

Laura Salvi nee DiPietro
Italian Immigrant
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Halifax, January 10, 1959

On December 31, 1958, Zio Mimi took us to Naples where we were to start a new voyage and adventure to our new home somewhere over the big sea. Zio

Mimi would have been the most qualified to take us to the port because he had a car. When we boarded the big ship I could hear the fireworks in the distance, because it was New Year's Eve. With tears in her eyes, my mother took my sister and I on the ship and someone led us to our cabin. Then I cried. The cabin was small, bunk beds on both sides. Later another woman and her child came in and we all shared this small space for the trip. How could my mother do this to us I thought, but it had to be done to join my father in Canada. He had been away since 1956. For 10 days this was our home. For 10 days I tasted salty air, and for 10 days I suffered a tooth ache not wanting to tell anyone for fear that it would be pulled out. The Chaplain was a consolation. This priest devoted himself to the children. He said mass on the Epiphany (January 6) but where was my "befana" who had brought me all those little gifts for 11 of my years? Finally we arrived in Halifax on Jan. 10. I thought our trip was over, but we boarded a dark train for 3 days to Hamilton Ontario. I remember the noise of that train. I remember my mother instructing us as to what groceries to buy. I bought bread and held it so tight that by the time I got to the seats in the train, it was a big mess of dough. I also bought a can of peaches but we had nothing with which to open it. I cried and quietly cursed this trip.

Fifty years later I went back to Halifax on the train, and while riding on the train I had so many questions about that first trip. I wished my mother was still alive so I could ask how she handled our daily needs, our change of clothes and how did she handled her sanity.

After checking Pier 21 and all the museums I am so impressed with all the research that was done and records that have been kept. Above all, I am very proud of this immigration history of which we were part. I am committed to this country. Now I will always think of Halifax as the first stop toward my new home.

