

Anita MacLean nee
 Vilumsons
 Latvian Displaced
 Person
 General M.L. Hersey
 July 1950

CANADA'S IMMIGRATION MUSEUM PIER 21



1325, 36, 21

Serial No 050107
 Issued at Fallingbotel

INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE ORGANIZATION

CERTIFICATE OF IDENTIFY FOR THE PURPOSE OF IMMIGRATION TO Canada

- The holder of this Certificate is the concern of the International Refugee Organization.
- This Certificate is issued by the International Refugee Organization with the approval of the Allied authorities of Occupation in Germany and Austria to Refugees and Displaced Persons recommended for emigration to Canada. It is issued without prejudice to and in no way affects the holder's nationality.
- This certificate is NOT valid for travel unless it bears the signature of the I.R.O. certifying officer AND a Canadian visa, and the appropriate military exit permit has been granted.

PERSONAL DATA

FAMILY NAME	VILUMSONS	CHRISTIAN NAMES	Aleksandra-Vilhelmine
MAIDEN NAME (where applicable)	Brauna		
DATE OF BIRTH	15.1.14	SEX	F / DP NO. 206182
PLACE AND COUNTRY OF BIRTH	Saldas/Latvia		
NATIONALITY	Latvian		
OCCUPATION	housewife		
FATHER'S NAME	Brauna Janis		
MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME	Slaime Anna		

A. Vilumsons
 (Signature of Applicant)

Description of Holder

Height 164 cm Weight 50 kg
 Hair dark brown
 Eyes brown
 Nose normal
 Shape of Face oval
 Special Characteristics

Children up to 16 years accompanying holder.
 (Dependents over 16 years of age must have separate documents).

NAME	SEX	PLACE AND DATE OF BIRTH
Anita	F	Saldas/Latvia 17.12.40
Maruta	F	Lueneburg/Germ. 11.2.47

W. Hersey
 (Signature and Position)
 FALLINGBOTELO, Certifying Officer)
 Date 26.1.50
 Place Fallingbotel

Exit Permit Visa No. 11557
 dated 27.1.50 issued Hersey

For insertion of _____ visa

We were forced to leave Latvia in 1944 to escape the approaching Russian army. The family consisted of my father, Ilgvaris (John), mother, Alexandra (Sasha), grandmother, Lina and myself at age 4. We took only what we could carry and sailed to Germany.

The next six years were spent in many displaced persons camps, one of which was Lueneberg where my sister Maruta, was born. These camps were in the English sector and we were well treated, even schooling was provided. The food was sparse and the adults were forced to supplement out diet by scrounging from the local

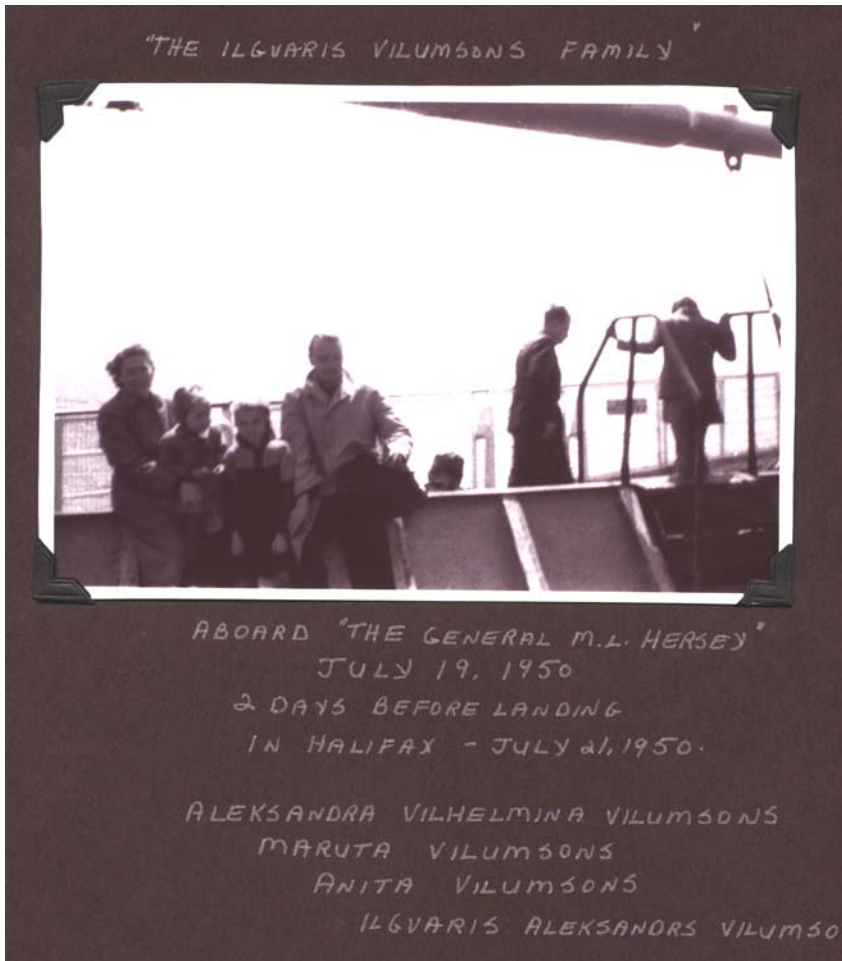
farmers. Sometimes it was without the consent of the farmers, but hunger is a powerful incentive.

My aunt had emigrated to Canada and was living in Red Lake, Ontario and she was able to sponsor us in 1950. My parents had to have jobs waiting and a promise from my aunt that we would not be a drain on the system. It was the best decision we ever made.

All I remember of the trip on the ship was that the minute the tug started to tow us out of the



harbour, seasickness set in. The men were separated from their families and required to do cleaning of the ship. That left my mother to care for a toddler and a very ill ten year old. My grandmother had been forced to



remain in Germany because she had a shadow on her lung and was not able to join us until a year later. I recently found a small snapshot of my family at the railing of the ship two days before we docked in Halifax. I also discovered the ship was the General M.L. Hersey (later re-fitted as the St Louis).

One of the rules on the ship was that food was not to be taken out of the dining room. This created a

problem, as I was not able to get to the dining room even if I could eat. This is where the kindness of the sailors made all the difference in the world. They would sneak food to my mother so I wouldn't go without it. I'll never forget them for that.

On arrival in Halifax, we were given funds for train tickets to Red Lake, Ontario. This money was paid back by my parents as soon as they were able. The cultural shock of arriving in a remote mining town, after living in cities our entire lives, was great. That summer the mosquitoes and black flies nearly did us in. Then, of course, the winter was something else. In spite of this, we learned to enjoy the North very much and love it still.

When we arrived at the train station in Kenora, my uncle said "Hi!". I had no idea what he was saying. That is how my basic knowledge of English was. However, I soon picked it up and hopped from grade to grade until I

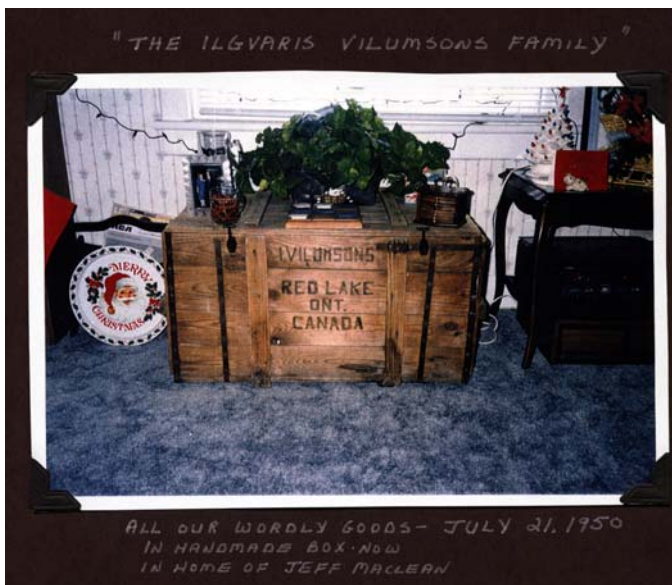
got to my age group. It was more difficult for my parents. My mother worked as a chambermaid in the local hotel and many a day came home in tears because she could not understand what was being said to her. My dad worked in the bunkhouse at the gold mine and had an easier time as he had studied English in school.

We lived in Red Lake for about two years and when the mine started to cut back, we moved to St Catherine's, Ontario. That was in 1952 and my husband and I still live here. My sister and her family live in Sarnia, Ontario where my brother-in-law has a furniture business. My parents, sister and myself became Canadian citizens as soon as we qualified to do so.



My grandmother and parents are deceased, my mother just last May, but I know they loved Canada and appreciated the fact that if you worked hard you could accomplish anything. They all did work hard and had to start from nothing when they were no longer very young. The fact that they were able to live comfortably without ever asking for a hand-out

proves what a great country this is.

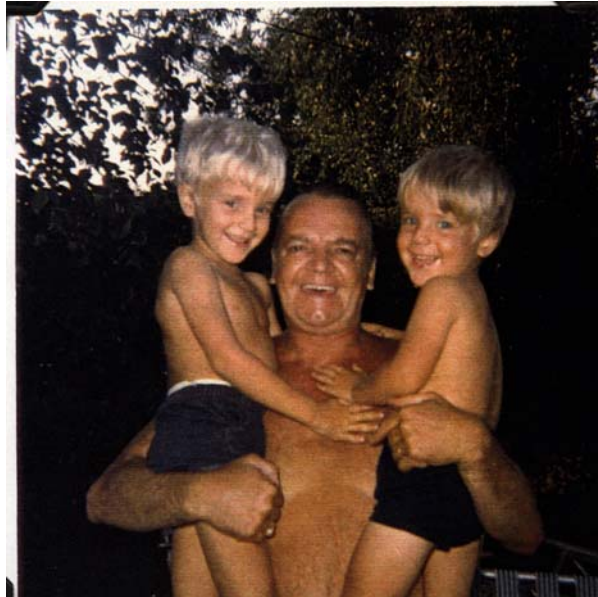


My husband, Gary, and I raised two wonderful sons. Chris and his Donna lived in Scarborough, Jeff and Judy in Crystal Beach on Lake Erie. They are all doing well. Jeff and Judy have a little girl. Our granddaughter, Samantha (Sammy) is the second generation of our family in Canada and she is the joy of our lives. My sister, Maruta, and her

husband, Tom Gillies have three children, Mary, John and Jessica. Jessica's middle name is Vilumsons and so the original family name will

be carried on. They are all great kids and will be successful at whatever they do.

I am a Canadian, born in Latvia, not a Latvian-Canadian. I hate the fact of hyphenated Canadians, and feel that we must put this country first. I do have an interest in what happens in the country of my birth, but Canada always comes first. I hope we all appreciate how fortunate we are to be living here!



Thanks Canada, for my life and for the fact that my family can live in freedom. After all, that is why we came to this wonderful place!

Thank you, also, for creating Pier 21 so that our history can be documented for us and future generations. For those of us who arrived as we did with what we could carry, our history really starts at that pier in Halifax. Keep up the good work!

