

"A la claire fontaine m'en allant promener,
 "J'ai trouvé l'eau si belle que je m'y suis
 baigné.
 "Lui ya longtemps que je t'aime,
 "Jamais je ne t'oublierai."

Both the tune and words come from France. So does this other version which is much older, sung to a different tune, and now forgotten in France but still widely sung amongst the French Canadians.

"Au beau clair de la lun' m'en allant
 promener,
 "J'ai recontre Nanett' qui allait s'y
 baigner.
 "Gai, faluron dondaine,
 "Gai, faluron dondè."

One of the loveliest songs of all is "Un Canadien Errant" — "A Canadian in Exile." The tune is plaintive and melancholy. The words, describing the homesick yearnings of an exiled Canadian, were written by Gérin-Lajoie during the troubles of 1837.

"Un Canadien errant
 "Banni de ses foyers,
 "Parcourait en pleurant
 "Des pays étrangers.
 "Un jour triste et pensif,
 "Assis au bord des flots,
 "Au courant fugitif
 "Il adressa ces mots:
 "Si tu vois mon pays,
 "Mon pays malheureux,
 "Va dire à mes amis
 "Que je me souviens d'eux.
 "Non, mais en expirant,
 "O mon cher Canada,
 "Mon regard languissant
 "Vers toi se portera."

"A Canadian in exile
 Banished from his haunts
 Wandered in tears
 Through foreign lands.
 One day, sad and pensive,
 Sitting by a riverbank,
 To the fleeing waters
 He addressed these words:
 Should you see my country,
 My unhappy land,
 Go and tell my friends
 That I remember them.
 No, even though dying,
 O my dear Canada,
 My downcast gaze
 I shall bend in your direction."

I heard all of these songs sung and a great many more during the time that I spent at La Malbaie. And the evenings were lively ones. Spoons, violins, accordions were played and handclapping and tapping of heels and toes created rhythms.

It was sad to leave La Malbaie. I returned to Montreal. The songs I had listened to, the houses and countrysides I had seen, the mingling of dialects and the ways of living which I had observed during my trip made me feel more sympathetic to both the French and the English Canadians and gave me a better understanding of the barriers between them. ♦

Mrs Pearson remembers

Maryon Pearson, widow of the late Lester B. Pearson, is one of those rare public figures beloved of the Press for the habit of making tart, to-the-point remarks at moments when most wives would supply the final touch of boredom with a comfortable cliché.

There was a famous moment when the former Canadian Prime Minister concluded a major speech in Toronto and turned to his wife asking "How did I do?"

She replied: "You missed several opportunities to sit down."

To strangers this might seem unnecessarily blunt: in fact, this barbed humour was a basic ingredient of their relationship. They laughed together over the remark on the way to Toronto airport, going home.

When she looks back now, Maryon Pearson can still laugh over the lighter incidents in the life of a warm, witty and devoted wife. She was her husband's constant companion on his travels abroad as well as on his political campaigns.



Photo by Capital Press Service

Above: The late Lester Pearson and Mrs Pearson returning from a worldwide tour in 1955, when he was Secretary of State for External Affairs.

The public has seen little of Mrs. Pearson since her beloved "Mike" died two years ago. She has been quietly reconstructing her life, like any other widow — but those who know her say she has been bouncing back recently. She appeared for an interview at her home in Rockcliffe Park, Ottawa recently with the same crinkly smile, the same tart comments — now directed at herself as they once were at her husband — and the same sharp sense of humour.

She began by carefully fitting a cigarette in the familiar gold holder. She was surrounded by family pictures, including ten grandchildren, and personal mementos — she has already let her husband's collection, including his Nobel Peace Prize,

go to his reconstructed library in Laurier House. "All his things are part of history and I guess they should be in Laurier House, but I rather miss them," she said.

What she misses even more is being informed about happenings in high places. "Even when Mike dropped in for a quick lunch, he would chat about everything that happened during the day. I was plugged into everything. I miss that. There are lots of things I miss." She paused briefly before adding: "He was one of the most entertaining men I have ever known."

Only those who travelled frequently with the Pearsons during his years as party leader — or who knew them at home — recognized the depth and affection of their relationship. As they exchanged those friendly barbs it was easy to see Mr. Pearson's face burst into a boyish grin. But one had to be close to see that her more austere expression masked laughter.

No stock phrases

She never seemed comfortable in large crowds — and her vocabulary did not include stock phrases to cover up this fact. She did not say "I am happy to be here" unless she really was happy to be there. In 1965, on her third election campaign in four years, she was asked if she was enjoying the campaign. "No!" she replied, unequivocally.

The record is full of such moments of disarming honesty. The classic was on the 1962 campaign when Mr. Pearson asked a small audience at the end of a long day whether anyone had anything else to bring up before he finished. "Three doughnuts and the last 10 cups of coffee," she muttered to reporters sitting near her.

Her husband was frequently embarrassed by flattering introductions. Her advice to him for these occasions was: "When somebody talks like that about you in an introduction, don't let your head hang and look shy and diffident — put your head up and make people think that at least you deserve some part of it."

He once remarked: "I couldn't get carried away with my own importance. Maryon wouldn't let me." Those election campaigns still are not exactly a fond memory for her — but I do wish I had kept a diary. I think I could have written a very interesting book."

Puffing on that cigarette, she smiled as she remembered the 1964 Klondike Parade in Edmonton in Alberta where Pearson seldom won seats for his Liberal party — when the Pearson convertible was swamped by cheering thousands. She had to make herself heard above the roaring crowd as she asked her husband: "If they can clap for you like this, why don't they vote for you?"

As the Prime Minister's wife she used to look forward to the day when she could browse in a department store without being recognized. Today she says: "It's surprising how many people still recognize me — and, oddly, I rather enjoy it now." ♦