

Carmel (Charles) Bonello
Maltese Immigrant
Nea Hellas
April 28, 1951



My journey began on the island of Malta on Monday, April 16th, 1951 aboard the Greek ship Nea Hellas. I was only 18 years old and barely looked 13 as my

passport picture shows. Leaving my parents, five brothers and five sisters to start a new life in Canada was very difficult. I watched them disappear from view as the ship left the harbour thinking I might never see them again. However, I knew that Canada held a very great future for me. In the years following the war, the huge reconstruction of Malta had created a lot of jobs, but when the rebuilding was done, unemployment became a problem. I had seen in movies and photos that Canada was a beautiful country. I also heard that it had great opportunity and I would later find out for myself that it was all true.



On the boat I soon made friends with some other Maltese men. One of them would some day become my brother-in-law. Our first stop was Naples, Italy, on April 17th where we took on Italian passengers immigrating to Canada and the United States. The Maltese and the Greeks had a lot of resentment towards the Italians who had been the enemy during the war. It was not easy to travel with people who had just a few years earlier destroyed our country. Things got out offhand a few times in the following weeks. After stopping in Lisbon, Portugal, to receive more immigrant passengers, we started on the long trip across the Atlantic. En route we hit a large storm which lasted almost a week and most of us spent the whole time in bed sea sick. After two weeks, we finally arrived at Halifax, Nova Scotia in Canada. I got off at Pier 21 and my friends continued on to New York, USA. The photo shows my friends and me on the Nea Hellas.

I was in Canada and I couldn't speak a word of English. I had hoped that my roommate would be traveling with me because he could speak it well, but we were separated and I had no idea where he was. I would have been lost if it were not for the Immigration Department and the Salvation Army. They were



extremely supportive and helpful. Soon I was on a train bound for Ajax, Ontario, where I would finalize my immigration paperwork. The three day trip was very difficult. I had no money to buy food and all I had was a tin of hard cookies that my mother had made for me before I left Malta. I also remember having to change my shirt once or twice a day because of the black smoke from the engine. We first arrived in Whitby, Ontario, where we were transferred onto a bus for the short ride to Ajax. Ajax was a small town that had been built during the war. It was mainly made up of barracks that housed the people who worked in the bomb factories. There I stayed, in the barracks while I looked for a job. I was surprised to find that my roommate from the boat was staying in the same place. We reunited and went job hunting together. He was a big help considering he could speak the language. We soon found that what we had heard was true. Jobs were easy to find. It didn't take us long to find jobs in Toronto. At the time, the Young Street subway was being built and I was hired as a construction worker but I had to quit after a few days so I could get paid right away. I had to pay some food and pay rent. But again jobs were very easy to find and I soon took a job in a large bakery called Christie's Bread where I would stay for 20 years. I took some night school courses to improve my education and learn to speak English. This proved to be beneficial when I eventually gained a position of foreman.

After 6 years living in Canada, I had saved enough money to go back to Malta to visit my family. While I was there I met Vivienne and we dated for three weeks. Before I left to come back to Canada we were engaged



and I promised to arrange to have her come over so we could be married. With financial assistance from the Immigration Department, she came over by airplane and we were married in July, 1958. In May 1959 our first Canadian baby boy was born. Later we had another son and later on a daughter.

In 1966 we bought our first house in Etobicoke, a suburb of Toronto. Now that my family and I were settled, the rest of my family in Malta began to see how well we were doing and how wonderful Canada was. Eventually, they all ended up coming over including my parents. The photo below shows my siblings and me at a wedding.

This was the first time we had all been together in the almost 30 years since I left Malta. My parents and one of my brothers later went back to spend their final years there. After 20 years of working at Christie's Bread, the plant went out of business. I started a job as a mail delivery postal worker. I worked there for 20 years until I took early retirement at the age of 57 for health reasons.

I am now 73 years of age. I live in a small rural community after 47 years of marriage with my wonderful wife. We have 4 grandchildren and a family which is very close. Vivienne and I have done a great deal of traveling all over the world together and we have always felt that



people treat us kindly when they find that we are from Canada. Whether

I am at home with my family or traveling through this magnificent country or traveling abroad, I can gladly say that I am proud to be a Canadian.



1980 visit to Malta



The family in 2002