

Francesco Scail
by Daughter Connie
Agoetino
Italian Immigrant
Queen Frederica
May of 1957



My dad Francesco Scail was born in a small town in southern Italy called Mammola in the province of Reggio Calabria on October 27, 1912 one of eight children. Life was hard, even at a young age. The men would farm and cultivate the land and the women would work hard in the home baking, sewing, looking after the young and the old. Money was scarce but there was always food on the table and a loving close-knit family.

On September 20, 1939, he married my mother, a beautiful, loving and caring woman, Maria Caterina Zavaglia, a seamstress. In November of that same year, my dad was called to serve in the army during the Second World War. In 1941, he was captured as a prisoner and spent the next 5 years in South Africa until his return home in 1946. Out of 26 men in his regiment, only 5 made it back home.

In 1947, I was born, Maria Concetta and the following year my sister Maria Ross was born. After the war, jobs were scarce in Italy so in 1953 my dad immigrated to Canada in search for a job and a better life for his family. In the meantime, my mom would do sewing in exchange sometimes for flour, fruits and vegetables.

After landing a job as a labourer and saving enough money, my dad returned home to take his family back to Canada.

On May 8, 1957, we boarded the QUEEN FREDERICA from Messina Italy, and arrived in Toronto May 24th, Victoria Day. It was a long and difficult journey, My mom was so sick that I was afraid she was going to die. What courage!!! To leave your whole family, your loved ones, not knowing if you would ever see them again, going to a strange land, not understanding the language and with only a suitcase to start a new life.

In 1961 my brother Domenico Antonio was born, life was very hard, my dad worked in a warehouse 7 days a week and my mom was sewing at home to help make ends meet. Time passes quickly, we grew up, finished school and got married. Mom and dad are so proud of their 9 grandchildren and 3 great-grand children.

September 9, 1994 was the saddest day for our family, my mom at age 73 passed away suddenly with a stroke. My dad's health went downhill so we decided that he needed more care after much searching we found a lovely nursing home where he now lived for 4 years. His mind is still sharp as a whip, enjoys telling his amazing stories to his friends and family, and is writing his biography in Italian.

We celebrate his 90th birthday two ago and is still strong.

Thanks you mom and dad for having the courage, for taking a chance, leaving your old safe world In search of a new life for your family and bringing us to a county called CANADA, we will always be Italian by birth but so proud to be called Canadian by choice.

This is a poem I wrote to my dad for his 90th birthday

Canadian By Choice

When I was nine in my native land
A stranger arrived and took my hand
My mother said, "This is your dad
He's been away, no choice he had"

Soon we crossed the ocean
Leaving our loved ones behind
With courage and a suitcase
Not knowing what to find.

You worked so hard
To give us a life
Never taking the time

Always giving advice

As our family grows

And you've become a granddad

I want to say "Thank you for

Sharing the life that we've had."

LOVE,

Your daughter

Maria Concetta.