

Romeo Natolino
Italian Immigrant
Queen Frederica
April 5, 1956

CANADA'S IMMIGRATION MUSEUM
PIER 21



I was born and raised in the province of Udine, called Friuli. (North East Italy). I always liked to travel, to see new places, to meet new people, see different cultures.



Early 1955 having completed my apprenticeship as a journeyman bricklayer, plus four years of drafting school. (Night courses) I applied to the Canadian Consulate to come to Canada as a bricklayer. The application was accepted, and I had to pass a rigid medical examination to come to Canada, including looking at the hard calluses in my hands.

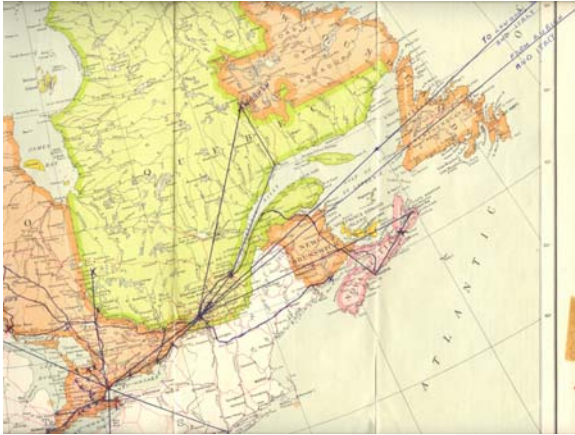
I wanted to go to Toronto, but they said that they needed bricklayers in Regina, Saskatchewan, and that is where I went. I had to pay the full fare from Friuli, to Regina, Sask. Plus I had to have \$125.00 cash to support myself until I got a job, and a place to stay.

I traveled by train from Friuli to the port of Naples in Southern Italy where along with four other friends we boarded the Ship Queen Frederica bound for Halifax. After eight days and nights at sea, we arrived at Pier 21, on April 5th 1956, where we disembarked. I remember very well how cold it was. When we left Italy a week earlier trees had leaves and all fields were green. (Pier 21 looked a lot different than it does now.)

After the necessary documents were examined and stamped 'Landed Immigrant' by the Canadian



Authorities, we were directed to the waiting Canadian National Railway car for our final destinations within Canada.



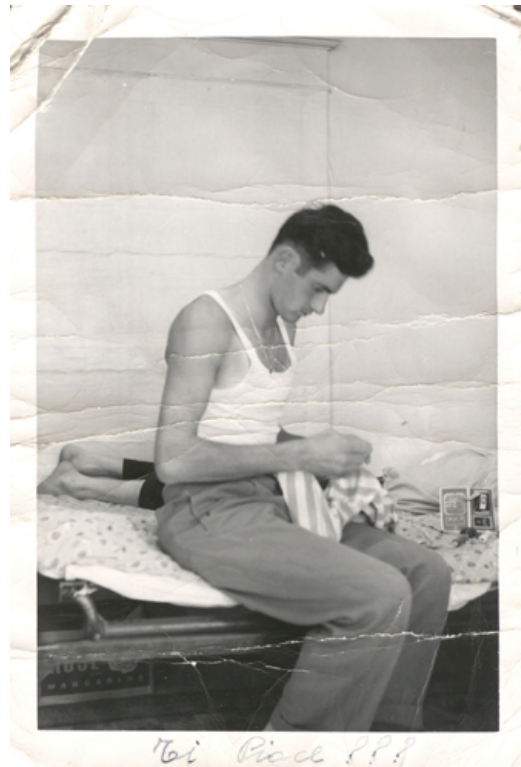
After traveling from Halifax to Montreal by train with wooden seats, all five of us changed train and the conductor pinned a 'Transfer to C.P.R.' tag on our coats.

Leaving Montreal we headed for Toronto. One from our group got off the train in Toronto, while the remaining four continued on. In Sudbury, Ontario, one more got off the train. Remaining three continued on. At Winnipeg, Manitoba, two more got off the train. Suddenly I was all alone continuing on to Regina, Sask. My final destination.

It took three days and three nights by train to reach my destination from Halifax. There was no one waiting for me at the station, when I got off the train in Regina Sask. That cold Sunday evening, April 8th, 1956.

Within few days I got a job as a cement finisher at a new cement plant under construction. Three months later, a contractor from Edmonton, Alberta, started to brick a large rotary kiln (furnace used to manufacture cement) on this site. I asked for, and was hired to work as a brick layer on this furnace. On completion of this job I was asked to continue to work for them on other jobs they had in Western Canada. Early 1957 I joined the 'Bricklayers International Union of America' in Edmonton, Alberta and I accepted their work offer. Their jobs took me all over Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia.

More than once coming home from work I laid on the bed for a few minutes to rest before washing up, only to wake up early next morning, still wearing my work boots. Although very tired at the end of every workday, at night I went to school to learn



the English language in whichever city my job took me. (From Vancouver to Hamilton, Ontario) The 'Language Is the Key to Success'. I may not have a command of the English language, but what I speak in English I can read it, and write it correctly.



In the fall of 1959 my fiancée arrived from Italy and joined me in Saskatoon, Sask. Where we were married one month later. Early 1960 we moved to Hamilton, Ontario.

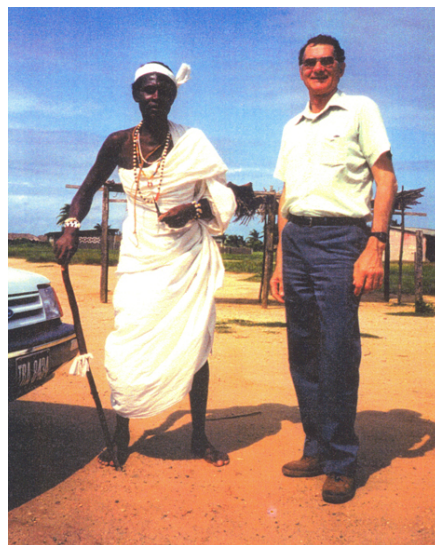
Here I got a job with the same company I worked for, in western Canada. (Edmonton was their western branch office).

Our two grown up children were born in Canada. Both have University degrees, both have good jobs and bright futures. They are our pride and joy.

I worked for the same company until I retired from the position of 'Manager of Technical Services' in 1997, after 32 years of service, plus 9 years on hourly bases as a bricklayer.

During those years the company secured sales and installation of their products on the International markets throughout the free world, specializing in the manufacture of refractory products used in the lining of industrial furnaces to make steel, cement, glass, aluminum, lime, etc.

As a bricklayer specialized exclusively in furnace installations, I worked in Canada from Labrador to Vancouver Island many times. In the USA from New York State to California, Louisiana, Wisconsin, Montana, Mississippi, Washington State, etc.



My work took me to several Countries of the world to supervise the installation of our company products as requested by the customer.

My first offshore installation job was in British Honduras (now Belize) in the early 1960s. From then on I worked in Indonesia, Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Jamaica, Mexico, U.S. Virgin Islands, Dominican Republic, Ghana (West Africa), Turkey, Yugoslavia, Italy (including



Venice about 110 km. From Friuli), and Sweden, with visits to England, Holland, Germany.

Now that I am retired, my wife and I travel for pleasure whenever we can within Canada and enjoy it very much, without the pressures of the job.

As you can see, my first 50 years in Canada have a colourful past. I may be Italian born, however I am a Canadian through and through.

The first years were very hard, but I persevered, and Canada has been very good to me. During those years and travels, I met and befriended a lot of good people that helped me, especially during the first hard and difficult years.

My family and I count our blessings to live here. It makes me proud to say that in a small way, I too contributed to make Canada the great country it is today.