

Frank Giorno
Italian Immigrant
Saturnia
April 11, 1959



My family came to Canada from Italy on the Saturnia. We departed from Naples probably in late March. My father's name was Oreste Giorno and my mother's name was Emma Chiappetta Giorno. They were from Montalto Uffugo, a town in the Province of Cosenza in the region of Calabria. Montalto's one claim to fame, which I was to learn when I was at York University in Toronto, was that it was the setting for Leoncavallo's opera I Pagliacci. My parents had very little education both completing the fourth grade at which point compulsory education ended under Mussolini's fascist regime. My parents were 30 years old when they set sail for Canada in 1959. My sister Gina was six and I was four.

I remember that after we left Naples we stopped in Lisbon, Portugal. My father left the ship in Lisbon and bought these large oranges which he called "porto gallos". I remember meeting a boy who was a little older than me and together we ran through the various decks of the Saturnia. I seem to remember three decks. I also have a vivid recollection of the smell of the dining halls. I recall two dining halls, one was a more elaborate than the other. My sister and I shared a room with my mother. My father's room was in another part of the ship. I remember people anxiously look for land as we approached Halifax. The trip lasted about 14 days. People cheered when land came into view and we docked at Halifax. When we landed at Pier 21 (I didn't know that's what it was until about a year ago) I remember entering a large dark cavernous place. My parents went down a ramp to pick up the suitcase and trunk. We then took the train that took us to Toronto. Along the way to Toronto my father stopped to buy some canned corned beef.

In Toronto my dad worked in the construction industry for the first several years. He later worked with Elte Carpets in Toronto before getting a job with Canada Post in 1970s. He had this job until he retired in 1985. My mother worked with Colonial Packaging a company that packed an assortment of dry goods ranging from pasta to nuts to candy, to dried beans and rice. She worked there steadily from about 1959 to 1987. When we first arrived my family shared a house with three other families my uncles Joe Giorno and his family (he owned the house) my uncle Pepino Bernaudo. An elderly single woman named Miss Ashworth lived in the room opposite us on the second floor. She moved to make

room for my Uncle Angelo's family who arrived in 1961. My uncle Peter arrived in 1965 and the basement was converted into an apartment for his family. Miss Ashworth gave my family a framed religious drawing inscribed with the words "Wishes and May Your family do well in Canada." I still have the drawing.

As the uncles earned money they each bought their own houses. In 1965 they bought at 851 Davenport Rd in Toronto for \$16,000 and had it paid off in three years. Both my parents are now deceased. Both died of cancer. My sister and I both graduated from York University with an honours BA. I subsequently obtained a degree in Journalism from Ryerson. We are both now working in the Ontario Civil Services. Just a few weeks ago I visited Pier 21 for the first time since I arrived there in 1959. I took my daughter Sophie, who is ten and my son Giancarlo, who is eight, so they could see where my family first arrived.

A few years ago I read Nino Ricci's "The Lives of Saints" and was surprised to find the *Saturnia* mentioned as the boat that took the heroine of the novel to Canada, possibly landing at Pier 21 - although the author wasn't explicit about this.