

Ylo Korgemagi  
Estonian Displaced  
Person  
Franconia  
December 10, 1949

CANADA'S IMMIGRATION MUSEUM  
**PIER 21**

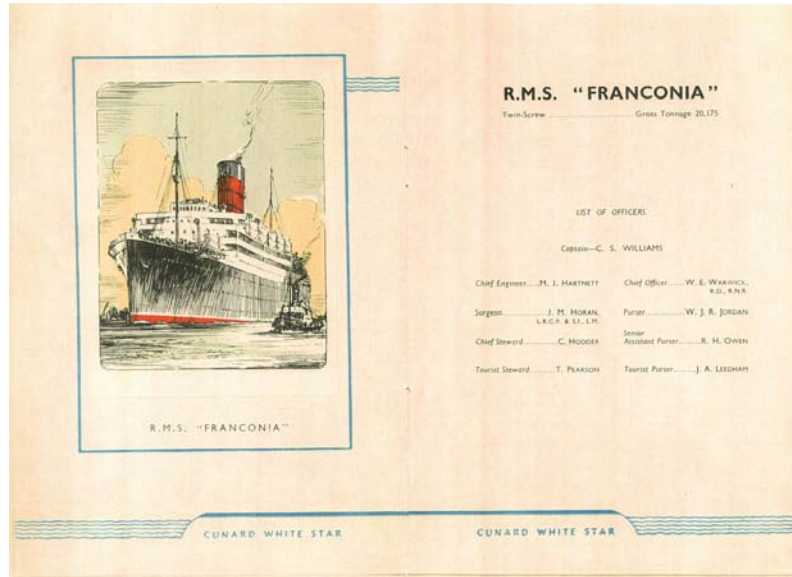


REFUGEES' DEPARTURE.—Some of the refugees who recently came to Cork on the ship, "Victory," seen at Glanmire terminus, Cork, before their departure for Dublin, en route to Canada.  
(*"Examiner" Photo*).

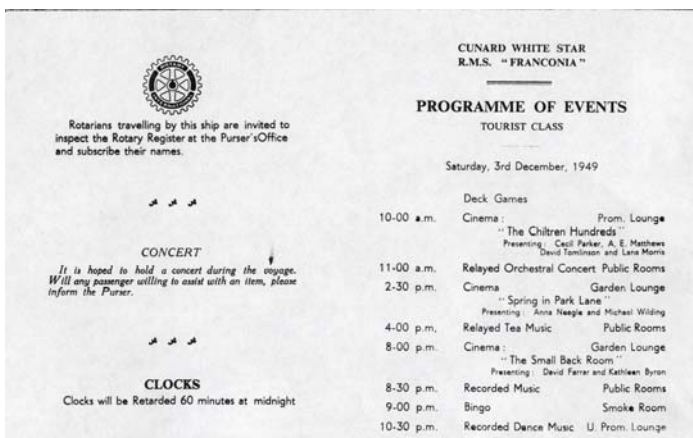
It was primarily my father's idea to immigrate to Canada after fleeing the Soviet occupation of Estonia towards the end of the Second World War (1944). As told by my mother: she, pregnant with my brother and myself in her arms, was to make her way to the harbour from their home, in Tallinn, during a Russian bomb raid. My father had gone ahead to secure passage on some kind of boat in an escape to Sweden. We fled on board an extremely overcrowded tugboat which was part of a fleet of anything that could float. This fleet had to run a gauntlet of Russian dive-bombers and German gunboats. Many didn't reach Sweden.

While in Sweden: my brother was born (March 1945), my father was able to contact a cousin who had emigrated to Canada in 1939 (and had become a rich baker) and found work as an auto-mechanic. In the next five years, several developments made it desirable to emigrate to Canada.

The refugees (Estonians, Latvians, Finns, and etc.) were not treated well by the Swedes and were resented for entering the workforce, some refugees living in Sweden and wanted by the Soviet Russians began to disappear (my father had ignored Soviet conscription prior to fleeing) and it became evident that my father could provide a better living for his family in Canada.



My parents sacrificed exceedingly to save enough to purchase a share in a freighter (the Victory), which was going to take us to Canada. I remember seeing a chain gang of men loading holds with rocks for ballast since the only cargo was passengers. I remember being cautioned by my parents not say anything of this venture to anyone. I suspect due to the illegality and foolhardiness of what this group were going to attempt. We sneaked out at night with no lights and in silence, but were either stopped by the British Navy or made for land due to mechanical and safety reasons. This ship was definitely not capable of crossing the Atlantic Ocean. During our brief trip on our little ship, I remember washing on deck by throwing a rope and a bucket overboard and drawing it forth. It was the first time I tasted salt water- I didn't like it.



The Victory was docked at Cork, Ireland and the passengers distributed to various Displaced Persons Camps. It was in Ireland I was introduced to, bangers, pork sausages and I love them still. With the assistance of English and Canadian Immigrant Officials and the sponsorship of our rich baker relative we were on

the move again, first to Liverpool, England. I remember being awed by the bomb damage to Liverpool.

We sailed to Canada on the Cunard White Star Liner R.M.S. Franconia early December 1949. On board, I discovered corn flakes with milk and sugar. When I was able to eat between bouts of seasickness, I would eat nothing but corn flakes. My poor mother was seasick during the entire passage. We landed in Halifax, became a landed immigrant on December 10, 1949. All I remember of landing at Halifax was the sense of finally having arrived safely. Mission accomplished, and boy did I look good in my new clothes. My mother was a professional seamstress and it was important to her to not look much like poor immigrants, which we were.

Certainly, much has been said of such an enterprise using synonyms of hardship, uncertainty and fear, but for a five year old it was an exciting adventure. It continued to for years after, while we proceeded to become established. As for hardships, I can only recall having to go to Sunday School at the Displaced Persons Camp in Ajax, Ontario where we stayed until my father was able to find work and a home in Toronto.

In the summer of 1990 (just six months before his passing) my father and I went back to Estonia. We went back to our roots; discovered relatives we didn't even know existed. It was a turbulent, emotional experience for the both of us to return to after forty years. Yet, we both discovered, and most significantly for my father, that home was Canada.

(CABIN CLASS)

**IMMIGRATION IDENTIFICATION CARD**

THIS CARD MUST BE SHOWN TO THE EXAMINING OFFICER AT PORT OF ARRIVAL

Name of passenger..... **MAST. U. KOR GEMAGI**

Name of ship..... **FRANCONIA**

Name appears on Return, sheet..... **27A** line..... **7**

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Medical Examination Stamp

Civil Examination Stamp

**LANDED IMMIGRANT**

**CANADA IMMIGRATION**  
**DEC 10 1949**  
**HALIFAX, N.S.**

(See back)