

John Martens  
Ukrainian Displaced  
Person  
Aquitania  
March 22, 1948



Introduction:

Left Hanover, Germany on the 12th of March 1948. Travelled by train through Germany and Holland. Took a boat from Holland across the English Channel. Arrived in Harvick Port. Took a train to London, then took bus to Southampton and left on the 17th of March. We boarded the ship, Aquitania, for Canada. Arrived at Pier 21, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada on March 22, 1948. (This day is special for me for two reasons: freedom day in Canada and, my first grandchild's birthday)

My first Impressions and Feelings:

At last I put my foot in a free country after many painful circumstances:

I lost my father to the communists. He died on his way to a concentration camp. Then I had to flee across the Ukraine, White Russia, Poland, and Germany with my mother, brothers and sisters, always hoping to some day come to a free country.

Coming out of war ravaged Europe, Canada was like an oasis in the desert. People were well dressed and had plenty of food. We had so little food in Europe. There was never enough to satisfy our hunger. But my mother said, When we get to Canada (pronounced Kahn-aud-ah) we will be able to eat all we want.

I owned a pair of pants which I found on the British Army base where I was employed. It was so stained with oil and needed five washings before they could be put on. That was all I had when I arrived at Pier 21 as an 18-year-old.

We were given \$25.00 per person for food on the train which was to last us five days. But sandwiches were 35¢ and would not be enough for 5 days so when the train stopped at a station, I ran to a nearby store and bought 10 loaves of bread, a large bologna, and about 15 pounds of Sunkist oranges. That last for the entire trip for our family of seven.

I had read and seen some movies in Germany about Wild Indians in Canada so I kept looking for Indians to attack the train but didn't see any!

On March 27th we arrived at the Chilliwack, BC station. Our sponsor, Mr. Nicholas N. Reimer, picked us up. He had a tree nursery and also supplied us with employment. After two years in Canada, I married a Canadian girl.

As soon as my five years in Canada were over, I applied for citizenship. I have never regretted it. I proudly display my Citizenship papers on the wall at our home. I was unable to get formal education during my years but all of our five children have obtained university degrees (9 in total, for my 5 children) and I am so proud of them!