

Antonio Saez Jimenez
Spanish Immigrant
Americo Vespuccio
September 30, 1958



Editor's Note: Mr. Jimenez was one of our original story contributors in 1999. In 2006 he submitted a more detailed account of his experiences and several photographs. The second memoir is below.

My First Trip to Canada

I left Barcelona, Spain, on September 22, 1958, in a boat called Vulcania, full of noisy adult and infant Greek-Italian immigrants, which made so difficult for me to join one of the two available turns at the large dining room, with the long, long tables and those huge spaghetti containers.

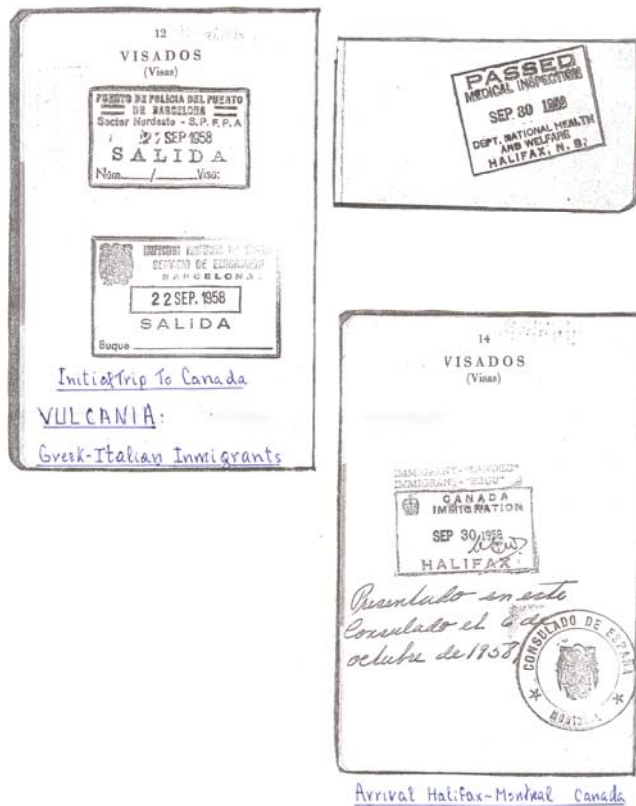


We crossed the Gibraltar Strait, stopped at Lisbon, Portugal, and when after several hours, the boat left that city we found ourselves in the middle of a hurricane, our constant companion for almost the whole trip. Soon after leaving Lisbon, only 6 - 8 people remained at our main meeting area, the dining room, among them a couple, he a pharmacist from

Barcelona, coming to join their daughter living in Quebec City, because during the first 24 - 48 hours of the Atlantic trip, people would get up and run away not even saying 'so long' and to vomit at the corridor or wash room their faces were not pale but green. They never came back and remained the rest of the trip lying down on the floor of the corridors or beds; large openings or windows at the side if the boat were opened for the wind to come in and refresh the sick ones. Three old people died and their families remained for a while at the library, where they received the condolences of friends; we were told they would be taken to be buried in Canada. We could only come out at the stern and the boat was at the top of a mountain of water and all of a sudden, it came down screeching to a hole, surrounded by water all around.

Finally, after 8 days of our trip, we arrived in Halifax on 30 September, 1958. Boat, gangway and building with a large room, separated in compartments, with noisy children running all around and mothers trying to keep them together. I will never forget the nice ladies who came around offering any help needed. Medical inspection, delivery of a letter I had received previously stating it was 'in lieu' of a Visa, stamp in my passport stating I was an IMMIGRANT - LANDED, Halifax, Sept. 30, 1958. New gangway to cross to a train waiting for us. I believe it took us about 24 hours to arrive in Montreal. Because we were young, we felt our trip to be a famous adventure, but for old people it should have been very hard for those not knowing French or English.

Montreal. In a train we were informed of a convenient accommodation. On Oct. 6, 1958, we stamped our passport at the Spanish Consulate.



Several letters to different hospitals asking possibilities to join them. Loneliness, not knowing anyone in the city. Train to Quebec City to visit my Pharmacist friend from the Vulcania: I found him removing a large amount of snow (October, 1958), from the front of the house. First answer to one of my letters, train, next day, to Kingston, Ontario, and 24 hours later I had joined the Hotel Dieu Hospital, Kingston General Hospital, Queen's University. Wedding by proxy in 1960, first Canadian boy in 1962. Certificate from de College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario and another from de Medical Council of Canada.

Toronto: Private medical practice. After a while, 8 Spanish Medical Doctors, 2 from Lithuania and one more from Italy, got together to buy an old cloth factory, to remodel it and build the large Spanish Clinic in 559 College St., W (College-W. of Bathers), end of 1966 or beginning of 1967, thanks to a loan given to us by the Royal Bank of Canada. Italian, Portuguese English, very few Spaniards, surrounded us. After 2 - 3 years, we got together a small group of those Spaniards and at our basement, free of charge and with some economical help, they built

themselves the first Spanish Club of Toronto, still opened when we left in 1974, and where Spanish festivities, such as 12 of October, discovery of America, were celebrated.

Relatives in Spain and long Canadian winters were the reason for our decision to return to Spain in August of 1974. However, my children attended the Universities of Toronto and Dalhousie University in Halifax,

N.S., one of them staying in Canada for good, marrying a nice Canadian girl. Our almost yearly visits to Canada show our feelings regarding my other country of which I still am a citizen, leaving a branch of my family, we feel only to have paid back partially what Canada did for me.

