

The Iantorno Family
by Daughter Angela
Belsito
Italian Immigrants
Conte Biancamano
December of 1956



Emilio Iantorno: 1915-1985

It's been 50 years since we landed at Pier 21 and we reflect with much nostalgia on our voyage to Canada and the new life we began here all



those years ago. In 1933, Emilio Iantorno and Letizia Cesario were married in Bucita, a small town in Calabria, Italy. Emilio was a very sensitive and insightful man. He had a keen interest in politics and was a socially-conscious individual. He had a love for music and the arts. After Emilio served in Africa as an Officer in the Army, he returned to his family to find a country that had been devastated by war and held no hope for the near future. Though he was politically involved and was often

sought out for advice, he felt that it was in the best interest of his family to emigrate to Canada where Letizia had a brother and sister who would sponsor them.

We left Naples on December 8th, 1956 and sailed on The Conte Biancamano. It was Emilio and Letizia Iantorno and three of their children, Giuseppe, Angela, Maria Teresa, who traveled on that day. The eldest son, Vincenzo, was unable to accompany the family as he had just turned 21; he would have to be sponsored after we arrived in Canada. We docked at Pier 21 ten days later on December 18th.

The first few days of our voyage went smoothly but once we passed the Strait of Gibraltar and were in open seas, most of us were too sea sick to leave our crowded cabins. After arriving in Halifax we took a slow train

to Toronto. The train stopped often because we were running out of water; the children, many of whom had never seen running water, were playing with the water and wasting the train's reserves.

We had to scrape the ice off the windows to see what our new country looked like. All that could be seen was deep snow with the occasional small frame house with antennas on the roof. We were amazed that every home had the luxury of a television set. Once we finally arrived in Toronto, we were met by our relatives. As it was a few days before Christmas, we found waiting for us a parcel from the Salvation Army arranged for by our Aunt. It was our first Christmas gift in our new country and our relative's kind efforts to make us feel welcome.

We shared our aunt's home with three other families. Letizia and Giuseppe were the first to find work and it wasn't long before we were able to purchase our own home that was just a couple of blocks away. The years passed and we settled in to our new lives in Canada. Several years later we all married, bought our own homes and started families. Vincenzo remained in Italy, married and has four children and grandchildren.

Emilio and Letizia never regretted their decision to come to Canada. They knew that Canada provided their family with the opportunity for a better life than they would have had in Italy. Emilio died in 1985 after a lengthy illness. Even after his death, we continue to meet acquaintances from back home who



remember Emilio with respect and admiration. Letizia continued living in the same house until the time of her death in May 2002. At this point, she had 12 grandchildren and 9 great grandchildren and left behind a legacy of a strong work ethic and most importantly a love for the family.

During the first several years of being in Canada, Emilio wrote poems about his experiences and impressions of Canada. Here are several lines from one of the poems he wrote:

Impressioni Del Primo Semestre in Canada, scritto da Emilio Iantorno,
Toronto 30 agosto 1957

Il bel paese dei laghi stagnanti,
grandi foreste che coprono il suol,
casette piccole e motlo affollate,
tra la distesa di torri fumanti.
Per tutto in fretta la gente cammina,
onde trovarsi ad orario al lavor,
esule e muta in quel perigrinar,
quante ferite a quei poveri cuor.

Our families continue to grow and become more ingrained in Canadian Culture, however, we hold on to our Italian heritage and continue to pass it along to the younger members of the family. We are grateful to Canada for welcoming us and providing us with the opportunity to grow and prosper as Canadians and still be able to celebrate our heritage with pride. Thank you Canada!

Angela Belsito