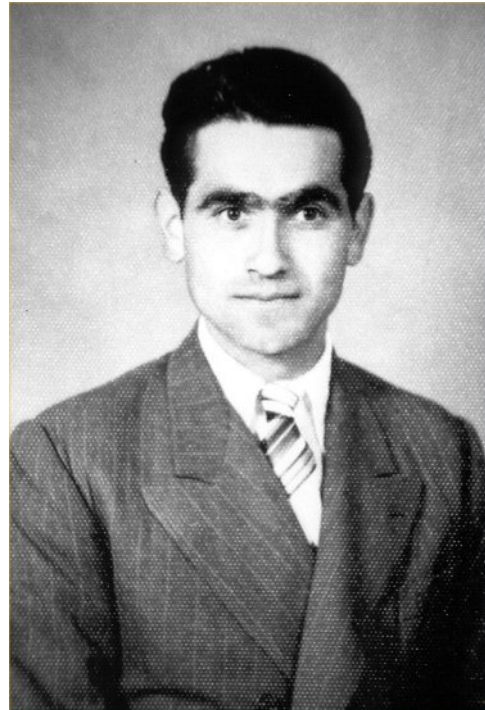


Luigi Antonio Pagano
Italian Immigrant
Saturnia
November 20, 1961

CANADA'S IMMIGRATION MUSEUM
PIER 21



I came to Canada in November 1961 with my mother, Maria Rosaria (Teti) Pagano and my sister, Maria Grazia Pagano. We came to join my father who had immigrated to Canada in 1958. We came from Italy, from a small town called San Pietro Infine, in the Region of Campania. We came on a ship called the Saturnia. We boarded in Naples.



I was seven years old at the time and I remember the excitement of getting on the ship and the sadness of leaving my grandmother behind. My uncle bought me my first coke at the port in Naples while we were waiting to board the ship. I recall how excited everyone was leaving the port and the cheering and waving going on around me on the deck of the ship.

From Naples we went to Sicily to pick up more passengers and I also remember stopping off in Gibraltar and Lisbon. We reached Gibraltar at night and Lisbon during the daytime. We left the ship for a short time in Lisbon.



I remember the boat as being very big with a huge dining room, a theatre and even a chapel. A few days after leaving Lisbon we hit some stormy seas. I remember that just about everyone on the boat seemed to be seasick. For some reason, I did not get seasick. My mother and sister spent a lot of time

sick in bed until we arrived in Halifax. Fortunately, there was an older boy from my home town who was also on the boat. He, his mother and sisters were going to Montreal to join his father, so I chummed around with him, otherwise my mother would not let me leave our cabin alone. Our cabin was below water level and away from the outer hull of the ship, so we had no window to look out of. Being used to living out in the country, I remember feeling cramped in the cabin, which we shared with an older lady from my town who was immigrating to Montreal to be with her children there. Upon arriving in Halifax, we were all glad to get off the ship. The journey lasted 11 days I believe.

Getting off the ship in Halifax we were brought to Pier 21. I remember there being lots of suitcases, trunks, and other luggage in the warehouse. We had to find our luggage, call a Customs Officer to have him check them and have him mark it as having been checked by Customs. Once we had our luggage checked by Customs, we proceeded to the Customs Office and were sent to the train station. I remember there being a long table in the warehouse and the table was full of items that the new immigrants were not suppose to bring to Canada such as prosciuttos, sausages, cheese, salamis and liquor bottles. I remember telling my mother that I had never seen so many Prosciuttos before. We spoke no English and



the customs officers did not speak Italian, but they were very helpful, made us feel welcome and made sure that we got onto the right train.

One of the men travelling with us on the boat kept saying that he was bringing with him a beautiful prosciutto that he made himself and could not wait to eat it with his family when he got to Toronto. Sure enough, it was confiscated at customs in Halifax and I remember some of the other men teasing him about it.

My mother went to the store in the train station to buy some bread and bologna to make us some sandwiches. My sister and I found the bread and bologna so sweet that we refused to eat it. It was the first time we had Canadian bread and processed meat. Since we would not eat sandwiches, once we boarded the train my mother brought us to the restaurant car and ordered each of us a plate of spaghetti. Again, my



sister and I found the food so sweet that we refused to eat it. At that point my mother was worried that we would get sick if they did not eat. Luckily she had some biscuits that she made in Italy and we munched on them until we got to Toronto. Our train was going from Halifax to Montreal and in Montreal we would change trains and take one for Toronto. Along the way there was a lot of snow. In some places, the snow was quite high and it was very cold. Having been used to a mild climate, the winter clothes that we brought did not keep us very warm. My mother kept looking out the window and saying, "Where have we come to, Siberia?".

When we arrived in Montreal, my mother's cousin Guido Fuoco and his wife Madalena met us at the

train station. They stayed with us and chatted with us until we departed on the train for Toronto. We arrived at Union Station in Toronto in the evening. I remember it was cold and my father, my aunt (my father's sister), and her husband came to meet us at the station. Since my father left when I was 3, I did not remember him and would not go to him. I think he was a little disappointed about that. All in all, for a seven year old the trip was an exciting ordeal. We were glad to have arrived at our

new home. I don't think that my parents planned on staying in Canada the rest of their lives. Like many immigrants at the time, the thought was to make some money and then go home. I guess we all got used to Canada and decided that we were not going back. Starting school without knowing any English was hard. My sister and I eventually mastered the language. She became a Secretary and I went to the University of Toronto and became an Engineer.

My parents bought a home, car and travelled after their retirement. We learned that Canada was full of opportunities if you are willing to work. Although it has been 37 years since I arrived at Pier 21, I still have not forgotten the day that we landed there. Having travelled to Halifax on business, I made sure to visit the site and was very pleased to learn that Pier 21 will be made into a national monument to those of us who entered Canada through Pier 21. It is a wonderful way to remember all of us who made the journey to find a better life in Canada!

