 couples in the line.

She got to know Don Wright and all the boys in the orchestra and they really liked her very much. Most of them used to hang around the pier during the day, and Mom really got to know them and their lady friends very well. In the evenings, when we were dancing, all Mom had to do was give them a quiet request for a song that she liked and they would play it on the next set of dances. All the regular campers at the beach knew us a couple “Chuck and Verna”.



After Mom's two week vacation, we saw each other regularly on the weekends. Mom always caught the 6:20 PM "Moonlight train" on Friday nights. It arrived at Grand Beach at 8:00 PM. I always meet it. It was the start of each week end for us being together. The Baillie cottage at Lor #8, Block "O", wa a very friendly and happy place. Nanhy Baillie always prepared a nice family dinner (usually a roast of beef or pork) on Saturday evenings. The week endd would end for us when Mom and her family left the Beah on the 8:00 PM train back to Winnipeg on Sunday evening.

he Baillie cottage was only about 400 sq ft. just a shell, withno formal windos, but were screend and had shuter.

'the bathroom was at theend of the blok. Papa Baillie had figged upa wooden platform outside the cottage to wash up and have, etc. Btu, they always had a lot of fun, and enjoyed their beach days together, esecially the train rides to and from Winniepg. They never did go down to the beah to swim.