

Charles Vella
Maltese Immigrant
Queen Frederica
June 3, 1957



I immigrated from Malta in 1957 as Carmel Vella, when I was 18 years of age. At the time, the Canadian Government was involved in a venture with the Maltese Government to recruit more skilled tradesmen to Canada. Successful applicants were to pay 1/3 that passage fare to Canada. I applied along with nine other men for an opening for a tailor and cutter. Most likely due to my status as a single man with no dependants and my British tailoring certificate, (City and Guilds) I alone was accepted for the position.

My motivation to leave the country was to escape the restrictions imposed on me by my parents and the culture of the time. I must admit that I had a desire to buy a car and felt that this would have been impossible under then present circumstances.

When making the decision to leave Malta, I applied and was accepted to immigrate to Great Britain, Australia, and Canada. I decided to relocate to Canada after viewing a movie presentation that documented the life of an average Canadian worker. This movie depicted a day in the life of a man who worked in a factory and came home to an attractive wife and two children in a nice home with two cars. Needless to say, I was sold.

ON June 3rd 1957, I left for Canada aboard the Queen Frederica. I was assigned to cabin 32B which I shared with three other men also travelling to Canada. The voyage was a marvelous experience for me. For a young man who had led a very sheltered and restricted life, the freedom during my voyage to Canada was a dream come true. The ship offered free food and wine and was also occupied by several young ladies who were travelling with their parents.

During my journey to Canada, I recall travelling through a rough storm where passengers were forced to use ropes strung through out the ship to hold their balance.

The Queen Frederica was originally scheduled to arrive on June 15th, 1957 in Halifax. However, while on route our destination was suddenly changed to New York where we docked at Ellis Island. From there, passengers were put on the train destined for St. Paul's L'eremite, Quebec.

Upon arrival in Quebec, we were immediately given accommodation in the department of labor hostel. Although free room and board was given I was dismayed to learn that there were currently no jobs available in this area. Fortunately, I was informed that being a British passport holder, I was entitled to travel anywhere in Canada. As a result, I left Quebec for Toronto.