

Kalju Pullerits
Estonian Displaced
Person
Atlantic
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Now some 45 years later we look back to this desperate flight to the freedom and to our new homeland with gratitude and thanks to Canadian people who accepted us with open arms in St. John and everywhere in the life in Canada.

Our people have prospered here and grown roots and established their homes here through hard work and with hands on where work was to be done. We expected very little in return and we were grateful for what we were able to accomplish.

As you know we were in total 38 adults varying in ages between 19 years to 53 years, mostly around 30 years of age, and four children - youngest 2 years old. At this time 50% of the adults have passed away. Oldest person alive is 88 years old and average age of remaining family is getting up to 70 year range.

Children born in Canada have done well and received good education. Good health and good education was the motto of the parents who had seen life under communist yoke in its most brutal phases. They were the living testimony of the horrors that existed in Soviet Union, horrors that Canadian people would not believe for long time. In sense it was also a mission for freedom and for democracy, to open the eyes of the world. Our children who are now Canadians, and their children, will be holding high their freedom and their home Canada.

On arrival to Canada I did not have any knowledge in English language. My university studies were interrupted by war and we were penniless when we arrived in St. John. Immigration Authority issued deportation order with statement that we would be most likely in public charge and did not have sufficient funds to support ourselves. While Atlanta was still in the harbour we prepared for the departure to Argentine since return to the country of birth, by the rule of the immigration, meant certain death to all of us. Finally we were accepted and allowed to stay and we travelled by train, paid by Canadian Red Cross to Montreal and most of the boat family to Toronto. I and my wife and my wife's mother found work in Montreal. I started as draftsman with Foundation Company of Canada - 1900 Sherbrooke St. West- and my wife and her mother found jobs, with William Scully uniform factory, as seamstresses.

I continued my engineering studies and passed examinations for Professional Engineer [in] 1953 and was appointed to Assistant Chief Engineer for Foundation Company [the] same year. In company work we travelled through Canada:

1950 Pine Falls Hydro Project in Northern Manitoba

1955 Proj. manager in Beachwood N.B.

1956 Chief Proj. Eng., Deas Island tunnel in Vancouver

1958 moved to Toronto office as Chief Engineer Marine Construction

1965 formed consulting engineering firm in Toronto - Albery Pullerits Dickson & Associates Ltd. Our work took us from Coast to Coast and to High Arctic.

We have two children, born in Montreal. John is 41 and is anesthesiologist, Eric is 39 and is civil engineer and 3 grandchildren.

My wife Aino whose university studies were interrupted during the war made her B.A. degree with University of Toronto 1976. We are now retired and live here on Wasaga Beach and often think back on the day of our "odyssey" and wonder was this our restless souls or was this our defiance to tyranny that started all this. Did we really find home and peace? What chance for life would we had if we had accepted communist yoke?

Today when Russian troops, some 15,000 strong, are still in Estonia after 50 years of occupation showing their presence on the streets of an independent republic of Estonia staggering under economic hardships, while Western powers are sending massive aid to Russia. Are our prayers cast into winds? We who spent our life to build up Canada are hurt deeply when we see occupants of our homeland being praised and supported in illegal occupation. Did our life work have any meaning here in Canada? Did we help any of those unfortunate countrymen, who could not escape and had to live in tyranny for 50 years and now, when [a] ray of hope has risen, they are again traded into slavery? If more Canadians new about conditions of the small nation of Estonia under heavy boots of Russian bear I am sure they would reach their helping hand.

For this reason your letter was as [a] ray of light in darkness showing the way. Young man on the harbour key in St. John harbour carrying in his heart the torch of the freedom of our people all these years, makes it worth while to feel Canadian in the heart. I, the one who was standing on the deck of Atlanta and looked up to the dock some 20 ft. above, am one of them who's life in Canada started from there. Canada is our home

now and we have been so very fortunate to meet so many Canadian friends.