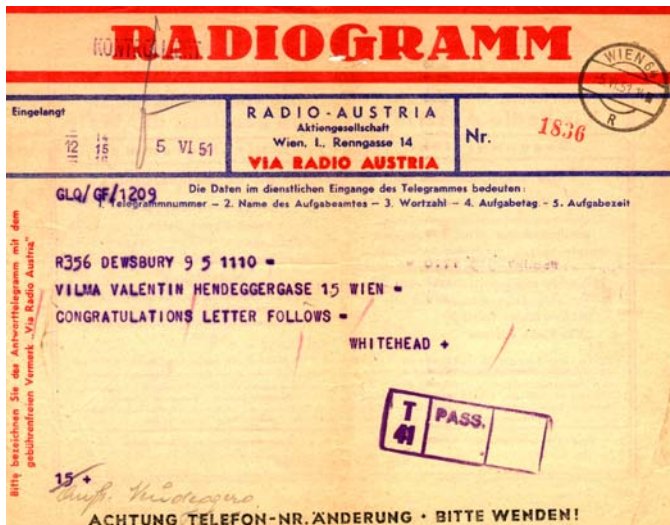


The Valentin Family
by Daughter Catherine
Coulter
Czechoslovakian
Immigrants
Georgic
Summer of 1951



When we immigrated from Czechoslovakia to Canada in 1951, our family consisted of myself, Renate (Rena), Valentin (b. in Czechoslovakia in 1936). Our father, Theodor Valentin (originally Weiskopf) died in 1950, before we managed to immigrate.

After the Second World War ended, our family settled in the city of Zilina, now located in the Slovak Republic. Having lived through the war and seeing the rise of



communism coming, our father decided that we should leave the country. We could not get visas to the United States, where my mothers' family lived, and so it was decided that Canada would our destination. My father had a friend who had a sister, Mary Bacovsky (m. Sternberg), living in Canada. They agreed to sponsor us as immigrants. In 1947, our father arranged for

Canadian visas for the entire family. Due to poor health and his inability to speak English, father delayed a move. After the communists took power, it was not possible to leave the country.

Father had been in poor health since the war and he died in 1950. Our mother remembered that when she was first married, a Viennese friend had jokingly told her that if she divorced, she could regain her Austrian citizenship. She applied for an Austrian passport and was granted one. Lucy received her own and I was listed on my mother's passport since I was only 13 years old. Plans were made to move to Austria, as we would not have been permitted to leave if it was known that we were moving to North America.

When we arrived in Halifax, mother spoke to the first official looking person that she met on Pier 21, whose name was Mr. Harry Wade. She explained that according to our visa we were to go and work on a farm in Alberta but that we had not money for the train ride and we did not know our sponsors, the Sternbergs. She asked if it would be possible to go to Montreal, since her parents and brother lived in New York City and we were not qualified to work on a farm. Somehow, Mr. Wade was able to grant us our request. After we had been processed, he invited us out for a tour of Halifax and then back to his home for dinner. It was amazing to us that a complete stranger (and his wife) would do this, and our first impressions of Canada that of a wonderful and welcoming country were completely coloured by Mr. Wade.