

Dirk G. Garlich  
German Immigrant  
Columbia  
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My parents, Ernst and Anny Garlichs met in Germany during World War 2. They married in March 1943, but saw little of each other during the remainder of the war, Ernst spending some time as a prisoner of war in Texas, Greenland and other places. Reunited when the war ended, they lived in Varel, Ernst's hometown. Soon they had 2 children... - a daughter Marion born in July 1946 and a son Dirk in Nov 1948. Like many other families, they found that post-war Germany had little to offer in the way of work or future. They decided to emigrate.

In the early 1950's, only 2 countries accepted immigrant families from Germany, Canada and Ethiopia. Despite my father having a job in Ethiopia as an interpreter, my parents decided to move to Canada because they could all come together. In Ethiopia, my father would have to go ahead alone and could only send for my mother, my sister and me 6 months later. They borrowed money for the fare, packed their few belongings and set off for their new home. They crossed the Atlantic on the Greek ship, the Columbia.

At age 3, I have few memories of the trip to Canada, but some very vivid images remain.

We encountered severe storms off the coast of Newfoundland. Waves were enormous, often towering over the ship. Many were seasick. The waves however provided a game for the children. As the ship rolled side to side, the children found joy in rolling back and forth on the decks. The mothers were horrified since the ship's railings were open at the bottom. They had visions of their children rolling off the decks and into the sea, never to be seen again. Luckily, no tragedy occurred.

At one of the meals, I recall the server bringing a tray which I thought included large, luscious black cherries. The server tried his best to dissuade me from eating one but I insisted. What a shock when I popped a black olive into my mouth. I have never liked them since.

We took a train from Halifax to Toronto. There we stayed for a short while in a few rooms in a house on Grange Avenue. One Monday my father took a bus to Oshawa, Ont, having been told of a tool and die factory that was hiring, and that surely with his experience he could secure

employment. Days passed without hearing from my father. Later in the week he called, much to my mother's relief. Imagine being in a strange country, not knowing the language, without any money and with 2 young children. My father had found work and a place for us to stay, but had no extra money to call us. That weekend we packed our few belongings into a truck and moved to Oshawa.

My parents, Ernst and Anny, lived in Oshawa for the rest of their lives. They always embraced Canada as their new home, feeling it was a wonderful place to live and raise a family. It offered so much more. They never had any desire to return to Germany and never regretted leaving. Dad did visit on several occasions, but Mom never went back. As soon as they could, my parents applied for and got their Canadian citizenship.

My sister Marion lives in Scarborough, Ont with her husband Terry. I live in Waterloo, Ont with my wife Lloy and our son Drew.

I often wonder how our lives would have unfolded had my parents decided to emigrate to Ethiopia rather than Canada. While I'll never know, I'm thankful for the decision my parents made.