

Werner Peters
German Immigrant
Anna Salen
May 1951

CANADA'S IMMIGRATION MUSEUM
PIER 21



Editors Note: See The
Otto Froese Family story
for further information

The Peters' family came from Germany in May of 1951. My father Hermann was 45 years old, and had known his wife Emilie, for a relatively short time due to the wartime interruption of their marriage.



Still there were five of us children; Elisabeth, Hanna, Klaus, Ruth and Werner. Johannes was born in Canada in 1954.

At the time I was the youngest of the lot; only a 6 month old baby, so of course I have no memory of these events. During the voyage on the Anna Salen, I took seriously ill with what they tell me was a bowel obstruction. Doctors were not equipped to do

major surgery on a moving vessel, and they did not give my parents much hope for my survival. One of the stories I remember my Dad telling me was that Mother was horrified at the thought of losing a baby at sea. Losing a child was tragic enough, but the thought of being buried at sea was especially abhorrent to her.

Another item my Dad passed on to me was that there was a lot of prayer that went up on my behalf. Prayer meetings were held on the ship. Many immigrations were organized by church groups, and so there were a lot of Christian believers on board. Our sponsor was the North American Baptist Conference, and the fellow who arranged it all for us was William Stuhrahahn. I have some of his correspondence with my father to this day.

I am forever grateful for those who prayed, and would love and/or correspond with anyone who was on that boat.

The Anna Salen was headed for Pier 21, but because of my illness, she steamed for St John's instead. I do not know whether the travellers lost an extra day because of me. I and my family were dropped off in Newfoundland where I was taken to the hospital.

The story gets fuzzy here. I was told, it seems to me, that I was taken off the ship by helicopter. I was doubtful of that story, until I heard that the boat was converted from a carrier to a passenger liner, and that there were a couple of helipads on the boat. If anyone can confirm that story, I would be grateful.

I was operated on in St. Johns, and survived (obviously). One day I would like to visit St Johns, where it all started for us. It would be neat to find anyone who can remember the day this big boat weighed anchor outside of St Johns. The harbour was not deep enough to allow the ocean going vessel in.

Because the illness and surgery delayed our arrival, my father's prearranged employer in Ontario had to make other arrangements, and we eventually ended up in Winnipeg, where we all grew up. Dad worked extremely hard, as most immigrants do. Our mother died of cancer early on, in 1958. She hardly had time to learn English. Dad remarried a few years later and Olga and Bernie Warkentin joined our family. We were also gifted with another sister at that time, Marianne.

Our family has since been spread across Canada, and there are children and grandchildren. Olga still lives with Marianne out West, and Hermann died in 1984.

Remember all that prayer on the boat? My father told me during my teen years that he 'gave me to God' during my crisis on the boat. Back then, I didn't know what that meant, and my life certainly did not reflect that I was going to end up being a minister. Yet I have been a pastor in the Christian ministry since 1977, and presently minister at Westmount

Park Church in Toronto. You can catch up with me on my weblog
(<http://wernerpeters.com>).