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A YOUNG ENGLISH BOY, WHO WAS EVACUATED IN AUGUST 1940, RECALLS HIS ENDURING AFFECTION FOR AMERICA.

the US. We may sometimes have criticisms of American policies, but you don't find in us a mindless anti-Americanism. For we were introduced early on to the generous heart of the United States.

One evacuee told me that it was probably no coincidence that she and her brother and other evacuees went into caring professions; another said that to "experience a second culture is to learn early in life that there is more than just the best British way of doing things."

For Gerald and me, those early years in the US were not only the start of a transatlantic adventure but also the impetus for a spiritual journey.

Returning home, it was hard for us to step into the lives of parents who had survived the bombing, and more recently the V1 and V2 rockets, and would jump at any loud noise. Our parents' admonitions were met with, "We don't do that in America." Soon America became known in our family as "We-land."

In order to help rebuild family unity, in 1947 we attended a conference center in Caux, Switzerland, which had been set up to help heal the hurts and hates of World War II. The final report of the American Committee for the Evacuation of Children called the whole experience "an applied lesson in international understanding." We have been able to carry that forward.

Unitarian minister Vivian Pomeroy, who encouraged Americans to open their homes, wrote in 1940: "We should all be enthusiastic to see thousands of English schoolchildren gathered here because not only will they be preserved from damage and death, but they will grow up to return to their own land with a great love of America in their hearts, a deep and grateful feeling for the people who saved them; and thereby they will become a strong ingredient of a better understanding of America among the English people."

His vision has been fulfilled and must be the biggest lasting effect of that evacuation.

— Michael Henderson

To escape the bombing

Seventy years ago this week, my brother Gerald, age 6, and I, 8, were among hundreds of English children who crossed the Atlantic in a convoy of liners escorted by warships. We were being sent for safety from a country threatened with invasion.

Sitting on our bunk playing Battleships, we were too young to appreciate the dangers. It was adventure rather than trauma. Parents felt differently. The father of four girls on our ship wrote in his diary on the day we left, "There are mines strewn across the oceans, submarines lying in wait to torpedo them, aircraft searching for them to blow them to pieces. Yet I cannot but believe that the crime of exposing them at sea is less than the crime of keeping them at home to be the possible victims of an invading army."

When our daughter was 8 I realized how dire that situation must have been for our parents to send us away. Our mother wanted to get us out of the war zone because she had grown up in "the Troubles" in Ireland before partition, with fights around her Dublin home and our Protestant grandfather being told to leave the country by week's end or be shot.

A Gallup Poll in 1940 indicated that 5 million American families were willing to welcome children from Britain into their homes. In the event, only some 3,000 out of the 30,000 who signed up to go to the United States actually went. This was be-

cause that September the passenger ship City of Benares was sunk by German torpedoes and 77 children died. It was clear that the Atlantic was too dangerous.

The care given by American hosts and schools overcame any homesickness on my part, even if we didn't see our mother for five years. Our father came on a mission to Washington, D.C., in 1943. After he phoned unexpectedly I said, "Gee, he talks just like in the movies." Our Connecticut school even put up a Union Jack that we could face when American boys pledged allegiance to the Stars and Stripes.

I loved American life and particularly American sports. After Pearl Harbor we were in it together; I joined Americans in collecting scrap metal and even spotting for planes from the top of the school chapel. Seventy years on, I can still be moved by the singing of "America, the Beautiful," remember the college and service songs we sang round the campfire, and recite all the American presidents — up to Cleveland. I can't get further; that was as far as I'd got when we came home in 1945 on an aircraft carrier.

My book "See You After The Duration" assesses the impact of those years. The superficial effects are long gone, the American ways of talking and dressing, even of eating. But most of us, even if our education was disrupted or in some cases we found the separation at formative years disastrous, are outspoken in gratitude to

The front page of The Christian Science Monitor on Aug. 23, 1940, featured this photo of Michael Henderson (far right) and his younger brother, Gerald (far left), arriving in Boston after being evacuated from England during World War II.

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