

## I Remember, Tonu Vanderer

We arrived in "Seabrook Farms" in May 1949 and settled in a wooden barrack of Hoover Village. A 16' x 48' barrack was hardly adequate for a six member family; however, it was a welcome sight for immigrants who came from post-war housing where two or three families were packed into one large room.

It all began with my junior year in Bridgeton High School - English was my third language, after Estonian and German. Scouting, summer jobs in the fields and the factory, two years of construction work after high school, the U.S. Army including 18 months in post-war Korea, U.S. citizenship, college, and my career in architecture followed.

Like most of the second generation Estonian immigrants in Seabrook, I was fortunate to receive a college education. My career in Architecture, with licenses in New York and New Jersey, is nearing thirty years of government employment with THE PORT AUTHORITY of NY and NJ. Restoration of a landmark building in New York City - the ESTONIAN HOUSE, is among my career accomplishments in private practice. The Estonian House is home to the Estonian-American community, The Estonian School, and the Estonian World Festival.

Being fluent in Estonian, I became a teacher in the New York Estonian School and later its Principal. Since 1989, I have been the Director of the ESTONIAN SCHOOL CENTER USA, coordinating the educational programs, resources, and faculty of all Estonian schools in the USA.

I am married to Tiiu-Mai, an Estonian with an M.A. in Psychology. We have two children. Our son Ilmar is a graduate from Duke University, and our daughter Aino-Liis is a graduate from R.P.I. Both are fluent in Estonian and are active in the Estonian-American community while pursuing careers in public relations and engineering respectively.

Father Time can be cruel to Mother Nature. Recently we visited the Republic of Estonia after 50 years of Soviet oppression. Physical and spiritual damage can be seen everywhere; in time, freedom and independence will heal the wounds. We remain forever grateful that we were able to make a new beginning, leading us to prosperity and happiness in the "land of the free and the home of the brave."