

Rosa Annarilli Campoli  
by Daughter Cathy  
Forest  
Italian Immigrant  
November 29, 1958



The Campoli Crossing By Cathy  
Forrest, Rosa's daughter

On November 19, 1958, Gerardo, Santina, Alberto and Rosa Campoli left their home town of Scifelli, in the region of Lazio, Italy to travel across the ocean to Toronto, Ontario Canada. Once they've packed their belongings and their lives, Gerardo & Santina took their 2 children and 5 large trunks and began their trip by traveling three hours South to Napoli, Italy. In Napoli, the family waited to board the ship that would take them to 'the new world'. They waited with friends at the harbor for four hours to board. Amongst the tears and crowds, they remained strong. After what seemed to be an eternity, they boarded the ship where the men were separated from the women right away. Gerardo & Alberto, then almost 8 years old, were to share a room with two other family friends in the men's ward. In the women's ward, Santina and Rosa, then almost five years old, shared a room with family friends Vincenza and Maria. As their belongings were loaded onto the ship, the Campoli family climbed separate stair cases three floors down to what would be their rooms for the next 11 days.

The men fared well, homesickness was their main ailment. The women however did not fare so well. The women were down the hall from the ship's kitchen, home to both fond and foul smells. With the rocking from the waves, the foul smells of garbage from the kitchen and the stale, recycled cabin air, all four women in the room suffered from severe travel sickness. Taking turns vomiting into bowls, the women did not consume anything more than scrap pieces of buns and sparse water as that was all they could stomach. When they were able, they climbed the three flights to the deck where they could visit with their husbands and sons. Although the coolness of the sea air was a welcome change, the movement of the boat caused Santina to vomit more on deck, but having her family together was a necessity. For eleven days, she tended to her four and a half year old daughter while trying to hold onto what little strength she had left for the rest of the voyage.

Finally on November 29, 1958, they docked in the Halifax harbor. As they were herded like cattle off the liner, the Campoli family gathered and began to look for their trunks. These five trunks held all that was left of

their previous life in Italy. The first person Santina met in the Halifax harbor was, ironically, an American. This Italo-American asked if she needed help. Santina took five dollars from her pocket, a fair amount considering the cost of the voyage, and gave it to the American, asking him to retrieve the 5 trunks bearing the Campoli name. After a short while, he returned with their trunks, each was marked with a large white cross. The white cross was a mark to the handlers to take special care of their cargo. The American, when picking up the cargo, must have shared some of the money with the baggage men to ensure nothing would be damaged. As more people tried to claim their possessions, they saw their clothes, pictures and packed food spread all over the floor, proof of looting and rummaging. To leave your only home to travel to a new land where you couldn't speak the language to communicate, only to be robbed upon arrival, was a devastating sight for all.

The next part of the voyage for the Campoli family was to find the train station and board the train that will take them to Toronto. Not knowing a word of the English, let alone the streets of Halifax, their new friend took them under his wing. The American advised the Campoli's to stock up on food for the train ride to Toronto. "They never have enough food to feed the riders" he said, "buy all the bread you can." With that, he took the family to a local grocery store where Santina stocked up on bread, cheese and tuna fish. "But the bread is terrible" she said. "It is the bread of the American's" he said, "that's all there is". Once at the station, the Campoli family bid their thanks and blessings to their guardian angel and boarded the train and began the third part of the voyage.

The train ride turned out to be four days long and seemed 'to break down every 50 feet', but at least this time the family got to stay in one room together. It was a good thing they brought extra food. The food on the train ran out with a day and a half left to go. Santina rationed their food and managed to buy more just before the shelves of the food cart went bare. On the end of the fourth day, out of food, hungry and tired, the train finally pulled into Union Station in Toronto.

Once again they gathered the family, friends and cargo, made their way through the crowds and began their search for family members they haven't seen in years. There to meet them was Costantino and Natolia Fiorini, Santina's parents, and her brother Gino. Through the sea of people, they some how managed to spot each other. Elated, the once strong family broke down into tears of happiness. Their voyage across land, over seas and by train had finally ended. The journey through their new life however had just begun.

