

## Leaving for Sandy Bay

August, 1963

I recall the day as though it were yesterday.

My bride and I, wedded but a fortnight or two, were leaving our little community of Poplarfield for our first very own domicile --- a rental home near our new teaching jobs --- not two hundred miles away.

All was well. We had just returned from our exotic honeymoon (Honolulu and Waikiki) and were leaving our parents' homes to start another chapter in our teaching careers. The wedding celebrations and formalities had gone well, we were happy, in love and all agog about starting our new life together. The car was packed with what few belongings we had and we were bidding good-bye to our parents and any other family members who happened to be around at the time. This was only for a short while, because we had agreed to return for the following week-end, and we were separated by merely a two-hour drive, at most.

I was too much taken up in all the departure activity to have noticed the tear that found its way to Mom's cheek, but my sister, Helen, did see it and she spoke to Mom about it.

"Why are you crying, Mom?" she asked, causing me to glance at my Mom's face where a crooked, tearful smile was doing its best to erase a look of sadness that her eyes betrayed. "They are going off to start a new life, and that is a good thing. You should be happy for them." My Mom's reply, as she wiped away the tear, was in Ukrainian, and brief and succinct, yet wistful.

"Бо вони ще незнають що їх чикає."

"Because they do not yet know what awaits them."

At the time, I, with the impetuosity of youth, I suppose, paid little heed to that. After all, life was looking pretty great and I could not, or at least would not let myself, conceive of some impending doomsday event that would dim the lights for me, for us.

But it did not take long to come face to face with realities of life, loss and sorrow. It was only then that I began to appreciate and understand the important things in life. My Mom, having had no opportunity for formal education whatsoever, had gleaned from her life experience a wisdom about life that no formal classroom can teach.

I have had reason to revisit that simple occasion, which I might have even not noticed but for my sister's remarks at the time. It stands for me now as a staunch reminder that not everything in life can be anticipated and planned, and that you have to just do the best you can with what you have because nothing is guaranteed. My Mom then knew full well the unpredictability of life, and I have learned it since.

..... 55 years later