

Maria Rosaria  
Pagano  
Italian Immigrant  
Saturnia  
November 20,  
1961



I came to Canada in November 1961 with my son, Luigi Antonio Pagano and my daughter, Maria Grazia Pagano. My son was seven years old and my daughter was twelve years old. We came to join my husband, Antonio, 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 thirty-seven years old at the time and I remember the excitement of going to join my husband, who I had not seen in over three years, and the sadness of leaving friends and family behind. 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 theater 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. My daughter and I spent a lot of time sick in bed until we arrived in Halifax. My son seemed to be immune to motion sickness and wanted to go exploring about the ship. It was difficult keeping an eye on him while I was sick. 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 had him look after my son and they would chum around the ship together, otherwise I would not let him 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. We shared the cabin with an older lady from my town who was immigrating to Montreal to be with her children there.

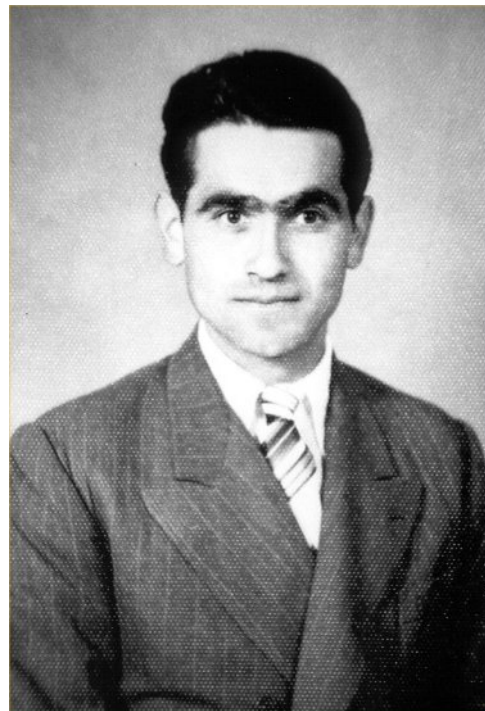


Upon arriving in Halifax, we were all glad to get off the ship. The journey lasted eleven days I believe. Getting off the ship in Halifax we were brought to Pier 21. I remember there being lots of suitcases, trunks, and other luggage in the warehouse. We had to find our luggage, call a Customs Officer to have him check them and have him mark it as having been checked by Customs. I had put a bag of beans in one of my trunks. I remember seeing beans on the floor around the luggage and thinking that they looked like the beans I had put in my trunk. Sure enough, when I found my trunk I saw that it was damaged and my beans had leaked out all over the place. I remember people saying "Where are all these beans coming from?" 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. 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.



I went to the store in the train station to buy some bread and bologna to make us some sandwiches. My son and daughter found the bread and bologna so sweet that they refused to eat it. It was the first time we had Canadian

bread and processed meat. Since they would not eat sandwiches, once we boarded the train I brought them to the restaurant car and ordered each a plate of spaghetti. Again, they found the food so sweet that they refused to eat it. At that point I was worried that they would get sick if they did not eat. Luckily I had some biscuits that I made before leaving Italy and they 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. I kept looking out the window and would say, "Where have we come to, Siberia?".



When we arrived in Montreal, my 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 husband, my sister-in-law, Dolorosa (my husband's sister), and her husband, Federico Masella, came to meet us at the station. Since my husband left when my son was 3, my son did not remember him and would not go to him. I think my husband was a little disappointed about that. My daughter instead, remembered her father and ran up to hug him and kiss him.

All in all the trip was an exciting ordeal. We were glad to have arrived at our new home. I don't think that we planned on staying in Canada the rest of our 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. We eventually bought a home, car and travelled after 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. I have never been back to Halifax, but I was happy 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!

