

Heide Cogswell  
Immigrant  
Italia  
July of 1955



When I came to Canada in July of 1955, I was very young, adventurous, straight out of high school, and had hoped to perfect the use of the English language, which I had studied in school for at least five years. My parents and I had met a German couple, who immigrated to Canada three years before and were looking for an au pair girl for a Canadian family in Halifax. They were sailing back three weeks later on the M.S. Italia, and it sounded like a comforting idea, for me to travel with them rather than alone. Somehow Immigration Canada worked a lot faster in those days, for three weeks later I was on that huge ship sailing to Canada. I had a wonderful time. The ocean was like a lake, there was hardly a ripple on the water. I shared a cabin with three other women, mostly war brides, but was lucky to be able to share a table with my German surrogate parents in the first class dining room.

The memories of my first ocean voyage are all first class, it was exciting and a very good beginning for new life. I could go on about the trip, however the ship docked nine days later at Pier 21, and life seemed much more serious. It did not take too long to have my passport processed in the large shed. Since I was brought up in the Lutheran Faith, a very nice lady, Miss Lehman, who worked as a volunteer for the Lutheran Church, met other new immigrants and myself belonging to the same denomination. As far as I understood at the time, the various churches had a booth with representatives meeting immigrants and welcoming them to Halifax and Canada. Miss Lehman did her job tirelessly for many years, always had encouraging words and was always supportive. She took great interest in people and was a real friend.

I was met by the Canadian family, and whisked away in their blue Dodge. It was difficult to adjust at first being a long way from home, among strangers, and thrown into a foreign language, but it helped to have arrived into beautiful Nova Scotia in the middle of the summer, for I loved swimming and seldom had the chance to swim in salt water. During my spare time I walked to horse shoe island by the North West Arm to go swimming and cool off. The Pastor of the Lutheran Church came to visit me and invited me to come to the services on Windsor Street. I was told about English courses for new Canadians being taught by very dedicated and kind teachers at Queen Elizabeth High School. Also the Canadian Film Board invited people to watch films shown to

interested people. Both programs were offered free of charge and a big help in adjusting and feeling more at home in a new country. I had planned to stay in this country for one year, and then go back to further my education for a career. However after my obligatory year with the Canadian family, I was accepted into a course at the Pathological Institute to study medical Technology under the leadership of Dr. D.J. MacKenzie.

My first job took me to the Sanatorium in Kentville, where I met my husband, and as the saying goes, "the rest is history."