

7/28/07

Life in the Refugee Camps 1946

By Anton Žakelj, translated and edited by John Žakelj

Tuesday, January 1, 1946 (in the Liechtenstein camp near Judenburg, Austria)

I awoke at 4 a.m., but didn't get out of bed till 6:30. At 7, I went to Mass. Bishop Rožman is predicting that we will all return home to Slovenia this year. Maybe! But I doubt it.

Cilka's brother-in-law Mire returned from Feldkirchen and Spittal with 10 shirts which he had obtained through bartering, and a sweater which he got for me for 70 Schillings. Clothes are still in very short supply, and many of us have only what we carried with us when we left Slovenia.

Mire says he heard that my youngest brother Janko returned home safely from Russia. Three years ago, while we were under German occupation, Janko was forced to join the German army and was sent with them to Russia. We were worried that he might never return.

Wednesday, January 2, 1946

The local newspaper reports that there are 60,000 - 70,000 Chetniks in Serbia who are preparing for a spring revolution against the communists. We don't know whether such reports are really true.

If we have to stay in the refugee camp for another six months, and if I can get a job, I will marry Cilka. She has become very impatient because I continue to delay our wedding plans. She is beginning to wonder if I really want to get married. But I tell her that it makes no sense to start a family when we have nothing.

Thursday, January 3, 1946

Our refugee camps are run by UNRRA, the

United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. Today, UNRRA handed out new and used clothing, all American. Four of the men in our group go out into the woods to cut firewood. They were especially in need of some new clothing, and they each received a coat, overalls, a shirt and gloves.

Saturday, January 5, 1946

This morning it was 5°F. I cut firewood for the kitchen all morning.

Tomorrow is the holy day of the Three Kings, also called the Epiphany. This evening, as we usually did back home on the evening of this holy day, we formed a procession around our barracks, sprinkled holy water and prayed all 15 decades of the rosary. (In Slovenia, we repeated this three times each year - on Christmas eve, New Year's eve, and on the eve of the Epiphany.)

Sunday, January 6, 1946

At 11 a.m., we went to a solemn high Mass in Judenburg. This afternoon, we watched people ice skating on the frozen Mura River.

Monday, January 7, 1946

I cut firewood for the kitchen all day.

In the afternoon, UNRRA gave me a new green overcoat and a pair of overalls. The overalls are so large, they're like a clown costume. My sister Mici got a blue coat that is too small for her, Mire got overalls, but Cilka didn't get anything.

Tuesday, January 8, 1946

Cilka wrote her first letter home since we left Slovenia. Mail service is finally becoming available again.

I helped my sister Mici exchange her coat for a larger one.

We hear that Chetniks murdered the mayor of our home town of Žiri. (This report turned out to be false.)

Wednesday, January 9, 1946

I helped another member of our group with a clothing exchange. Now almost all of us in our barracks are wearing the same green overcoats with huge collars and yellow trim on the left sleeve.

I made a list of other clothing needed by each member in our group. Many people are not pleased with what they received in this latest distribution. They think it wasn't done fairly. But we really needed new clothes. Some members of our group were so desperate, they had gone to Wolfsberg, where they got pieces of cloth from burned military uniforms. They sewed clothes for themselves out of those pieces.

There are no reports in the newspapers about what happened to Domobranec generals Rupnik, Nedič and Pavelič. We fear that the British have sent them back to be executed in Yugoslavia.

Thursday, January 10, 1946

About 100 Volksdeutscher arrived from Slovenia. (These are Germans who had settled in Slovenia during the war.) The authorities put them in new barracks in our camp.

We received new tobacco ration cards. We can buy 40 cigarettes for each card. I trade

the cigarettes for money, food and other things that we need.

Sunday, January 13, 1946

It was warm today. Cilka and I walked in the nearby hills all afternoon. I gathered twigs which we will use to make baskets. The baskets will hold the "pillows" on which our women make bobbin lace.

Tuesday, January 15, 1946

A new snow turned everything white.



In this picture taken in 2002, the author (age 95) demonstrates the handmade saw which he used to cut wood in the refugee camp 50 years earlier.

The price of bread has dropped from 31 Schillings per kilo to 15, but people have very little money. Here in the camp, we are getting decent rations for now. Each person is getting almost a pound of bread, about 2 cups of coffee, half a cup of milk, two cups of soup, about 3 oz. of meat, half a pound of potatoes and 2 cups of corn mash each day. But the corn mash is getting more watery each day.

Due to a shortage of electricity, the lights are turned off each evening from 7 - 8 p.m. When it's dark in our room, we usually say prayers. Somehow, Jakob shaves himself in the darkness.

I stayed in the barracks all day today. I started reading my first English book. It's called "The Oakleyites." I don't understand it - I don't have a good dictionary to look up words that I don't know.

Wednesday, January 16, 1946

Rožman, the tailor, agreed to make my sister Mici a new coat for 80 cigarettes.

Thursday, January 17, 1946

Today is my father's 67th birthday. I wonder how he is, back in Slovenia. This morning, I went to Mass. In the evening, I went to church to say the rosary. I usually don't go when it's this cold.

Our friend Potočnik returned from a trip to a different part of Austria, where he had talked with some people who had news from our home town. He said our neighbor died, our friend Johan got married and two families were sent into exile. People want to see an end to communist rule.

Saturday, January 19, 1946

Janko Demšar (one of the members of our

group) left for Feldkirchen. I asked him to take my new overalls (the clown costume) and see what he could trade for them.

Sunday, January 20, 1946

This evening, we went to the nearby town of Murdorf to see and hear an excellent performance by the Ukrainian refugees. The performance included dancing, magic tricks and singing.

Groga (one of the members of our group) has been complaining that he doesn't get his fair share of food. I gave him our ration card and told him he could get his own food from the camp authorities. Up until now, we've been getting our food together and then dividing it up in our room. Now we have our first separatist!

Monday, January 21, 1946

Our woodcutters brought 2 cubic yards of wood from the forest today. On the way back, they somehow lost two large pieces. There was an argument because not everyone is doing their share of work

Tuesday, January 22, 1946

Janko returned from Feldkirchen. He got 500 cigarettes for two pairs of overalls and some other things. We will be able to trade the cigarettes for things we need here.

Wednesday, January 23, 1946

They've started cooking dry beans for supper. It's a good, but heavy food.

We weighed ourselves. Pavel Kokelj is the heaviest in the camp at 209 lbs, Cene is close behind him at 200. I'm far behind at 152.

Thursday, January 24, 1946

This morning, I chopped wood for the kitchen. In the afternoon, I did the same for our room, then I got things ready for basket weaving.

Friday, January 25, 1946

Mire left for Spittal - without permission from the authorities. He can't seem to find any work here in the camp. He lies in bed till 10 or 12, and then he eats and smokes. Sometimes, when things are not going well for him, he'll sleep for days.

Cilka is sometimes angry with me because I keep delaying our wedding. She would like us to start a family. How can we, when we have nothing and our future is so uncertain? Right now, the other refugees from our home village of Žiri are my family.

Saturday, January 26, 1946

This afternoon, I went to the city to sell the lace we had made, but I sold nothing. Money is short everywhere.

Our friends Karl and Janez Vončina got jobs with shoemaker Russheim nearby. They say they are satisfied.

Sunday, January 27, 1946

I went to Mass at 5 a.m. and 7 a.m., and litanies at 5 p.m. In the afternoon, Mici, Cilka and I walked into the city to watch skiers and ice-skaters.

The newspapers report constantly growing conflicts between the Americans and British on one side and the Soviet Union on the other side in a conference of foreign ministers in London. I expect we will see another world war starting during the coming year.

Monday, January 28, 1946

UNRRA is handing out clothes again. Cilka received a coat and towel.

Tuesday, January 29, 1946

Mire returned to the camp with flour, nails, suitcases and some other things which he obtained through bartering during his travels. He also brought news from our home village:

Our church organist, Anton Jobst, together with his wife and child, were deported by the communist authorities in Žiri on Christmas Eve, 1945. All of their possessions were taken away. With great difficulty, they made their way through Hungary, to Celovec (Klagenfurt), in Austria. (A web page published in Žiri in 2001 states that the reasons for their deportation are still unknown. In the early years of the communist government in Yugoslavia, it was not unusual for people to be deported or jailed for vague "crimes against the state.")

Mire also reported that the Gantar brothers (Cilka's cousins) in Žiri were arrested and their possessions taken. Martinc was shot (we learned later that this report was not true), and Muhovc died. Shoemakers are working again at a number of small shops in Žiri.

This morning, UNRRA began vaccinating everyone against typhus. In the afternoon, they gave each of us a shirt. The shirts are all the same - gray with collars so large, they look like elephant ears.

Thursday, January 31, 1946

The British delivered enough wood to the camp for 20 new barracks, which will be built by the Ukrainians.

Friday, February 1, 1946

I sold 200 American cigarettes for 2 Schillings each and bought 2 kilos of bread for 12

Schillings each.

At Kuznik's, I got an order for us to make bobbin lace - that's good!

Saturday, February 2, 1946

This afternoon, Cilka and I walked across the frozen Mura River and then back through the town of Murdorf. We read a report in a newspaper about many priests being arrested in Ljubljana - my brother Stanko is among them.

Pavel Podobnik says he heard that refugee Lovro Možina was shot when he returned to his home in Slovenia. (That report turned out to not be true.)

This evening, we had Slovenian pancakes for the first time in this camp. From 8 - 10 p.m., we played "spank the judge" ("biti rihtarja"). Janez Levičar, who was a real judge in Slovenia, got spanked the most. Whenever Levičar bent over and covered his head, we all crowded around him in a circle. Pavle, our largest and strongest man, jumped forward and spanked him, and then quickly jumped back behind the rest of us. Levičar looked up and could not guess who spanked him. Levičar got spanked more than anyone else before he finally guessed right.

Sunday, February 3, 1946

For Sunday dinner, we had a thick soup, and then for supper, we had beans. Finally, after months of being hungry, we have enough food!

This afternoon, the weather was nice. Cilka and I went for a

walk in the woods, but we argued again.

Tuesday, February 5, 1946

I drew a nice design for a bobbin lace collar. It's for an order I received from a professor in a nearby town.

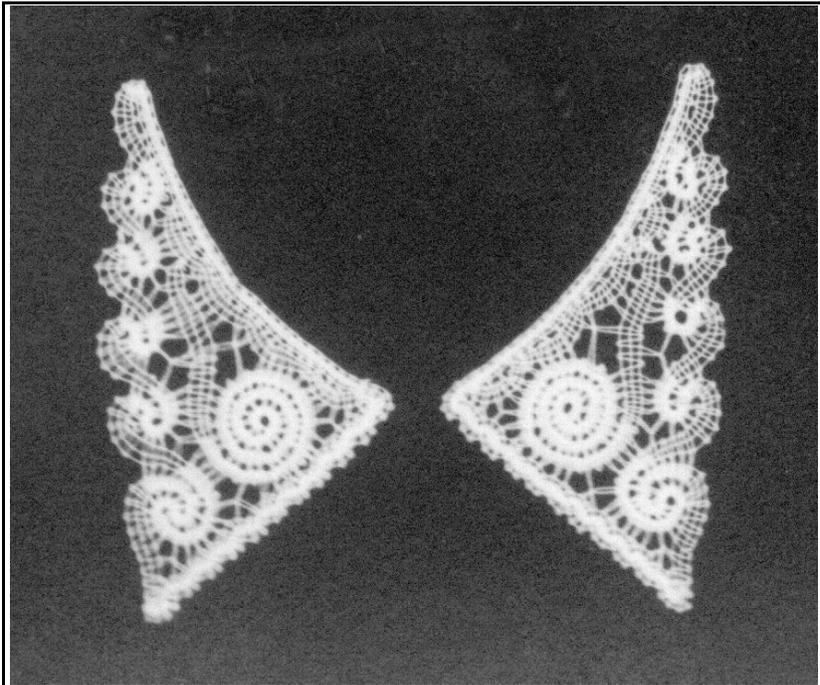
Wednesday, February 6, 1946

I received an order for more than 100 pieces of bobbin lace. This will provide enough work for my sister Mici, Cilka, and Karl Erznožnik's Mici for 6 months!

Thursday, February 7, 1946

At 6 a.m., we went to a Mass for my priest brother Stanko, who is in prison in Ljubljana.

Friday, February 8, 1946



This is another example of the bobbin lace we made in the refugee camp. I drew some of the designs myself. These pieces are intended to be sewn onto the collar of a woman's dress.

The Ukrainians are building new barracks quickly, and tearing down some which we had built.

Sunday, February 10, 1946

This afternoon, Cilka and I walked across the frozen Mura to an auto junkyard. In the evening, our group played "spank the judge" again.

We hear that, at the London conference, the Americans and the British refused all Russian requests that refugees be forced back to their homelands.

Monday, February 11, 1946

Today was the second round of typhus vaccinations. I only got one shot today, some got two. The others say it hurts, but it doesn't bother me.

In the evening, we listened to a speech by Dr. Basaj about the dangers of selfishness and laziness. Back home, Dr. Basaj was a leader in the Slovenian government. Now, he's a refugee like the rest of us, but he still has the ability to inspire people.

Tuesday, February 12, 1946

This evening, Dr. Basaj spoke to the women. Outside, it's snowing and raining.

Wednesday, February 13, 1946

Last night, I dreamed about eating meat which was cooked in our family home. Here, we get very little meat.

This evening, I went to driver's training for the first time. A Ukrainian engineer is teaching in the city; he says he will begin teaching in the refugee camp.

Thursday, February 14, 1946

I paid 5 Schillings for a driver's training course which will be held in the new school barracks in the refugee camp. Sixty people signed up.

Saturday, February 16, 1946

I went to the city (Judenburg), where I sold all the lace I brought with me and got orders for more. Thank God!

Sunday, February 17, 1946

We went to Mass at 5 a.m. and 7 a.m. as usual. In the afternoon, Cilka and I took a walk along the Mura River to the woods and back. It was very windy!

In the evening, we had a pre-Lenten (Mardi Gras) dance in our room. Since we are almost all men in our room, we invited women from the nearby barracks to join us. Karl played the harmonica, Fr. Kopač played an aluminum banjo, Levičar played on a homemade tambourine, I played bass (on a broom), someone else played on a comb, and others played on the pots and pans that we had made from warplanes.

Monday, February 18, 1946

We hear news reports that the UN Security Council meeting in London ended without success. It appears that another world war is unavoidable!

I received written confirmation that I was vaccinated 4 times against typhoid.

Exactly one year ago, American planes bombed our home village of Žiri.

Thursday, February 21, 1946

I cut firewood for the kitchen all day. I'm tired

because I'm no longer used to such hard work. I spent most of the previous 3 days drawing designs for bobbin lace.

The camp authorities have said that everyone will have to go work for farmers in the nearby countryside. Our driving instructor says students in the driving course will be exempt. People do not like working on the farms because they are forced to work 14 - 16 hours a day, and all they get is some food.

Saturday, February 23, 1946

Mire and Janko went to Kapfenberg, where they hoped to buy some Yugoslav dinars from recent refugees. They were only able to get 500 dinars for 75 Schillings. They will send the dinars back to their relatives in Slovenia.

Sunday, February 24, 1946

There was no dance tonight. Rev. Rott had a sermon this morning, in which he denounced the dance we had last week.

We have 7 priests in our camp:

1) Rev. Janez Klemenčič was the pastor of his parish, a real farmer, and very hard working. He likes to do everything very quickly. When he does the final blessing at Mass, he's already turning and getting ready to take off his vestments. He's adamantly opposed to refugees having to work for local farmers for little or nothing. He has made contacts with the local clergy, who often help him with extra food and other things. Since he knows German well, he often helps in the nearby churches.

2) Rev. Roman Malavašič is the complete opposite of Rev. Klemenčič. He doesn't venture into the surrounding area, and he suffers because of that. He works hard in the camp, publishes the camp newsletter "A Home on the Mura," takes care of the camp chapel and works

with the boys. In his sermons, he tells us to not be too concerned about getting paid for our work, but then he always wants more donations for the chapel. How can we give for the chapel if we don't get paid for our work?

3) Rev. Josip Rott is a nice man, but he doesn't work and he wants everyone to live like a saint. He's opposed to all forms of recreation and is very strict about proper singing in church. Once, when he thought people were singing too lively in church, he stopped them in the middle of the song and told them there is only one church song that should be sung like a march.

4) Rev. Franc Kokelj is an older man who preaches about nothing other than the upcoming final judgement. He looks like the poorest man in the camp, but actually is the wealthiest. Why did he leave Slovenia?

5) Rev. Janko Hafner likes to split firewood and wants to excommunicate anyone who doesn't attend Mass regularly.

6) Rev. Jože Perčič is the least known priest in the camp.

7) Kanonik Tomaž Klinar is a higher ranking priest, so he doesn't live in the barracks with the other refugees. He has an apartment in the special barracks for the camp administrators. He likes to play tarok cards. His sister cooks for him.

I know that Rev. Klemenčič and Malavašič would be executed if they returned to Slovenia, but I don't know why the other priests left home.

Monday, February 25, 1946

Five members of our group (Štrajt, Rafel, Andrej, Janez and Gropa) have decided they will return to Slovenia. I tried to talk them out of it, but I was not successful. A couple others

are thinking about returning, but can't decide. A sadness has fallen over our room, as if we just had a funeral.

I'm attending driver's training 4 evenings a week. In addition to the Ukrainian engineer, we have two other instructors - a Croatian named Rauš and Janko Smole.

Tuesday, February 26, 1946

One of the men who will be leaving has had a job cutting firewood for the camp. The job provided him with extra food rations. Cene at first suggested I could take his job, but then picked Franc Kopač. I wonder if he thinks I wouldn't work hard enough.

I worked on bobbin lace designs all day.

At 2 p.m., Štrajt, Rafael, Andrej and Janez left the camp to return to Slovenia. I cried, and Mici cried even more. We may never see each other again.

The Mlinar sisters came for a visit. They are working for farmers in the Koroška region of Austria.

Levičar is no longer disapproving of refugees who return to Slovenia. He's quiet and thinking. The other members of our group say it's crazy to think about returning. There is a feeling of envy for those who can return.

Wednesday, February 27, 1946

I went to the damaged warplanes in the woods and brought back some wire and aluminum pipes.

Thursday, February 28, 1946

This evening, some of the refugees performed the comedy "At the White Pony." My sister Mici helped people remember their lines.

Attendance was good and people were happy with the performance.

Saturday, March 2, 1946

Tonight I went to a repeat performance of the "White Pony." The acting was excellent, especially Dr. Erman.

Sunday, March 3, 1946

At 7 a.m., I went to Mass, then driving class from 10 - 12, then a walk with Cilka from 3 - 5 p.m., and another dance from 8 - midnight. Even I tried dancing. But the absence of some members of our group (the ones who returned to Slovenia last week) kept our spirits down.

Monday, March 4, 1946

I wove a basket from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. I think it turned out well.

We have electricity now without interruption, and without any problems.

Tuesday, March 5, 1946, Mardi Gras

A new English class started at 5 p.m.. The teacher, Miss Russon, speaks English only and moves on very quickly. From 8 - 10 p.m., I went to driver training. The others in our room had a dance till midnight. There was also a dance in the camp hall with people wearing masks.

Our room got extra food for supper because it was our turn to get what was left over in the kettle. The food that is left in the kettle after everyone gets their rations goes to a different barracks each day. Our turn for this extra food comes up every other Tuesday.

Wednesday, March 6, 1946, Ash Wednesday

Someone set up a puppet man made of straw

next to a barracks that has mostly women, and set it on fire. Everyone in the camp came to watch. Whoever set it up was teasing the women about not being married.

Thursday, March 7, 1946

Mire returned from another one of his trips. UNRRA is saying they will no longer give him food ration cards since he leaves without permission.

Friday, March 8, 1946

I was at driver's training all evening. The engineer spoke 4 times, and the electrician 3 times. We have to learn everything about how automobiles work.

Saturday, March 9, 1946

Mire got his first postcard from his wife Manica (Cilka's sister) back home in Žiri. She writes that she is fine, but bored. There is not a single word for Cilka. I think Cilka's family is angry with her, that she is traveling with me without being married. We should have gotten married in Vetrinje, our first camp. But I always wanted us to be married by my priest brother Stanko, in the presence of my parents, and my other brothers and sisters. Are we waiting in vain for the time when that will be possible?

Sunday, March 10, 1946

I went to Mass at 7 and 9 a.m., then to driver's training from 10 - 12, then for a walk with Cilka and Mici to the soccer field outside town. This afternoon, the camp had a farewell ceremony for departing UNRRA director Cluyver.

Cilka got a card from her sister Manica with news from Žiri. Her cousins Franc and Jože Gantar were each sentenced to 10 years in prison for not cooperating with the Partisans during the war. Franc was my boss when I was

assistant manager for the shoemakers' cooperative in Kranj during the war. I said the two of us would probably be hung from the nearest lamppost if the Partisans win the war; he said we would probably get 10 years in prison. He guessed that one exactly right.

Later, I learned that Franc Gantar had actually helped the Partisans, even while we were making shoes under German occupation. One day during the war, he was very worried about a certain wagonload of wood. The horse-drawn wagon was stopped by Partisans, who took 800 kilos of leather which Franc had hidden under the wood. I believe he had arranged with the Partisans for them to get that leather. I heard that he also gave the Partisans 7% of whatever profit we made from selling shoes to the Germans. That kind of assistance probably kept him from being executed after the war, but it wasn't enough to keep him out of prison. After he got out of prison, he worked his way up until he became one of the managers of the Alpina shoemaking factory, which was formed out of the many small shoemakers' cooperatives which we had in Žiri.

Monday, March 11, 1946

The international situation continues to become more and more dangerous. There are news reports that the Russians have occupied Persia. The British and the Americans are protesting, but the Russians are not bothering to reply. Last week, Winston Churchill attacked the Russians in a strongly worded speech. He proposed the formation of a British-American mutual defense alliance against the Russians. Many people expect war to break out very soon.

Wednesday, March 13, 1946

About 300 new refugees were settled into the new barracks in our camps. These are all Volksdeutcher - Germans who had settled in Jugoslavia during the war.

Friday, March 15, 1946

In driver's training, I've been studying automobile electrical systems.

In English class, I completed my biggest assignment yet - a letter to a cousin in Australia.

Monday, March 18, 1946

My brother Jože, who has been living in Feldkirchen, Austria, came here to visit us in the camp. He says he received letters from many members of our family back in Žiri: his wife Francka, daughter Anita, our brother Janko, and our parents. All letters are censored, so they cannot say anything that would be critical of the current situation in Slovenia. But since they are not asking us to come back home, that means we should continue to wait here.

Tuesday, March 19, 1946

We celebrated my brother Jože's 40th birthday. My sister Mici cooked some delicious dumplings, but Mire didn't want to eat any, since they were made out of his flour.

This afternoon, a group of us walked about 7 miles to Dietersdorf and back through Fohnsdorf. We hoped to visit some friends who had recently arrived at a camp in Dietersdorf, but the Croatians running the camp would not let us in.

In the evening, my roommates played "spank the judge," but I didn't join in.

Wednesday, March 20, 1946

All day, I cut firewood for the kitchen. This is usually Karl's job, but he was busy repairing shoes for Cilka and Mici. I got into an argument with Rode, who had sharpened the saw only on one side.

Thursday, March 21, 1946

Sugar is no longer included in our food rations. Again, there is talk that we will all have to go work in the nearby farms. Very few people are agreeing to go voluntarily.

Friday, March 22, 1946

Earlier, we were all required to deposit whatever money we had in the local banks. Now they refuse to let us withdraw any savings without approval from UNRRA police.

This afternoon, a group of us took a long walk past the ruins of the Liechtenstein castle to the top of a nearby hill.

Monday, March 25, 1946

Today was a holy day. We went to Mass at 7 and 9 a.m., then took another long walk in the nearby hills.

This evening, some of the refugees performed the play "Snow White."

Tuesday, March 26, 1946

Franc Kopač received a number of letters from Slovenia. Everyone is asking him to come back home, including some of his friends who had just recently returned home from refugee camps. Even so, he says he won't return.

Anže also got a letter with an invitation to return home. Cene got a letter, but no invitation. Gropa has decided to return home, and is looking for the documents he will need.

In the news from Yugoslavia, General Mihajlovič and his staff were arrested. Many people were hoping he would bring freedom this spring.

Wednesday, March 27, 1946

Our friend Grogga left the camp to return home.

Our food rations are being cut: 25% less bread, canned meat instead of fresh, no sugar, less milk. We've been getting 1,800 calories a day - now we'll get 1,200. (Nutrition experts recommend about 2,000 calories a day.)

Monday, April 1, 1946

UNRRA is moving all the new refugees who arrived in our camp two weeks ago to a different camp at Trofaiach. The people do not want to move.

Tuesday, April 2, 1946

Today's dinner had less bread, but more canned meat and potatoes. Instead of sugar, they gave us each two pieces of chocolate.

I wrote my first letter home.

Our driving instructor asked us lots of questions today. He tried both German and English, but none of us knew the answers.

Yesterday, Pavel Podobnik and Janko Demšar (two men in our group) decided to return home, but today they changed their minds and decided to wait a while longer.

Saturday, April 6, 1946

The authorities are requiring all refugees to report for work on nearby farms. I accompanied one of our men to the "Arbeitsamt" (work office) to get an exemption. A friendly clerk recommended that I go to the regional government and get approval for our people to work in trades and crafts (making lace, etc.). But I have to find merchants who are willing to buy what we produce and treat us like their workers.

This afternoon, we watched a soccer game.

UNRRA staff played the British pilots, winning by 4:2.

Tuesday, April 9, 1946

Today we welcomed a new arrival to our camp - Jože Urbanc. Early in the war, Jože was a partisan, but then he became a Domobranec. When he was a Partisan, they called him "Gašper." In a battle between the Partisans and the Domobranci, the Domobranci captured him and convinced him to join their side. At first, the Domobranci didn't trust him, so they sent him into battle with the Partisans with only three cartridges for his rifle. But he soon proved to be an excellent fighter for the Domobranci.

After the war, Jože fled to Vetrinje with the rest of us, but the authorities sent him back to Yugoslavia with the other Domobranci. He escaped and twisted his ankle during the escape. With that twisted ankle, he fled on foot across the mountains. When he arrived in Austria, the authorities captured him and put him in prison for 6 months because he didn't have the proper authorization to enter Austria. (The rules became much stricter after we entered Austria.) Now the Austrians finally released him and allowed him to join us here. (But he only stayed with us for a few months until he got work near Celovec (Klagenfurt). Soon after he left, we received a letter for him from Fr. Erpič in Australia, inviting him to settle there. As I recall, we didn't have a forwarding address for him, and he may have never received that letter.)

Wednesday, April 10, 1946

Two of our roommates, the brothers Pavel and Jakob Podobnik, returned to Slovenia today. (Jakob is the one who made us a wall clock from an unexploded time bomb.) When he left Slovenia last year, Pavle promised his wife Marička that he would return within two years. He's keeping his word, and even going back a year earlier than he promised. Pavle is feeling

brave and ready to face whatever problems they will encounter. But his brother Jakob is very worried that the communist authorities will make life difficult for them.

Felix, one of our other roommates, became sick today and fell down. We had to carry him to the hospital.

Thursday, April 11, 1946

We didn't receive our usual ration of bread yesterday and today. Instead, they gave us each some dried biscuits.

I was at driver's training from 6 - 10 p.m. It was all lectures, some of which I didn't understand.

Saturday, April 13, 1946

Today our driver's training moved out of the classroom and outside, next to an automobile which is owned by the camp. We didn't actually drive, but I sat in the driver's seat for my first time.

Sunday, April 14, 1946

I drove a car for the first time - it was only a short distance with the instructor, and it didn't go well.

Monday, April 15, 1946

This morning, Rev. Hafner began a class in religion for men. I joined with 30 other men and boys.

Tuesday, April 16, 1946

Today, I was at religious education in the morning, then to an English class which is taught by Mr. Klemente, a fellow refugee, then to an English class which is taught by Miss Russon (a Canadian who is employed by

UNRRA to help run the refugee camp), and then to driver's training. Six hours of classes!

Wednesday, April 17, 1946

I cut firewood all day.

Thursday, April 18, 1946

Today we had classes again. The religion class finished with Mass and communion.

Saturday, April 20, 1946

Tomorrow is Easter. We used some of our savings to buy traditional Slovenian Easter food - sausages, salami and eggs - food which we had not seen for months. The women baked some potica. This afternoon, we took everything to church to be blessed, and then we had a wonderful dinner.

Sunday, April 21, 1946, Easter

We went to the church in Judenburg for the 5 a.m. Mass of the Resurrection. The church was full, and the singing and music were beautiful. There was a short procession outside, and guns were fired into the air in celebration.

At 7 a.m., we went to a second Easter Mass at the camp chapel. Beautiful singing!

For Easter dinner, we had soup with dumplings, potatoes, fried chicken (!), lettuce and potica. What a change from our usual diet!

This evening, we played "spank the judge" in our room.

Monday, April 22, 1946

In driver's training today, I drove for about 5 - 6 minutes in the morning, and 10 minutes in the afternoon.

My brother Jože is visiting from Feldkirchen, Austria, where he has been living and working for a shoemaker. He is showing me how to cut leather to make the upper parts of shoes. He says he plans to return to Slovenia and wants me to get his job when he leaves.

We often still see new refugees arriving from Yugoslavia, and at the same time, some of the refugees who had left earlier are returning.

There was a dance in our room from 10 p.m. to midnight.

Thursday, April 25, 1946

I had my picture taken and paid 8 Schillings for 4 copies. I gave one to Cilka and will use the other copies for identification documents.

We hear that the driver's training class may be eliminated. I need 20 more minutes behind the wheel before I can take the exam. I haven't learned how to shift gears yet.

Friday, April 26, 1946

I visited a local shoemaker and sold him 3 pairs of leather uppers which I had cut out with training from my brother Jože. The shoemaker ordered 3 more pairs.

Saturday, April 27, 1946

Driver training class was out on the road today. I got to drive for 3 minutes - it went well. The camp's second car broke down. A piston broke through, ruining the engine.

Sunday, April 28, 1946

Our driver training class drove on a nice road



On the back of this picture is written, "To Cilka, from Tone, 1946". We were engaged to be married in 1940, but the war began and we delayed our plans. When this picture was taken, I was 39.

almost to Leoben, about a 60 mile round trip. We stopped often, taking turns driving. I drove about 15 miles, including some backing up - it went well again.

Monday, April 29, 1946

This afternoon, I accompanied 8 fellow refugees in a car to St. Johan in Tauern (about 20 miles away) where they will work for farmers. The car was driven by a Russian, who drove about 50 miles per hour on the narrow, winding

mountain road. The ride was horrible!

This evening, the UNRRA director announced that we will have elections for a health and welfare board for the camp. Board members will not be paid, and each one will have responsibility for a separate aspect of camp life, such as health, food, employment, schools, etc.

Tuesday, April 30, 1946

People are becoming excited about holding elections in the camp. Some people are saying I should run on a slate which will oppose the current appointed leadership.

About 160 Slovenians relocated to our camp from Dietersdorf, while a number of Croatians moved there. Now we have only Slovenians (about 700, including children) in our camp.

Wednesday, May 1, 1946

Cene Kokelj (one of my roommates) received about 20 pounds of wheat for working on a farm. I accompanied him to a nearby town to help him find a miller to grind the wheat into flour, but we couldn't find anyone.

People celebrated the first of May. It was hot outside.

Jerry Zupan tried to convince me to run on the opposition slate. I told him I would decide tomorrow.

Thursday, May 2, 1946

I found someone in a nearby town who was willing to give me 13 pounds of flour for about 18 pounds of Cene's wheat. Cene let me keep half of it for helping him.

I decided to run on a slate that would

support the current camp leadership. I think the opposition just complains and criticizes, and can't agree what to do to make things better.

We had a camp meeting from 8:30 to 10:30 p.m. Some people asked me to run for president of the camp board, but I refused. I told them that I would run for a position on the board if I could have the responsibility for employment. I am particularly concerned about our teenagers, who loiter around the camp without any work.

Friday, May 3, 1946

Current members of the appointed camp



My wife-to-be Cilka (Gantar) Žakelj, in 1946, at the age of 32.

leadership are not allowed to run in the election for the new board. The only person we can agree on for president on the "governing" slate is Dr. Erman, who has been in the appointed leadership. Dr. Erman has agreed to give up his appointed position, which has now been filled by his wife.

Some of the individuals who were considering running on the opposition slate changed their minds at the last minute and switched to the "governing" slate.

Saturday, May 4, 1946

Cilka's brother-in-law, Mire, is campaigning against Dr. Erman and some of the other members of the "governing" slate. Levičar and Šepin are working hard to build support for the "governing" slate.

Two of the 8 men and women whom I had accompanied last week to work on farms returned today. One of them is the man whom I had asked to speak for the others, and to keep an eye on how the farmers treated each one. He said the farmers made them sleep where their dogs usually slept - under the front steps. They fed them left over grain which included more mouse droppings than grain. These farmers still think they can treat us the way Hitler told them to treat the Slavic peoples who were forced to work on German and Austrian farms during the war.

Sunday, May 5, 1946

The election campaign has been very lively, but I decided to stay in my room today. The opposition published 6 - 8 leaflets, but we didn't publish a single one. I didn't even campaign in my own room. Each person has to make their own decision!

The elections were held this morning, until noon. I went towards the close, and voted for

the other candidates on my slate, but not for myself. I don't think anyone can judge their own qualifications. I don't know whether any of my roommates voted for me.

Results were announced at 3:30: There were 350 people voting out of a possible 390. Ivan Maček received the most votes (340), and he will be responsible for food and kitchen. Jože Tominc received 298 votes to be in charge of health. I was third, with 278 votes to be responsible for employment. Other members of the "governing" slate were successful in their bids to be in charge of culture, education, athletics, gardening, clothing and firewood. The opposition slate was not successful. Jerry Zupan received 134 votes, the most for anyone on the opposition slate. Dr. Est, who expected to be elected president, received the lowest number of votes on the "governing" slate.

The UNRRA director told us today that we will be getting less food for a while. He begged us all to stay calm and maintain order for at least another 2 months - until the locally grown food begins to be available this summer. Each day now, the camp gives us some bread, a little meat, some potatoes, peas or macaroni, but it hardly adds up to half the calories we should be getting. We are receiving about 750 calories a day, and they tell us it might drop to 320. We supplement the camp rations with the potatoes that we found left over in farmer's fields last fall. Sometimes we eat those potatoes three times a day, prepared in many different ways, but we have no butter or fat to mix with them, so they're not very filling.

This evening we had a dance and played spank the judge in our room till 10 p.m.

Monday, May 6, 1946

The camp board held its first meeting this morning, first just the board for 30 minutes, then a 2 hour meeting with the UNRRA director, Mr.

Gilbert (a Belgian military officer employed by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration and in charge of 3 refugee camps in the Judenburg area). We will be meeting every Monday morning. Because our board president does not understand German, I was selected to represent our camp.

The director explained the responsibilities of each board member. I will be responsible for arranging employment. The director asked me to meet with him individually tomorrow morning.

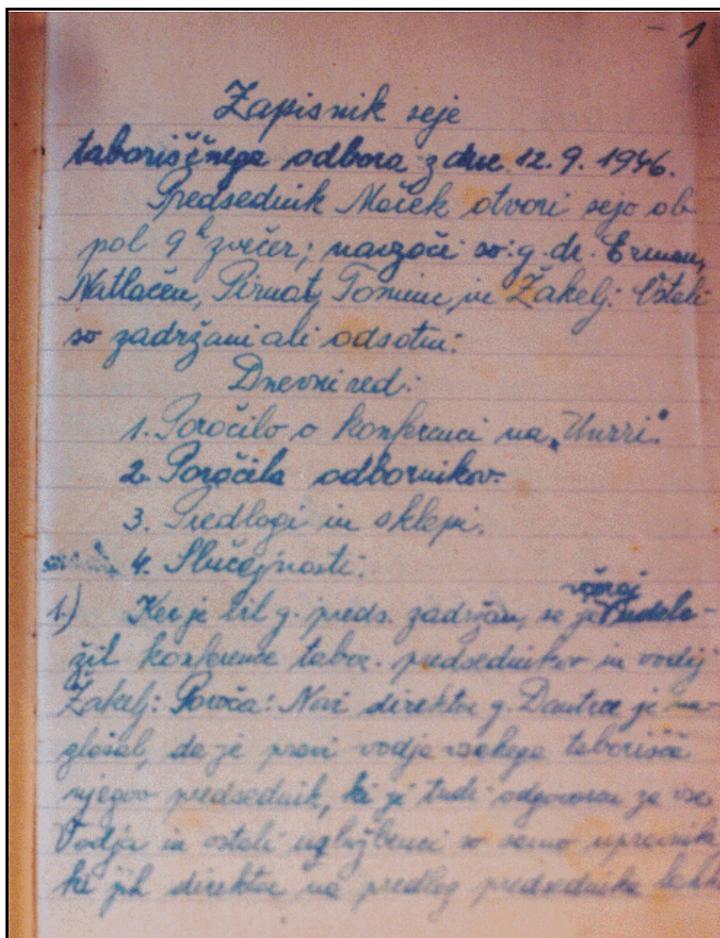
Employment is the area that I wanted to work on. I will do everything I can to get jobs for our refugees, especially the young people. I don't like to see our people loafing around the camp, but I don't like to see them being treated like slaves by the local farmers either.

At our first meeting today, I proposed that we select someone to take minutes of our meetings. Nobody volunteered, so I agreed to do that. (Later, the director asked for minutes each time we met, so I was glad I was able to provide that. I wrote my notes in Slovenian during each meeting. The director wanted an English translation, so I worked on that after each meeting. The translation went well, except I had a hard time finding the right English words for "meeting minutes." At first, I couldn't believe that "minutes" could be the right word. In Slovenian, the word "minuta" means a minute of time and has nothing to do with meeting notes. But then I learned that, in Latin, "minutiae" means "details.")

(During the entire time that I was responsible for employment at the camp, I always checked the working conditions before I sent anyone to a particular job.

There were many jobs available where the conditions were horrible and the pay was very minimal. There were no minimum wage laws. The best jobs were with the British in Zeltweg or in the woods near Schmelz.)

(Although my responsibility for refugee employment took a lot of time, I never received any pay. Later, they provided each board member with 15 cigarettes a week, but that didn't last long. For a while, we also got some extra soup which was full of mouse droppings. As I write these additional notes thirty years later, I can't believe I was able to eat that soup. I must have been very hungry.)



This is an example of the minutes that I kept for the refugee camp board meetings.

Mire bought me a Remington typewriter which is very useful now for my new responsibilities. I can type in both German and English.

On one of his many trips to neighboring towns and cities, Mire traded some shoes we had made for 4 lbs. of bacon, 20 lbs. of wheat, 3 lbs. of flour and a quart of milk. This will be a very welcome addition to our camp rations!

Tuesday, May 7, 1946

At 6:30 a.m., I went to Mass for my priest brother Stanko, who is still in prison in Slovenia. It's his birthday today. We prayed for his release.

Then, I met with the UNRRA director and a Croatian who is responsible for employment at the Dietersdorf camp. The director provided us with additional instructions about our new responsibilities. He said we can each choose one or two assistants. Then we went to the local Austrian "Arbeitsamt" (work office).

This afternoon, I met with a representative from a construction company in Graz regarding possible employment for our refugees. Janko Demšar will go visit them tomorrow to review the working conditions.

Wednesday, May 8, 1946

This afternoon, we had a special 3-hour meeting of the new camp board. Dr. Erman wants to dictate everything, and everyone else stays silent. I made some proposals, but it didn't do any good.

Thursday, May 9, 1946

Last January, everyone had to turn in their German Marks. Each person received 150 Austrian Schillings in return; anything over that had to be deposited in the Postal Savings.

Today, I went to UNRRA with a list showing how much each person in our room turned in. We are having problems getting any money back out of savings. While I was there, UNRRA gave me 5 pencils and some paper for my new responsibilities.

This afternoon, Mire and I went to a quarry near Maria Buch regarding employment possibilities. We talked with a worker who told us that the pay is not very good and the work is physically very demanding. Workers need to be well fed, not the kind of diet we get at the camp. Work in the quarry is also hard on the workers' clothes, so you need to be prepared for torn and worn out clothes that will need to be replaced frequently.

The worker at the quarry showed us a valuable stone (onyx) which they sometimes find in that quarry. He also showed us where they mine mica, which is used for windows in stoves and furnaces. Mica comes in thin, flat pieces which look like glass but are more heat resistant than glass.

This evening, we had a meeting of the leaders from each barracks. We agreed to a plan to establish workshops in the camp.

It's now one year since we became refugees.

Monday, May 13, 1946

At 5 a.m., the British surrounded the camp. At 7 a.m., they asked everyone to come out of their barracks. Every male older than 15 had to show their identification. We were very worried that they were looking for people who may have been reported as "war criminals" by the Yugoslav government. But nobody was arrested.

For the rest of the morning, I typed a card file with information on every person in our camp who is older than 15 and younger than 60 -

about 350 people. I am dividing them into 3 categories: 18 - 45 year olds who are unemployed (we have 80 in this group), 16 - 60 year olds who are employed (140 in this group), and 16 - 60 year olds who are not able to work (150 in this group).

The camp board met from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 15, 1946

I received my first postcard from Yugoslavia - it was from my mother. My sister Mici also received a card from our sister Julka, and Cilka received a card from her friend. They report that they have bread, but not enough butter, sugar or money.

Thursday, May 16, 1946

This evening, the camp board reviewed the way I had categorized everyone in the employment file. One person attacked me because I had listed his wife as being able to work, but not working. Everyone else agreed with my list and my plans.

Saturday, May 18, 1946

My brother Jože arrived from Feldkirchen with flour, bacon and other food.

In the evening, we went to a circus performance, but it was not very good.

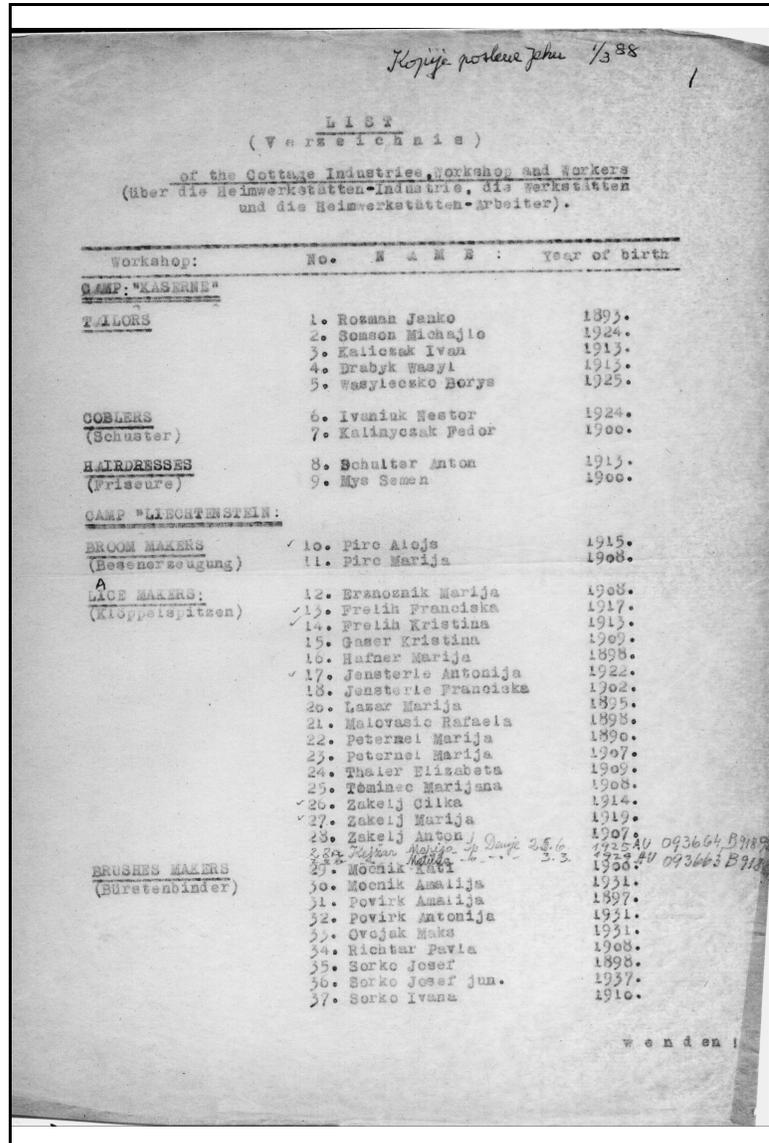
Sunday, May 19, 1946

This morning, I met with refugees who want to work as lumbermen in the woods.

In the evening, I worked on a list of craftspeople in our camp. We have shoemakers, carpenters, bakers and others.

Monday, May 20, 1946

All morning, I ran to various places in Judenburg asking about employment for our



This is the first page of the list I developed of workers and craftspeople in the refugee camps Kaserne, Liechtenstein and Murdorf near Judenburg, probably May 1946..

refugees, but found nothing.

Last Saturday, I was able to withdraw some money from Postal Savings for 4 of my roommates. There was a limit of 150 Schillings per person. Today I went back with a request for 8 people, but the Postal Savings wouldn't release any funds.

90 Serbs moved to our camp from Dietersdorf.

Wednesday, May 22, 1946

UNRRA is providing some clothes for refugees who are working. We're being told that everyone else will have to wait until fall, when we will need clothes for winter.

This evening, Franc Zupan directed a concert of Slovenian singing in the camp hall.

Thursday, May 23, 1946

The camp kitchen is providing us with pea soup in the mornings and pea soup in the evenings. We also get a little bread, meat and potatoes. We've been supplementing that with the potatoes we found left over in farmers' fields last fall, but now our room has only about 20 pounds of those potatoes left. What will do when we finish the last of those?

Saturday, May 25, 1946

UNRRA gave us new ration cards, called "canteen cards," good for the next 2 weeks. Each person can get 40 cigarettes, 1 bar of soap and 5 shaving razors. We traded some of the cigarettes for money and used the money to buy over 100 pounds of potatoes. Used this way, the "canteen card" will be worth about 180 - 200 Schillings per month. But "canteen cards" are not given to refugees who have a job and earn more than 60 Schillings per month.

Sunday, May 26, 1946

Cilka and I have decided to get married before my brother Jože returns to Slovenia (he is saying he will return in a few months.) We had hoped to be married by my brother Stanko, in the presence of our parents, but it has become clear to us that that will not be possible. I would still rather wait until we can afford to have children, but I also need to think about Cilka's reputation. We've been living together (with up to 20 other roommates) for over a year now. The women are asking why we're not married.

Monday, May 27, 1946

A representative of the Austrian "Arbeitsamt" (work office) comes to camp every day looking for workers, but without success. The jobs he has to offer are terrible jobs. The local Austrian farmers usually expect us to work for them for no pay. All they offer is basic room and board, and the quality of the "living quarters" they provide is often not any better than what they provide to their dogs and farm animals. Our people prefer to work on a road construction project which is run by the British. Sixteen refugees applied for 10 jobs there.

My sister Mici has stomach problems. She is treating herself with Belladonna (deadly nightshade) from the nearby woods.

Wednesday, May 29, 1946

Franc Kopač and my cousin Anže Žakelj left the camp to return to their homes in Slovenia. Seven of our roommates have now left to return home. People are wondering whether we were really communist sympathizers. I still don't think it's safe for me to return home.

All the news reports indicate that we are heading for another world war, this time between the Americans and the English on one side, and communist Russia on the other side. Yugoslavia, of course, will side with Russia.

Thursday, May 30, 1946

Since we are now down to 11 people in our room, we took out 2 bunk beds.

Friday, May 31, 1946

I went to 2 Masses this morning for my mother's nameday.

I've been too busy arranging employment for my fellow refugees to continue my driver's training. Besides they no longer have vehicles that we can use for on-the-road training.

Cilka has obtained part-time work sewing the upper parts of shoes for a shoemaker in the city. She gets a little pay and sometimes she is allowed use his sewing machine to make things for refugees in the camp. This morning, I cut out some leather for him.

The representative from the Austrian work office is angry with me because I didn't provide any workers for the rock quarry. I told him that I went there and found the working conditions unacceptable. The pay is terrible, and our men don't get enough food or clothing for that kind of work. So far, he hasn't found a single good job for us.

Saturday, June 1, 1946

The camp is opening a new kitchen for the 50 refugees in our camp who are laborers, teachers and otherwise employed.

Sunday, June 2, 1946

Mire returned from a trip to Koroška and soon left again. He makes enough by buying and selling things to people that he doesn't need a regular job.

I'm angry with our camp board. It's a month since we were elected and we haven't

accomplished anything. I'm especially frustrated with my own lack of success in arranging employment for people. When we have board meetings, Dr. Erman talks and people just nod in agreement, but nothing gets done. Even when proposals are accepted, only a few of them are actually carried out. So, I proposed that the agenda for every meeting include a report on the status of previously accepted proposals.

Monday, June 3, 1946

This morning, I went to the UNRRA offices and asked for permission to travel to the refugee camps at Lienz and Spittal, to see how they organize their camp workshops (where the refugees produce things to sell in the surrounding area.) They told me to come back tomorrow. They're angry with me that I haven't sent workers to the rock quarry.

Tuesday, June 4, 1946

I met with UNRRA director Gilbert. He won't allow me to travel to the other camps; he says we don't have time for educational excursions. He says he'll figure out something for workers in our camp himself. There will be big changes coming soon.

I also asked the director if we could have some raw material so the refugees could have a workshop and make things to sell. He replied, "So you can take that raw material to the local farmers and exchange it for bacon and potatoes? You don't know how to make anything, you don't have anything to show!"

When I returned to my room, Felix (one of my roommates) attacked me wildly. Somehow he became convinced that I was trying to send him back home. He accused me of all sorts of things from the past 15 years. Some of them are completely impossible. He screamed and pounded on the table and finally went to see Dr.

Est.

Felix is from our hometown of Žiri. He's smart, but there has been something wrong with him mentally since he was born. During the war, he had the job of town crier, informing everyone about the latest news. One Sunday, he called out to people to stop growing red flowers because "The Führer doesn't like red flowers."

In the camp, Felix has always talked about how he will be condemned to death under "the eastern democratic system." He even gave Rev. Klemenčič instructions as to how many candles there should be at his grave. He's hard of hearing and when he can't hear what we're saying, he always thinks we're talking about him. Once, Cene Žakelj was talking about something that had nothing to do with Felix, but Felix suddenly threw a knife toward Cene and yelled out: "You lie!"

Wednesday, June 5, 1946

Last night, I thought all night about what the UNRRA director said yesterday, "You don't know how to make anything, you don't have anything to show!" I decided we will have to show him what we can make out of nothing.

In the afternoon, I went around the camp and wrote down what kinds of things my fellow refugees could make, and what they would be willing to display if we did a show to demonstrate what we can do. Babnik and others yelled and refused to cooperate. Babnik is a skilled metalsmith who has made some truly beautiful items. But I think he's still angry with me because I refused to be on the opposition slate with him when we had the board elections. "I'm not going in with you shoemakers," he said condescendingly. But I didn't take offense at that.

Thursday, June 6, 1946

I continued to ask fellow refugees what they would be willing to display in a craft show, and I wrote it all down. I took the list to the camp office and showed it to them. They looked at it silently, without comment.

Friday, June 7, 1946

I typed invitations to our craft show, including one to UNRRA director Gilbert. The show will be next Monday, in a new barracks which is still empty. Logar, Šepin and Švajger are helping with plans for decoration of the space and arrangement of the items to be displayed. The show will be on a day when the director and the UNRRA office workers will be present. With a few exceptions, everyone in the camp is glad to help.

Saturday, June 8, 1946

It was hot today. I had an argument with my sister regarding the prices we should charge for the bobbin lace she is making. We worked it out.

I have become very nervous due to worries about the upcoming craft show and my fight with Felix. Felix obtained travel permission yesterday to return home, but now he doesn't want to go. He's threatening to tell everyone about the awful things I've done. What does he have to tell? I'm not afraid of that. But it's amazing all the things he's telling people. He's accusing me of wanting to have him sent back home by force. He told the director that I tried to send him to a terrible job, that I forged his signature, that our roommates are traveling outside the camp without the required travel permits (that part is sometimes true), that we all hate

him, and so on.

Sunday, June 9, 1946

Yesterday, we drank some milk without boiling it first, and today Cilka and I are both feeling sick. This morning, I felt so sick, I had to leave the chapel during the sermon.

Logar helped me all day, decorating the barracks where we will do the craft show (which will be tomorrow), and arranging the craft items for display. People were supposed to bring their items by 6 p.m. this evening, but they continued bringing more items until 10 p.m. Even people who had been opposed to the idea now brought things that they had made.



Slovenian refugees at the Liechtenstein camp near Judenburg put on a craft display to show what they had made, even when they had nothing. These ladles, cups, pots and pans were all made from the aluminum skin of damaged warplanes which they found in the woods nearby. June, 1946.

Monday, June 10, 1946

At 6 a.m., I went to the display area to finish final arrangements in preparation to open the show at 8. We have, on display, pots made out of downed warplanes, little heart-shaped sewing boxes, brushes made out of larch branches, brooms made of birch branches, shoes, a barrel, a carpenter's wooden table, pictures, lots of bobbin lace, and other things. All together, 50 refugees are displaying 300 items, all things they made here in the camp.

When the show opened, I accompanied the UNRRA director and pointed out various items. For example, I explained that much of the bobbin lace was made out of thread from discarded flour sacks and I emphasized that we could do much better if we had the proper raw materials.

The craft show continued until 9 p.m. We had visitors all day. Everyone was impressed, including the director.

Tuesday, June 11, 1946

The craft display continued all day today. The UNRRA officials came and the wife of the city commandant. I gave her a lace collar.

Now the director wants me to organize a craft show in the city in 14 days. He has visited this show 4 times and has become very friendly.

This evening, my sister Mici returned from a trip to Feldkirchen with hundreds of bobbin lace patterns which were designed by my brother Jože.

Felix left the camp yesterday morning and returned at 10 p.m. last night. During the night, he had fantasies about death. Today, he spent two hours writing "My Deposition," in which he accuses me of planning to have him returned home by force, to have him executed, and similar things. He says almost everyone in our room is planning something bad for him. He took his 6-page "declaration" to Rev. Klemenčič, but the father is against him, too. This evening, Felix didn't return to our room.

Wednesday, June 12, 1946

Last night the rain leaked through our roof, right



This is an example of the embroidered heart-shaped sewing boxes which were made by Slovenian women from Dobrovo in the refugee camp near Judenburg, Austria. This particular box was still used by Cilka Žakelj 50 years later for sewing, and for memories .

onto my bed. I slept poorly.

We were asked to extend the craft show for a day, so the city commander could also come see it. Commander Tracy arrived at 9 a.m. with a photographer from UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration). The photographer took many pictures. People continued to come all morning, but at noon we decided to end the show. We returned everything, undamaged, to the individual refugees who had made each item.

In the afternoon, we cleaned the barracks where we had the craft show. I worked on this show full-time for a week - all without pay, but I don't mind. It was a complete success.

After two months of short rations, we are again getting almost a loaf of bread per person per day, but still only 4 oz of milk.

By nightfall, Felix still had not returned to our room. We notified the police.

Thursday, June 13, 1946

Today is my 39th birthday. Cilka was the first to congratulate me. We went to Mass at 6:30 a.m. It rained all morning, with water leaking through our roof. We couldn't figure out how to stop the leak, so I set up pots to catch the water, but it wasn't always leaking in the same spot. (Later we learned that the leak was actually over on the other side of the barracks, and the water was somehow finding its way under the sheet metal covering.)

For my birthday lunch, we had štruklje (a type of dumpling). For dinner, we had salami. Special treats!

I received only one birthday postcard, and that was from my brother Stanko. I was pleased to hear from him. He writes that he

is out of prison and healthy. He advises me to not return home. He never received the letters I wrote to him during the war. Apparently, the communists got them. Was it because of my letters that he was imprisoned and suffered so much?

Friday, June 14, 1946

It's cold. Snow fell up on the mountains.

I asked the UNRRA staff for raw materials (wood, thread, wool, aluminum) for the craft



Mr. Gilbert, the director of 3 refugee camps in and near Judenburg, Austria, greets Rev. Jagodic, who was the pope's special delegate for refugees and was visiting the camp on June 23, 1946. Photo by Marjan Kocmur.

display which we have been requested to do in the city next month. They were all very polite but they said they don't have any materials to give.

Saturday, June 15, 1946

Our cigarette rations are being cut from 40 cigarettes every 2 weeks to 15. Since we can trade these cigarettes like money, this means it will be harder to get the extra food and other things we need.

Tone Babnik says he won't participate in the next craft display if Logar is involved, but Logar is the one who is most willing to help.

This afternoon, Janko Demšar and I left by train to visit my brother Jože in Feldkirchen, Austria. Refugees in the camps are required to get

permission to travel more than 10 kilometers from the camp, but we decided to not bother with that. Travel permits are too hard to get.

I have wanted to visit Jože for over a year and finally now I am doing it. Jože is also a refugee, but he has a job and a place to stay in Feldkirchen. He works for master shoemaker Smerslak, and has told me that I could get his job when he (Jože) returns to Slovenia.

Sunday, June 16, 1946

At 8 a.m., we went to Mass in Feldkirchen with my brother Jože. Then we visited J. Kokelj, Smerslak and De La Fiore. We discussed Jože's plan to return home, and advised him to wait longer. Our brother Stanko had written from Slovenia, also advising us to "not hurry back home." It's still too dangerous.



Children and teen-agers celebrated their first communion and confirmation in the dining hall of the refugee camp near Judenburg, Austria on June 22, 1946. Photo by Marjan Kocmur.

Jože made us lunch: corn mush ("žganci"), canned meat in soup, and potatoes. Very nourishing food!

In the afternoon, we walked with Jože to see a castle on a nearby hill. At 7 p.m., Jože's employer, Smerslak, made us a delicious dinner of sausage, bread and coffee. From 8 - 11 p.m., we went to a special church service. There were many people in church, but not all of them were awake.

Monday, June 17, 1946

Janko and I took the train back to Judenburg. At the train station, we saw our old friends Silva Hoja and Mila Huber with her two daughters. Mila didn't have food for her daughters, so I gave them my bread.

When I returned to our refugee camp, I learned that a group of 10 (including Levičar and Mire) were sent by UNRRA to the Kapfenberg camp to help them with camp administration. UNRRA wanted me to take over leadership of the Kapfenberg camp, but Cilka told them I would not want to do that. I'm glad she turned them down. I have heard there is corruption in the administration of the Kapfenberg camp and I don't want to be involved with that. UNRRA finally found someone else who agreed to take the job -

a former judge named Fišinger, who know German and English better than I do.

Tuesday, June 18, 1946

I worked on designs for bobbin lace, including a tablecloth.

Wednesday, June 19, 1946

I went to the UNRRA offices to ask for raw materials for the upcoming craft show. All I could get were a few minor supplies.

Thursday, June 20, 1946

At 8 a.m. Mass in the camp chapel, some of the refugee children had their First Communion.



Refugees from the village of Žiri celebrated confirmation and first communion in the Liechtenstein camp near Judenburg on June 23, 1946. In the front are the Primožič sisters (? and Irena). Back row, left to right: Franc Demšar, Anton Žakelj, Jože Žakelj, Cilka Gantar (Anton's fiancée), Vinko (Cene) Kokelj, Mici Žakelj, Pavel Kokelj, Mici Erznožnik, Franc Kokelj, Karl Erznožnik, Vinko Kržišnik, Janko Demšar. Photo by Marjan Kocmur.



The confirmees and their sponsors appear a little worried as they wait until it's time to meet with the pope's delegate in Judenburg, Austria on June 23, 1946.

I met with the UNRRA director to ask for materials for the craft show. I also asked for an increase in my cigarette rations (which I could trade for other things) for the work I am doing on the craft show. He promised he would arrange something.

Saturday, June 22, 1946

All morning, I met with various people in the

city to make arrangements for the refugee craft show. We thought we would get a hall in a hotel, but now it looks like they can't get it cleaned and ready in time. We need a different space.

Miss Russon is helping us. She is a Canadian employed by UNRRA, very enthusiastic and always very busy. Of all the UNRRA staff, she's the hardest worker. She really cares about the refugees and helps in any way she can. Whenever she goes to Trieste in her jeep, she brings back thread and other raw materials,



Cilka (Gantar) Žakelj is the sponsor for Irena Primožič at her confirmation in the refugee camp in Judenburg, Austria on June 23, 1946. Here they are walking to the camp chapel.

which we can then use to make things to sell. But she can't stand the Croats, who are too long-winded. When the Croats begin to ramble on in our meetings, she cuts them off and asks them to sit down. If we need something from her, we get the best results by just using a single word: "Food!" or "Thread!"

Marjan Kocmur, the photographer, and his brother Alojz arrived for a visit today. They are staying in our room.

Dr. Jagodic, the pope's special delegate for refugees, arrived to conduct a confirmation ceremony in the camp tomorrow.

My brother Jože arrived on a visit from Feldkirchen. He has decided to delay his return home to Slovenia.

Sunday, June 23, 1946

We celebrated Confirmation in the camp chapel this morning. There were 60 Slovenians and 40 Croats who were confirmed, mostly teenagers, but also some adults. Afterwards, there was a special dinner for the confirmees. Cilka was the sponsor for Primožič's daughter. *(Translator's note: See also 6/13/48 - was that the other daughter, or a mistake?)*

Felix returned to our room today, after being gone for almost 2 weeks. He had been arrested in Scheifling for traveling more than 10 kilometers from the camp without permission. After 10 days in jail, they allowed him to return here. He looks pale, is unshaven and appears to be hallucinating. I can't stand him - I have too many other things to worry about!



Irena Primožič appears relieved that confirmation is over.

Wednesday, June 26, 1946

I met three times with UNRRA staff and the UNRRA director to ask for materials for the craft show, but without success!

At 11 a.m., I went with Miss Russon to a meeting of representatives from other camps. UNRRA says we have to share whatever raw materials we can get with the other camps. But the Slovenians in our camp are really the only

ones who have developed a capacity to make some quality products. The Croats in Murdorf are making a few brushes out of tamarack branches and the Ukrainians aren't making anything.

In the evening, we had a meeting in our camp. Babnik agreed to help with the craft show.

Felix is hallucinating and talking about how he will die tomorrow.

Thursday, June 27, 1946

I spent all day walking to various places in the city, asking for paint and wood for the upcoming craft show, but couldn't get anything.

Our UNRRA director, Mr. Gilbert, suddenly announced that he will be leaving after 4 months with us. When he arrived, he was very strict and not very supportive, especially with the Slovenians. But we impressed him with our first craft show and he changed his mind. We will be sorry to see him go.

Friday, June 28, 1946

Again, I went all over town asking for materials for the craft show, and finally obtained 4 cubic meters of lumber and about 15 lbs. of paint. Everything will have to be shared with the Croats and the Ukrainians.

I got the lumber from the city's military commander. When I knocked on his office door, there was no answer, so I just walked into his office. He happened to be meeting with a city official and was angry that I interrupted them, but he agreed to my request.

Šepin went with me to the lumber mill to pick out the lumber. First he chose some thick beech boards which he could use to build a work bench. (Later we also used some of this lumber to make benches for the camp chapel.)

We received a postcard from Brezje (the religious shrine in Slovenia). My sister-in-law Francka and 60 other people from our home village walked to Brezje and back (about 50 miles). She writes that it may be safe for my sister Mici to return home now.

Saturday, June 29, 1946

It's been a year since we arrived in Judenburg. How much longer before we can go home?

This afternoon, we met with representatives from the other camps to plan the upcoming craft show. Some people talked in German and some talked in their own languages. We had a hard time understanding each other. The UNRRA director wants the show to continue for a week, and he wants each nationality group to perform national songs and dances in the evenings - at least two performances for each group.

This afternoon we had a thunderstorm and flooding in our room.

Our roommate Felix continues to hallucinate. He is constantly talking - loudly - about how people are trying to poison him. Since the camp police have come to know him and refuse to listen to him, he is now taking his accusations to the city police.

Sunday, June 30, 1946

My worries about the upcoming craft show are keeping me from sleeping.

Steierblatt, the local newspaper, had a very positive article about the upcoming craft show. It mentioned that Slovenians have been influenced by German culture for hundreds of years, and that this is evident in the quality of their workmanship.

Monday, July 1, 1946

This morning, I was at the UNRRA offices to work on a program for the craft show. We also made signs which will be posted around the city.

This afternoon, I visited with 60 people from our camp who have agreed to displays items which they have made.

Tuesday, July 2, 1946

This morning, I visited the theater where we will have the craft show. It's a beautiful theater for dramatic presentations, but completely inappropriate for a craft show. How will we be able to use the same hall for a craft show during the day and performances in the evening?

Wednesday, July 3, 1946

This morning, I had an argument with the Ukrainians regarding the schedule for their evening performances. In the afternoon, I took posters announcing the show to various stores in the city. It rained and I got completely wet. Nothing but worries!

This evening, we met Vrtačnik, who is a tailor. He refers to Miss Russon as "Micka," but she doesn't seem to mind.

Thursday, July 4, 1946

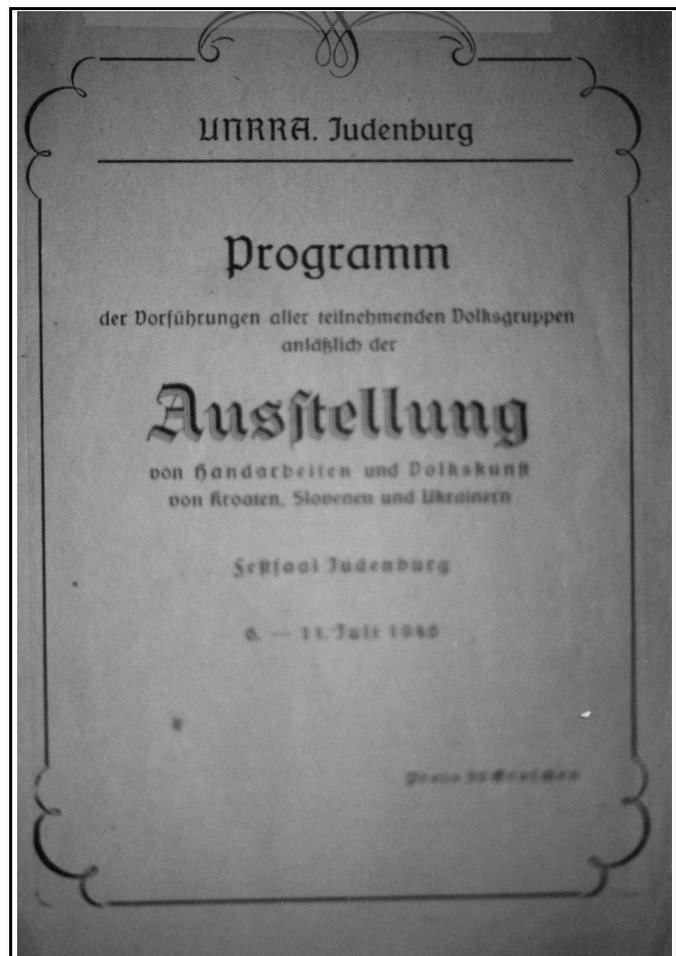
I took measurements of the exhibit space at the theater, then met with Miss Russon for 2 hours.

I attended a meeting regarding refugee employment. Also attending were the UNRRA director, some British military officers, the city mayor, representatives of the Austrian work office and representatives from 3 refugee camps - 14 people in all.

The representative from the Ukrainian camp spoke for 5-10 minutes about how poorly the

area farmers treat Slavic people. Under Hitler, the farmers around here learned to treat Slavic people like slaves. Hitler brought in "Ostarbeiter," people who were forcibly moved from East European countries to work here as if they were farm animals. The Austrians at the meeting were ashamed, and the British began to understand why none of the refugees want to work on the farms.

Then a representative from the Croatian camp spoke for an hour and said less in that hour than the Ukrainian said in 10 minutes.



This is the cover page from the program for the craft show and display of national talent which was organized by refugees in Judenburg, Austria on July 6 - 11, 1946.

I was tempted to talk about the experience our own men had with a farmer near Maria Buch. They worked for 14 hours and more a day, and all they got was the normal food ration. I asked the farmer what our men were supposed to do when they wear out their clothes. The farmer said, "I'll try to get some clothing for them from the government work office." Later, I noticed that farmer had wagon loads of used military uniforms, but he wouldn't allow our men to use any. I didn't say anything about those military uniforms because I knew that the farmer would be arrested and sent to the Wolfsberg internment camp if anyone told the authorities (the Wolfsberg camp was where the British imprisoned former Nazis). I probably should have said something!

Friday, July 5, 1946

I was at the theater all day, accepting items for display at the show. All together, I registered 276 items from 70 exhibitors.

Miss Russon returned from Italy with some silk cloth, paint, wool and other things. She went to each camp - ours, the Croats in Murdorf, and the Ukrainians in the city - and personally divided up the materials she had brought.

Saturday, July 6, 1946

This morning, Babnik, Vrtačnik and Zupan worked with me to set up our display. Earlier, Zupan and Babnik were opposed, but now they're helping.

Director Gilbert opened the show at 3 p.m. with a speech complimenting our hard work. He mentioned that there is always a black sheep in every group, and we must not allow that to affect our opinion of the entire group. I think he may have been talking about his own opinion of Slovenians, which was very

negative when he arrived, but is now very positive. It's a shame he will soon leave.

After the director's speech, Franc Zupan led a concert of Slovenian singing, and then people were invited to view the crafts on display.

Soon after the opening of the display, the Croats threatened to walk out if we didn't



This is the monstrance which Tone Babnik made by hand in the refugee camp near Judenburg, Austria for bishop Gregory Rožman in July, 1946. Most of this monstrance was made from aluminum which the refugees obtained from damaged warplanes. Note the fine detail - grains of wheat to represent the body of Christ, grapes and grape leaves to represent the blood of Christ.

remove a painting of King Peter which we had hung on the wall. King Peter and his now-deceased father, King Alexander, are Serbian, and the Croats hate them. The Croats complained to the director that politics did not belong in our display. We agreed to remove the painting.

We had divided the space in the hall by a lottery. Luckily, the Slovenians got the best and largest space, which was along the left side and immediately in front of the stage. The Croats got the right corner, and the Ukrainians got the back, in the balcony. The Ukrainians displayed some rugs, and the Croats displayed their coat of arms and a map of Croatia (which they had obtained from a painter in Austria). Neither group displayed any crafts which they had made in the refugee camp. But the Slovenian section was full of items that were made in our camp: bobbin lace, knitted hearts, aluminum pots, brushes, handbags woven from straw, shoes, paintings, and many other things. We had much more bobbin lace to show, but there wasn't enough room. Our most beautiful item was a chalice and monstrance which Tone Babnik made for bishop Rožman.

Sunday, July 7, 1946

Lat night, the rain poured through our roof into our room, and I didn't fall asleep till 4 a.m. At 6 a.m., I went to Mass, at 8 a.m. back to the craft show. We had a nice number of people coming to see the craft show this morning.

The Ukrainians put on a beautiful concert from 3 - 5 p.m., in front of a crowded hall. There many Austrians there from the surrounding area who enjoyed the concert. The UNRRA director repeated his speech from yesterday, complimenting our hard work.

Monday, July 8, 1946

The craft show continued, with an evening

concert by the Croats and Slovenians. Attendance was good.

Tuesday, July 9, 1946

Cilka's brother Rupert arrived on a visit, also Dr. Ložar from Lienz or Spittal.

In the evening, the Slovenians from our camp performed a comedy, "At the white pony." The girls performed a dance. It was good.

Jurčenko complained that he had to pay admission like everyone else, even though he is an exhibitor. He thinks he should be paid.

Wednesday, July 10, 1946

This evening, the Ukrainians repeated their concert. Every day, we're seeing more visitors to the craft show, including master craftsmen from Judenburg, Gradec (Graz) and Celovec (Klagenfurt).

Thursday, July 11, 1946

At 4 p.m., Miss Russon closed the show with a speech in English. Prof. Jirka spoke in German. All three nationalities sang songs.

A reporter from *Weltpresse* arrived just as were putting everything away. The Slovenians cleaned up their part of the hall by 7 p.m., Ukrainians came later to clean up their part, and the Croats forgot about their part.

We're all very happy with the show's success, except for one scandal: 17 electric bulbs are missing from the hall. We don't know who took them. The police are giving us a hard time about that.

After 40 days of rain, the weather seems to be finally getting better.

The British had talked earlier about giving out

awards for the best craft items, but they decided to not give any because everyone deserved awards. I think Babnik's chalice and monstrance were the best item. He used mostly aluminum that we had obtained from the fuel tanks of damaged warplanes, and sculpted it into finely detailed representations of wheat, grapes and thorns (to symbolize Jesus Christ). The inner part of the chalice and a small part of the monstrance were made of silver from Austrian coins.

People wanted to buy Babnik's chalice and monstrance, but he had made them as a gift for Bishop Gregory Rožman. There were also people interested in buying Šepin's work bench, Močnik's barrels, and our bobbin lace. Some of the visitors wanted to buy the Ukrainian rugs, but they weren't for sale. The Ukrainians said, "Give us some wool and looms, and we will make rugs!"

The local newspaper, *Steierblatt*, published praise for our show.

A month ago, the UNRRA director said the refugees had nothing to show. Now we've shown everyone what we can make out of nothing! This is a wonderful success!

Friday, July 12, 1946

We returned every item to its owner, nothing was lost. The show was also a financial success: we took in about 2,500 Schillings (mostly from admission tickets) and spent about 400, for a profit of more than 2,000 Schillings. All profits will be turned over to the Red Cross.

All afternoon, I accompanied visitors who wanted to tour the camp and buy what we had displayed at the show. We sold paintings, aluminum pots, baskets, weavings, bobbin lace and other things. We took orders to make more.

Saturday, July 13, 1946

I read all morning, for the first time in a long time. I'm very tired.

Sunday, July 14, 1946

I slept poorly last night. I had bad dreams about my home in Slovenia.

Tuesday, July 16, 1946

I sold 240 Schillings worth of lace in the city.

I visited the Murdorf camp and noticed that the person who has responsibility for refugee employment at that camp (comparable to my position here) has a nice office. I have to do everything out of the room where I live with 11 other people. I complained to Dr. Est, who said I could use the camp office.

Wednesday, July 17, 1946

I met for 3 hours with Miss Russon and Kurdidik. We set up an accounts book for the "Welfare Fund."

A new UNRRA director, Mr. Daintree arrived.

Thursday, July 18, 1946

A number of refugees from our camp took their written driving tests today. Out of 24 taking the test, 18 passed. Franc Demšar would have passed but he made a mistake because he was mad about something. I didn't go because I haven't had the time to study, and I don't have the 300 Schillings for the required fee.

Because of my work on the craft show, I am receiving double food rations. At least I have enough food!

Friday, July 19, 1946

I worked with Miss Russon on a final accounting for the craft show. Total income was 2,830 Schillings and expenses were 730, for a profit of 2,100 for the Red Cross. As a reward for my work, I got 2 cigarettes!

Holzinger, the tailor, agreed to make me an overcoat for 40 Schillings and Pirnat agreed to make me a shirt for 20 Schillings. Karl agreed to fix my shoes for free, but I had pay 20 Schillings for the leather.

Saturday, July 20, 1946

We hear on the news that the Russians demand our forced return to Yugoslavia, but the British insist that nobody will be moved against their will.

Tuesday, July 23, 1946

After a long break due to my work on the craft show, I again began reading and studying English.

After the craft show, our refugees received many orders to produce items for sale, but we can't get the raw materials we need. I went to the UNRRA offices to beg for the materials we need, but couldn't get anything.

(My diary does not say anything about this, but I believe it was around this time that I begged the authorities to give us permission to salvage metal from the many downed American warplanes which could be found in the surrounding woods. Mr. Podhorsky finally obtained permission for Tone Babnik to do that, but I think the other refugees thought I had profitted by selling those rights to Babnik. I think that may have been why I had some problems getting cooperation from the other refugees for the craft show. As it turned out, the American planes were of no use to us, since they were made of Duraluminum, which was too hard to work with by hand. The German planes

that we had found earlier were made of softer aluminum, which was very workable.)

Wednesday, July 24, 1946

Our food rations were adequate for a while, but now they're being cut back again. In the evening, they give me extra pea soup as a reward for my work. But the soup has more mouse droppings in it than peas.

Friday, July 26, 1946

I've been to the UNRRA offices 5 times this week to beg for materials - always without success. Even Miss Russon can't help me. I gave her a list of everything we need.

Saturday, July 27, 1946

Two higher level UNRRA officials arrived from Vienna to tour our camp workshop. Maybe they can help us get raw materials.

Sunday, July 28, 1946

Rev. Roman Malavašič is conducting religious training for the young men. He wants me to talk to them about development of will power.

This afternoon, I went swimming in the Mura river.

Marjan Kocmur arrived from Celovec (Klagenfurt) with pictures he took in our camp last month.

Monday, July 29, 1946

We received more orders for bobbin lace. At least we have thread to make lace. Ten women are working full-time and earning 5 - 10 Schillings a day!

My sister Mici was the first to begin making lace in our camp. I went to stores and other

places in the city nearby and sold what she made. Soon we had orders for more than Mici could make herself. There are a number of women and girls in our camp who are skilled lacemakers, so I asked them to help us fill our orders. (Later we had up to 35 women making lace.) I often draw new designs myself so we can offer a greater variety of products. I take care of the accounting and procurement of raw materials. I try to divide our income fairly, with my own pay being the same as our average lacemaker's.



The income we received from the sale of bobbin lace made life in the refugee camps much more bearable. I drew many of the designs, the women made the lace, and I took care of the sales, accounting and procurement of raw materials. In this picture, I am watching 3 of our lacemakers: (from left) Marija Lazar, Mici Erznožnik and my sister Mici Žakelj.

Tuesday, July 30, 1946

This afternoon, I went to the neighboring village of Fohnsdorf by bicycle to deliver an order of bobbin lace to a bakery. In exchange, they gave me 6 loaves of bread.

Wednesday, July 31, 1946

We have so many orders for bobbin lace now that we don't have enough skilled lacemakers to fill all the orders.

Our lacemaking business is helping the refugees gain respect in the local community. People are beginning to see us as hard-working, honest, and skilled. In case we can never return home, or if we cannot find a home elsewhere in the world, this will help us if we need to settle here in

Austria.

I've been selling our lace at very low prices. Prices for most things in Austria are controlled by the government. I took our price list to the local government office, where they reviewed it and said, "You're free to charge whatever you want for bobbin lace. We consider lace to be a luxury and not under government control."

When we were in Slovenia, I always thought that our tradespeople were not as skilled as the Germans and Austrians. Now I see that the Austrians may be centuries ahead of us in heavy industrial manufacturing, but they're far behind us in their tradeswork. The local Austrians are impressed by the quality of the items produced by our lacemakers, shoemakers, carpenters, wheelwrights, metalworkers and painters.

Thursday, August 1, 1946

I wrote my first letters from camp to my mother and Cilka's mother, and told them that we will soon be married. I asked Cilka's mother for her blessing. I know that she worried about Cilka living with me without being married. I told Cilka's mother that Cilka is still the same as she was when we first started seeing each other.

Friday, August 2, 1946

I asked Mr. Šešek if I could have my own office for my work arranging employment for refugees in our camp. He promised I would get one. (But I never did get my own office.)

Saturday, August 3, 1946

I wrote 14 pages of notes for a speech regarding development of will power. This is in response to the request from Rev. Malavašič to help him conduct religious training for our young men.

Sunday, August 4, 1946

I read my "lecture" to our young men in 20 minutes.

A group of refugees from our camp went to Celovec (Klagenfurt) today to sing on the radio.

This afternoon, I went by bicycle to the neighboring village of Weisskirchen and sold 145 Schillings of bobbin lace in a restaurant there. I continued on to Eppenstein, but had to stop 5 times to pump more air in the tires.

Monday, August 5, 1946

My weight is down to 61 kilos (134 lbs.), the lowest it's been in many years. I've lost over 15 lbs during the past year. Not enough food and too many worries!

Wednesday, August 7, 1946

My roommates Cene, Franc, Pavel, Jože and Karel are working in the woods along the road between Weisskirchen and Graz. Before this, Cene and Karel earned 20 - 30 Schillings a day working for Rudolf Primožič, a fellow refugee who has established a shoemaking shop in the camp. (20 Schillings buys about 2 loaves of bread.)

Wednesday, August 14, 1946

The camp rations now include more bread and potatoes. We get enough food, but there's very little fat and protein.

Thursday, August 15, 1946

As I was leaving our barracks today, I encountered Felix, who was coming in. He suddenly attacked me with all sorts of imagined accusations. He hadn't spoken to me for 2 months, but before that, he had often accused me of hurting him, or plotting to hurt him in various ways, none of which were true. Today I had enough and I reacted by slapping him on his right cheek with my left hand. He happened to have a boil on his skin where I slapped him. The boil broke open and blood started streaming down his face. He ran around the camp showing everyone what I had done to him. Since people in the camp are used to his craziness, nobody paid him much attention. Then he went to the city police, but they just called the camp police. The camp police know what a problem Felix has been, and they decided to not do anything. I think part of Felix's problem is that he is hard of hearing. When he can't hear what people are saying, he begins to imagine that people are talking about him and plotting against him.

Saturday, August 17, 1946

My sister Mici returned from a trip to Feldkirchen with food and other good things from our friend Silva.

Sunday, August 18, 1946

This morning, 30 young men attended the 5th session of religious training.

Felix got a letter from his sister in Slovenia, telling him that his wife is sick. Felix says he will return home to his wife. He has talked about returning home, but never quite does it.

Monday, August 19, 1946

Felix went to the UNRRA offices and filled out all the forms for his return home. He even asked for my permission! Suddenly, he's normal and we get along fine.

20 - 25 women work in the camp kitchen every day, mostly peeling potatoes. They take turns so each woman in camp works in the kitchen once or twice a week.

Tuesday, August 20, 1946

At my request, the camp board met for the first time in a long time. I criticized the way the camp was being run, and I proposed a number of improvements. We met for an hour and half, but it probably won't do any good.

Some of the camp's refugee leaders have been going to the kitchen and helping themselves to extra food. The director announced in a letter that, from now on, everyone will have to

wait in line at the kitchen window. Dr. Est taped the director's announcement next to the kitchen window, but it's in English and hardly anyone understands what it says.

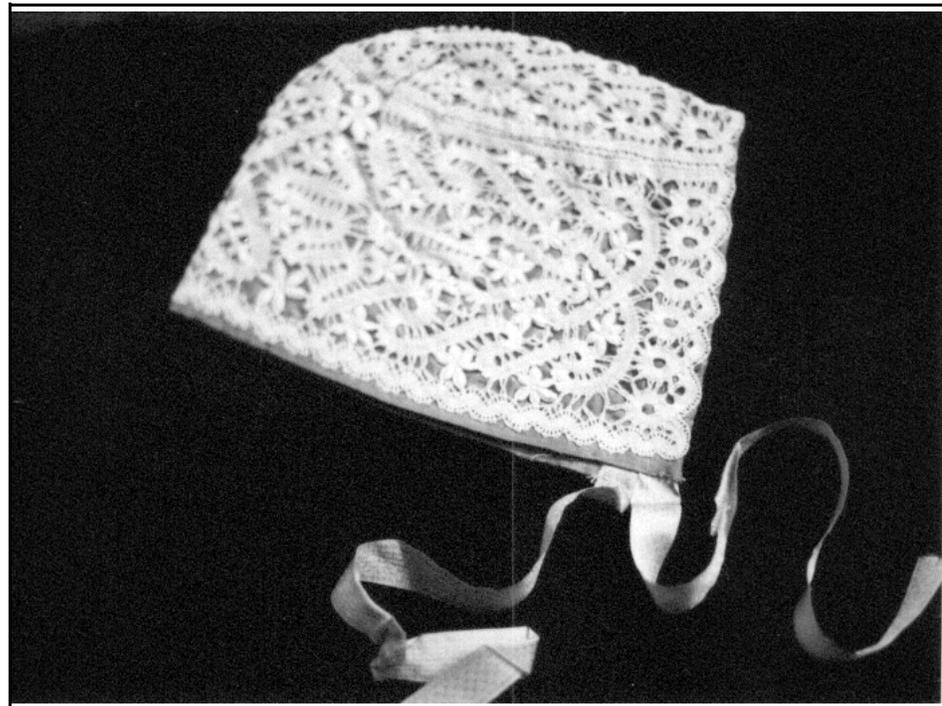
Wednesday, August 21, 1946

Felix got a card from his wife, asking him why he hasn't returned yet.

Thursday, August 22, 1946

At 7 a.m., Felix and Mr. and Mrs. Zupan (the cook) left in an UNRRA vehicle for Celovec (Klagenfurt), where they would get transportation to Slovenia. Felix seemed happy and was making jokes. He even gave me a couple pounds of peas and his cigarette ration card.

Friday, August 23, 1946



This is a bobbin lace baptismal cap, similar to the one that Cilka made for UNRRA director Gilbert's newborn niece. This cap was made by Cilka for our son John's baptism in 1948.

Miss Russon obtained approval for me and a group of other refugees to visit the camps at Spittal and Lienz so we can see how they arrange for refugee employment.

Earlier, we learned that our former director, Mr. Gilbert, is now working in Villach (which is on the way to Spittal) and that he had recently become an uncle. My fiancée Cilka decided to make a special baptismal cap for the newborn baby, as a symbol of our gratefulness to Mr. Gilbert for everything he had done for us.

Saturday, August 24, 1946

At 7 a.m., a number of us got into the back of a military truck for the trip to Villach and Lienz. The group included Babnik, Šepin, Vrtačnik, Kovač, Cilka, 6 Croatians and myself. Along the way, I became sick and they moved me to the front seat, where I felt better. At 10 a.m., we passed through Celovec (Klagenfurt), at 11 we arrived at Villach.

Director Gilbert greeted us very warmly. We gave him the lace baptismal cap and little mittens for his newborn niece.

We had lunch at 2 p.m. and then boarded a train for Spittal. We missed supper and arrived at the Spittal camp at 7.

Sunday, August 25, 1946

We went to Mass at 8 a.m., and then visited workshops and stores till noon. It appears they have a well-organized cottage industry in the camp, with many good workers.

We listened to a radio broadcast over the public loudspeakers in the Spittal camp. It was a broadcast of the Yugoslav government's trial of General Rupnik. During the war, he was the leader of the Home Guard, fighting against the communists. After the war, the British turned

him over to the Yugoslav government. Now the Yugoslavs accuse him of "war crimes." (A few days later, on September 4, 1946, he was executed by the communists.)

At 1 p.m., we had lunch (polenta and cabbage) with our friend Potočnik. At 2 p.m., we boarded the train for a 2-hour trip to Lienz. We visited our friend Miha Peternejl, who immediately invited us to stay with him. Then we visited Skvarča (who also invited us to stay overnight), Stanonik and Tavčar. They all seemed satisfied. At 10 p.m., we went to bed, me at Skvarča's, Cilka at Peternejl's.

Monday, August 26, 1946

For breakfast we had lots of polenta. It seemed good to me, but the people here don't like it because they've had too much of it.

At 8 a.m., Mr. Bajuk and Mr. Stanonik took us on a tour of the workshops in the Lienz refugee camp. Very interesting! We got a number of ideas for things we could do in our own workshops.

We were provided with a lunch of canned meat, bread, cabbage and tea. At 1 p.m., we left Lienz and at 3 p.m., we arrived at the Spittal camp. We immediately toured their workshops, and their stores where they sell the things they make. Again, very interesting! We discussed exchanging products and helping each other sell more to the public.

At 9 p.m., I went to sleep at Mlakar's, and Cilka at Vida's.

Tuesday, August 27, 1946

At 6:19 a.m., we left Spittal with Babnik and Natlačen. I bought train tickets for our group to return to Judenburg, including a stop in Feldkirchen on the way.

The train reached Feldkirchen at 10 a.m.. Cilka and I went to visit my brother Jože, who is also a refugee, but has had a job and apartment in Feldkirchen. As we approached Jože's apartment, we were stopped by a policeman and an official from the local work office demanding to see proof of our employment. We were saved when Jože came out and explained everything to them.

At Jože's apartment, we had a lunch of tea, potatoes and canned meat. In the afternoon, we visited our friends Tomaž and Dora Pivk, then took the train back to Judenburg. We arrived back at our camp very tired but encouraged by everything we had seen.

Wednesday, August 28, 1946

This morning, I went to the stores in the city and sold 180 Schillings worth of bobbin lace, but didn't get any new orders and couldn't find anyone with thread to sell.

This afternoon, I interviewed new arrivals at our camp to determine how we could help them with employment.

Saturday, August 31, 1946

For 4 hours this afternoon, I worked with Dr. Erman on a list of our adult refugees, organized by job skills. We will use this to help fill jobs that become available.

Sunday, September 1, 1946

Pavel Kokelj got into

an argument with Weber during a game of bolinca. Pavel grabbed Weber's jaw with such force that he knocked out two teeth.

Monday, September 2, 1946

I did more work on our list of job skills of each refugee in our camp. I visited the new UNRRA work office.

I received mail from Slovenia - a card from my priest brother Stanko and a letter from my mother, and I wrote back to both of them. The Yugoslav government censors mail from Slovenia and other parts of Yugoslavia, so I know that my relatives probably leave out many things that they would like to tell me. The communists punish people who write anything that might make them look bad.

Tuesday, September 3, 1946

I was at the UNRRA work office again. They



Young men play bocce ball in the refugee camp near Judenburg, maybe around August 1946. Back row, from the left: Nande Žonta, Ivan Zupančič, Vinko Kokelj, Slavko Smole, Janez Šusteršič, and ???. Front row, from the left: Ivan Vičič, Ivan Zakrajšek, Miro Kolenc and Marjan Filipič. Photo by Marjan Kocmur.

want us to provide 6 workers for a company in Zeltweg, but we are refusing because the working conditions there are intolerable.

Wednesday, September 4, 1946

This afternoon we had a big meeting of the camp leadership from 2:30 to 5 p.m. Est, Pip and Podhorsky got into an argument. We concluded that the new UNRRA work office cannot force refugees to accept jobs regardless of working conditions.

Thursday, September 5, 1946

I went to Fohnsdorf and sold 200 Schillings worth of bobbin lace that our women had made.

Franc Demšar went to Graz and completed his driver's test. He brought back electric bulbs and heating elements for electric stoves, which we need very badly.

Saturday, September 7, 1946

I sold 500 Schillings worth of lace, but still couldn't find anyone who would sell me thread.

Monday, September 9, 1946

Cilka's brother-in-law Mire received his first letter from his cousin Eleanor Kolenc in America. It was in English, so I had to translate it for him, which took about 2 hours.

This evening, the refugees performed the play "Triglav Rose" in the camp hall.

Tuesday, September 10, 1946

We had a second meeting with the UNRRA director to discuss the authority of the camp's refugee leadership. He said the president of our camp board has authority to hire and fire the refugees who are employed to run the camp (Dr. Est, Dr. Erman and 3 - 4 others are paid to run

the camp). Dr. Est was not happy about the director's statement.

Wednesday, September 11, 1946

The camp's refugee board met from 8:30 - 11:00 a.m. We argued about the dictatorial way that Est runs the camp.

Saturday, September 14, 1946

This evening we went to a gymnastics exhibition in the city banquet hall. The exhibition included performances by Slovenian refugees from a number of camps, including Fric Natlačén, Ivo Krmavner, Janez Varšek, Mrva, and I think also Jeraj from Spittal. They performed on the horizontal bar, parallel bar, the pommel horse and floor mats. The Austrians were so impressed by the world-class quality of the performance that they immediately hired Fric Natlačén to be a gymnastics teacher for the Social Democratic Gymnastics Union.

For the first time, I had one of the seats which were reserved for special guests and camp leadership. I sat next to Levičar and Rev. Klemenčič. Unfortunately, 20 of the reserved seats remained vacant, while other people were turned away at the door for lack of seats.

Sunday, September 15, 1946

Marjan Kocmur is staying overnight in our room (he arrived yesterday to take pictures of the gymnastics exhibition.) Whenever he comes for an event, he also takes lots of pictures of people in the camp. He makes a living by selling his pictures of camp life to the refugees. When he takes someone's picture, he gives them a slip of paper with the time and date and asks them if they want to order any copies. Very few people in the camp have a camera and nobody has the ability to develop photos, so people appreciate the opportunity to get pictures of themselves at a reasonable price.

Kocmur has epilepsy - he had a seizure today.

My brother Jože is also here visiting. He has decided to return home, against everyone's advice. I have not tried to influence him because I'm worried he will blame me if things go wrong.

Our cook, Mr. Zupan (not related to Jerry Zupan), is returning to Slovenia and has offered me his room, so Cilka and I could have some privacy after we get married.

Monday, September 16, 1946

Marjan Kocmur had another epileptic seizure, but decided he felt well enough to return to Spittal.

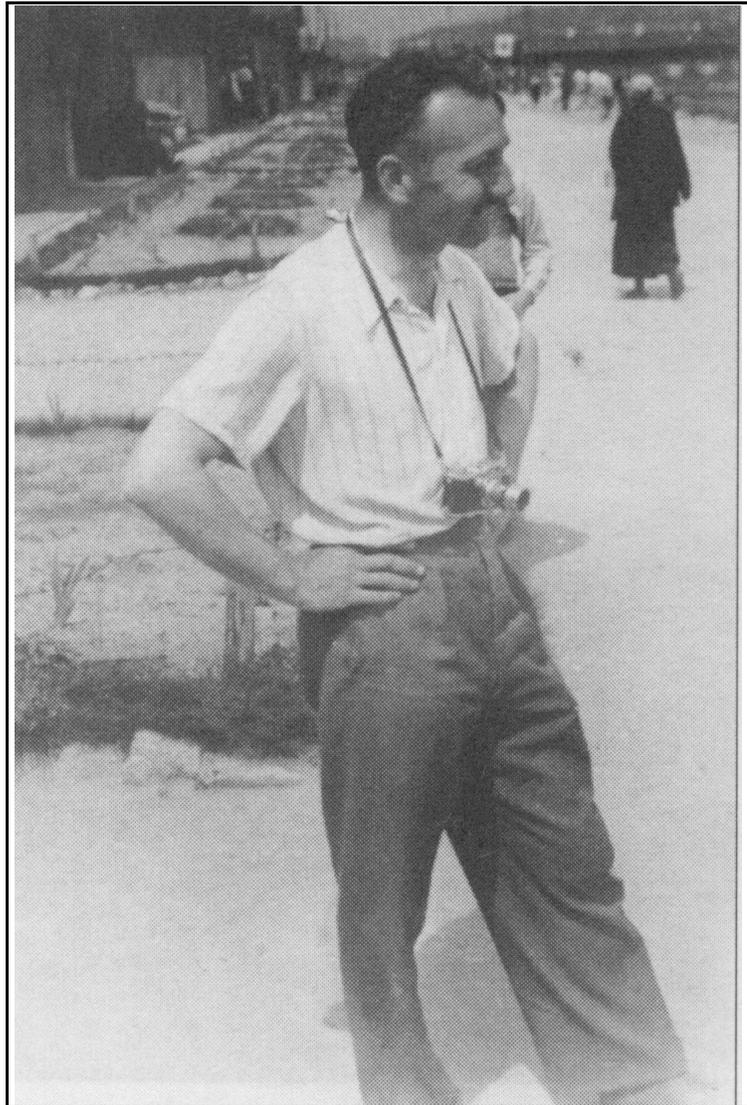
At the UNRRA director's request, I translated the minutes I had taken of our refugee camp board meeting into English.

Tuesday, September 17, 1946

My brother Jože returned to Feldkirchen, Austria where he has an

apartment and a job. His wife Francka wants him to come home to Slovenia. He knows that he will be in constant danger if he returns, but he can no longer resist his wife's request.

I received a letter from my mother which says



Marjan Kocmur was a professional photographer in Ljubljana before he became a refugee. He documented all aspects of refugee camp life in thousands of photos. After many years in refugee camps, he emigrated to Argentina. This picture is from a book by Janez Arnež regarding Slovenian publications in Austrian refugee camps.

that Felix (who left our camp a month ago) has been spreading wild lies about me. My sister Julka defended me at a public meeting.

Wednesday, September 18, 1946

Varšek, Kermavner and others returned to the refugee camp at Lienz.

At a meeting of the camp board, assignments were made for three private rooms which have become available. Zupan's room was assigned to our friends Karl and Mici Erznožnik. There were no rooms left for me and Cilka. Maybe in a month.

Dr. Est usually refuses to speak with me, but when we meet with the director and the director offers cigarettes, Dr. Est always asks me to take two for him.

Tuesday, September 24, 1946

The camp board decided who will be the new (paid) cook for the children's kitchen. I protested because there was no announcement about the job and no opportunity for others to apply.

Wednesday, September 25, 1946

This morning, I accompanied a group of our refugees who are working in the woods near Premstein, about 15 miles away. I cut trees with them from 9 - 11. They seemed cheerful and carefree! Pavel cooked us lunch in the woods: potatoes, beans and canned meat.

At 1 p.m., I left by bicycle to return to Judenburg. On the way, I stopped at Oberzeiring and visited Mr. Friese von Rabenstein regarding sale of our bobbin lace. He and his wife were very friendly and treated me with coffee, bread and butter, but didn't buy any lace.

Friday, September 27, 1946

Jože Sorko brought me various things that were produced at the Spittal camp. He offered me 10% if I could sell them here. Some people think he cheats, but I have always found him to be honest. He makes ironing boards based on his own patent. He can make a baking tin out of aluminum in a minute, using only a compass and his bare hands.

Sunday, September 29, 1946

Cilka, Mici and I walked to Weisskirchen, Krottendorf and Maria Buch. Everywhere we went, we offered our lace for sale, but sold only 24 Schillings worth. We also looked for fruit to buy, but bought only 4 pounds of apples.

Monday, September 30, 1946

At the camp board meeting, I was attacked because I had questioned the hiring process for the new cook. Levičar accused Mire (Cilka's brother-in-law) of being dishonest in his trading.

Cene received a letter from his mother, who is in our home village in Slovenia. She says Felix (our former roommate) is spreading lies about us and people believe everything he says. This will make it harder for any of us to return home.

Tuesday, October 1, 1946

At the camp board meeting, I again protested the dictatorial way in which the leadership has awarded paid jobs. Finally, the board adopted a resolution by J. Tominc that all jobs must be posted.

Wednesday, October 2, 1946

This morning, I was at the UNRRA offices in the city and developed proposed rules for the new "Camp Labour Office."

Thursday, October 3, 1946

I drew bobbin lace designs most of the day. I received my first letter from my brother Ciril in Trieste.

Saturday, October 5, 1946

The mountains surrounding our camp have turned white with a new covering of snow.

Monday, October 7, 1946

I worked on the paperwork for the new labor office all day.

In the evening, Cilka and I met with Rev. Klemenčič to plan our wedding. We chose a date - October 22.

Tuesday, October 8, 1946

Today, many of us went to nearby farmers' fields and dug potatoes which the farmers had missed during their harvest. Mici and I dug about 80 pounds, but most of the potatoes are small.

Wednesday, October 9, 1946

I had a number of errands in the city today, including three meetings with UNRRA director Daintree regarding the organization of jobs in the camp. He said he needs an accountant who would be skilled, hard-working and enthusiastic.

I went to many places to sell our lace - without success.

I met with UNRRA worker Miss Russon and gave her a list of clothing which our refugees need. She promised to get back to me by Monday.

Thursday, October 10, 1946

From 2 - 5 p.m., we had a meeting regarding plans for the new labor office, which will include the neighboring camps for Ukrainians and Croats. The Ukrainians and Croats agreed with our plans.

Friday, October 11, 1946

I sold 250 Schillings worth of our bobbin lace in Fohnsdorf.

Saturday, October 12, 1946

Cilka, Mici and I found almost 200 pounds of potatoes in fields that had already been harvested by their owners. This will help us make it through the winter!

Cilka and I met with Rev. Klemenčič to receive marriage and wedding instructions.

Sunday, October 13, 1946

At Mass this morning, the priest made the first official announcement that we will be married on October 22.

Some of our roommates think we should all continue to live together, others want Cilka and me to find our own room. I don't know what to do.

Monday, October 14, 1946

Levičar offered a small private room for me and Cilka, but we've decided to stay where we are.

Tuesday, October 15, 1946

I went to Fohnsdorf and Judenburg looking for wedding rings, but couldn't find any that we could afford.

From 2:30 to 5:30. I attended a heated meeting at the UNRRA offices regarding plans for the labor office. The UNRRA director proposed that Mr. Pip's name be included in the official rules, which was strongly opposed by Dr. Est. The director accused Dr. Est of personal hatred towards Mr. Pip. Dr. Est argued that it made no sense to put someone's name into the rules. What if something happened to that person?

(Later, something did happen to Mr. Pip that resulted in his losing his position in the labor office. He defended two young men who were caught stealing from the camp. As a result, Mr. Pip lost his job with the British *Field Service* and his position in the labor office.)

Wednesday, October 16, 1946

I ran errands in the city all morning. When I returned, I was surprised to see that my roommates had walled off a corner of our room so Cilka and I could have some privacy after we get married. They used wood which I had obtained for general camp use. They knew that I would never have agreed to use that wood for myself. Instead of thanking my roommates, I



The wedding of Cilka Gantar and Anton Žakelj in the refugee camp near Judenburg, Austria on October, 22, 1946. From left to right: Mire Kolenc (Cilka's brother-in-law), Rupert Gantar (Cilka's brother), Silva Hoja, Cilka, Rev. Janez Klemenčič, Anton, Mici Žakelj (Anton's sister), Jože Žakelj (Anton's brother), and Milan Hoja with the accordion. Photo by I. Wachnianyn.

was angry with them.

Thursday, October 17, 1946

I went to see Miss Russon for the fifth time to ask if she could get me a shirt for my wedding, but without success. I finally took a bedsheet to Mrs. Pirnat and asked her to make me a shirt out of the bedsheet.

I sold 180 cigarettes and bought flour and meat for the wedding.

Friday, October 18, 1946

Cilka and I decorated our new "room." My sister Mici is in a bad mood, maybe because people are teasing her about her boyfriends.

Mire bought a sheep which he slaughtered. He is selling most of the meat, but saving 10 pounds for our wedding.

Saturday, October 19, 1946

Mici's mood is even worse today. Now that Cilka and I will have a walled off corner of our room, she will be only one of two women who will have to share the rest of our room with about 8 men. She wants her own room. Mire, Vinko are others are constantly teasing her. She's crying and has decided to return home to Slovenia. Our brother Jože arrived around 10 a.m., but he couldn't make her feel any better.

Despite Mici's bad mood, she still baked bread and potica today, in preparation for our wedding.

I went to Fohnsdorf, sold 100 Schillings worth of bobbin lace, but couldn't find any wedding rings.

Sunday, October 20, 1946

This morning, Cilka and I went to Maria Buch and other nearby villages to buy cider for the wedding, but couldn't find any. We went back in the afternoon, and got some apples and a promise for cider tomorrow.

Monday, October 21, 1946



Newlyweds Anton and Cilka Žakelj on October 22, 1946. Cilka's wedding dress was borrowed from a friend of Anton's brother. Anton's suit was an old suit which was one of the few things he brought along when he left Slovenia in 1945. In the background is one of the barracks in the refugee camp. Photo by I. Wachnianyn.

Cilka's brother Rupert arrived this morning, so he could be present at the wedding tomorrow. Our friends Silva and Milan Hoja arrived at noon.

Rupert and I obtained about 80 pounds of potatoes, 10 pounds of apples and 9 liters of cider. Later we got 12.5 liters of beer, another 10 pounds of apples, and tea.

I went to a watchmaker in Judenburg who made us a pair of wedding rings out of German silver coins. I had bought the coins earlier from Primožič. I paid the watchmaker 4.5 Schillings for his work.

I picked up the new shirt that I had asked Mrs. Pirnat to make out of a bedsheet.

In the evening, I went to confession and communion.

I received a letter from my brother Vlado in Slovenia that he was married on October 5.

Tuesday, October 22, 1946

At 6:30 a.m., we went to Mass and communion. At 9 a.m., I put on the 8-year old suit which was one of the few things I brought with me from Slovenia, and I put on my only new shirt, new socks, and newly repaired shoes.

The wedding was at 10 a.m. in the camp chapel in the presence of my brother Jože,

Cilka's brother Rupert, Cilka's brother-in-law Mire, our friends Milan and Silva Hoja, and others. My sister Mici was in the kitchen cooking. Cilka wore a wreath of flowers in her hair and a white wedding dress which Jože had borrowed from his employer's wife Mrs. Smerslak. The only new thing Cilka wore were her shoes.

After the wedding, I felt very happy and fortunate, almost the way I had felt when my brother Stanko said his first Mass. I wish he could have married us today.

Earlier, I was so worried about what our life would be like, being married and having absolutely nothing. But now, at least for a moment, all those worries have been set aside by the joy of our wedding.

After the wedding, there was a Mass and then a



Cilka and Anton Žakelj's wedding dinner in the refugee camp near Judenburg, Austria on October 22, 1946. Sitting, from left to right: Mire Kolenc, Rupert Gantar, Cilka and Anton Žakelj, Rev. Janez Klemenčič. Standing: Milan and Silva Hoja, Mici Žakelj, Jože Žakelj. Photo by I. Wachnianyn.

wedding dinner in the presence of Dr. Est and Rev. Klemenčič. The dinner included soup, potatoes, lettuce, beets, chicken, potica, cider, beer, cookies, bread, fruit compote and other things - just like a wedding dinner would have been in Slovenia.

At 3 p.m., I. Wachnianyn, the photographer, arrived and took two pictures inside, and two outside.

In the evening, we had klobase made by Cilka's brother-in-law Mire. Rev. Klemenčič said he would come if we had klobase, and he did. Many others also came to celebrate, including Tine Malavašič and his wife Jelka, Dr. Erman, Levičar, and others. Karel Erznožnik arranged for music (he played the accordion.) We provided mutton stew with bread and beer for our roommates. Earlier, I had thought they were somewhat reserved about our wedding plans, maybe because they thought as I did, that we were crazy to be getting married in such uncertain conditions. But they celebrated with us until midnight and shared our joy.

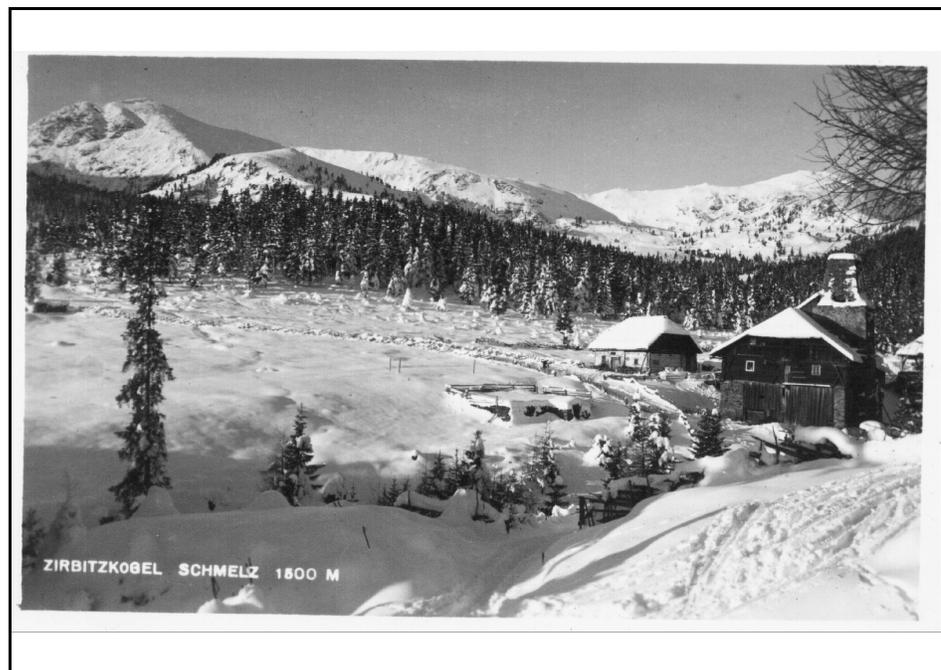
We drank all the cider, which was very good. But we didn't finish the beer - there were still a few liters left. Despite our poverty, we had quite a nice wedding celebration, thanks to Jože, Mire, Rupert and others.

After the guests departed, Vinko and our roommates prepared our bed for us in our new "room" (the corner which they had walled off). Cilka

and I had to go there - willingly or unwillingly - for our first time as man and wife.

I remember how my mother would often tell us children: "Don't ever get married! Be nice to each other, stay home and work together!" I know that she is not happy in her marriage. I want a better life for Cilka. Because of my mother, I will try hard to be a good husband.

My father is always working. He's not particularly careful about details, but he's a good worker. He lives to work. He often told me that a person must work because he wants to work, not because he wants to be paid. I worked in his shoemaker's shop for 10 years without being paid. He said "You don't produce enough to support yourself!" It's true I didn't produce as much as he did. But, even though I did as much as some of the paid workers, he continued to treat me and my brothers as if we were still children.



Postcard from Schmelz, Austria. This is where Slovenian refugees labored in the woods, cutting wood to heat the refugee camp near Judenburg..

Wednesday, October 23, 1946

I slept maybe 3 hours. We got up at 7 a.m. At 8 a.m., we helped Jože, Rupert, Silva and Milan get a ride to Celovec (Klagenfurt) in a vehicle provided by UNRRA. The trains are not running because there is no coal.

We reviewed our wedding presents: 2 meters of silk and a 60 watt light bulb from Franc Demšar, 100 Schillings from the Hoja's and 100 Schillings from Rupert.

We hoped our wedding pictures would be ready, but the photographer wasn't able to develop and print them because there was no electricity.

Friday, October 25, 1946

I have resumed my unpaid duties arranging for employment for our refugees. Our workers at Schmelz (a military artillery range) are continuing to have problems. We never know when the Schmelz truck will arrive to take them there. Sometimes it comes at 9 a.m., sometimes 10 or noon, or it doesn't come at all. And the workers say that, when they work there, they don't get enough food.

Our workers at Schmelz complain that I haven't tried hard enough to get them extra ration cards. I visited the Austrian work office to get extra rations for our men, but the work office showed me a report from a Schmelz foreman stating that our workers are unreliable and do not deserve extra rations. I talked to our men and some of them admitted that they don't work hard and they only care about the bundle of firewood which they are allowed to bring back to the camp for their own use or for sale. But it's not their fault if their transportation is late and unreliable.

The temperature dropped to 20°F last night. We will need firewood to stay warm.

Saturday, October 26, 1946

We heard a rumor that the refugee camp at Lienz was closed and that the people were forced to leave. Will they close our camp, too? Where will we get food and housing? (Later, we learned that the rumor was false.)

Sunday, October 27, 1946

This morning I wrote 6 letters, including letters to my mother and my brother Vlado to tell them about the wedding.

Mire is in a bad mood. He doesn't like anything cooked by my sister Mici. For the wedding, he gave us about 250 Schillings worth of meat and didn't ask for payment. But he also owed Cilka about 250 Schillings, and Cilka hasn't asked him to repay that. Mici complained to me that Mire is always bothering her. He overheard me tell her to call me if he ever bothers her again.

Even though we are now down to about 11 people in our room (we started at 22), it's difficult having so many people living in one room for so long under these conditions. (Our room is about 18 feet on each side.)

Tuesday, October 29, 1946

I attended a meeting at UNRRA from 2:30 to 6 p.m. regarding the new labor office. Some of our refugees from Ljubljana (Slovenia's capitol city) have split into two groups competing for control of the camp. I think they're all corrupt and immoral. I want to quit my unpaid duties on the camp board and go work as a logger. At least there I will get some pay - and some peace.

I. Wachnianyn finally printed our wedding pictures, but they're very poor quality.

Cilka took her wedding ring back to the watchmaker to exchange it for a smaller one.

Wednesday, October 30, 1946

Mire is angry and arguing with everyone. He doesn't want to eat with the rest of us.

Thursday, October 31, 1946

I walked to Fohnsdorf (about 3 miles away) and sold 66 Schillings worth of lace we had made. On the way back, a wet snow made me soaking wet and cold.

Friday, November 1, 1946

Today is All Saints Day. We went to Mass at 8 a.m., visited the cemetery at 3 p.m., and back to the chapel at 6 p.m. to pray the rosary and the litanies.

From 7:30 - 9:30 p.m., I attended a meeting of the camp board. I criticized the fighting that is going on among our camp leadership. I said the fighting is causing problems for all of us.

I applied to be a woodcutter, but then realized later that the person who has been a gardener needed the job more than I did, so I recommended him instead.

This afternoon, I went back to the photographer and ordered 36 prints of our wedding pictures.

Monday, November 4, 1946

Mire bought about 300 pounds of sugar beets and started making marmalade. We have had such a shortage of sugar in the camp that it makes sense to make our own. (Other people began doing that, too, and pretty soon we were cooking sugar beets night and day. At first, the syrup from the sugar beets tasted good in coffee or tea, but then we began to be sick of that sharp taste. It began to remind us of the horse meat that we ate for 6 weeks at Vetrinje.)

Saturday, November 9, 1946

UNRRA is planning to set up a central store to sell products made by refugees in the area camps. They are talking about hiring a person to run the store who has been opposed to my efforts to develop a craft industry in our camp.

Sunday, November 10, 1946

We had a meeting to resolve arguments among the staff in the children's kitchen (the camp has a separate kitchen to make food for the children.) The 4 assistants are all opposed to the head cook, but they will have to learn to get along.

Monday, November 11, 1946

I had hoped that our Slovenian refugees would have their own store to sell our products, but UNRRA is insisting that we have a combined store with the Croatians and the Ukrainians. They don't produce anything, but they expect to share in the profits. UNRRA wants me to be in charge of the production of bobbin lace.

Our logging crew returned to the camp tonight with some firewood, but the police were close behind them. The police took the firewood and wrote down their names. UNRRA has not provided us with any firewood. The weather is getting colder - how are we supposed to heat our barracks?

Mr. Štajdohar began an English course. He lived in New York for many years and learned to speak English in a way that sounds awful to us. We are more used to British pronunciation.

Tuesday, November 12, 1946

Our loggers refused to go to work because their shoes are too worn out. The camp refused to serve them food this evening.

Wednesday, November 13, 1946

Our loggers met with UNRRA director McMillan. He promised to get them shoes and food.

I didn't go to UNRRA meetings yesterday and today - every word at those meetings seems worthless.

UNRRA is handing out used clothing. Mici and Cilka got dresses. I got a coat, a vest and enough cloth to make a pair of pants. There were no shoes.

I sold 655 Schillings worth of bobbin lace to R. Uhl, but I had to give him a 20% discount. I now have 15 lacemakers working for me.

Friday, November 15, 1946

This morning, I went to the local government registry office to record our wedding. We will have to go through a civil ceremony. They said it will take some time.

Confusion reigns in the new UNRRA labor office which is supposed to supervise the camp workshops and sale of refugee products. I'm glad I refused to be their accountant.

UNRRA hired 3 people to work in the new labor office: Engineer Büchsel (a German-Prussian who was an officer in the German army), Cviljusač (a Croatian who was a major with the Ustaši), and Slovenian Jerry Zupan. Even though Jerry was the one who was most opposed to my initial efforts to develop work for our refugees, I am pleased he got this job. I recognize that each person has a right to have his own opinion and to express that publicly.

(Later, Jerry helped me in many ways. When he left the refugee camp for America in 1949, he gave me the job he had at that time as a camp mailman. There was no official pay with that

job, but at the end of each month, people would sometimes give me more in tips than I earned from hard labor in a construction job. After we arrived in Cleveland, Jerry brought us a bed, a stove and other things that we needed when we had nothing. Later on, he also helped me find work, and in general, helped us in any way he could. Jerry, may the Lord repay you!)

Mire is in a better mood and wants to eat with the rest of us again.

Levičar asked for our support in his fight to work in the camp offices. We told him we don't have a reason to support either of the factions which are vying for control of camp administration. He was surprised that we wouldn't support him.

Saturday, November 16, 1946

Mire sold about 25 pounds of meat to Cene Kokelj (one of our roommates), and about 7 pounds to the rest of us. Cene does not recognize any limits, not when he's working or when he's eating. If he can get work, he works 16 hours a day. On Sunday, he cooks a large pot of potatoes and meat, and then he eats that all week. How can his stomach stand that?

Sunday, November 17, 1946

This afternoon, I sold 978 Schillings worth of bobbin lace to R. Uhl, minus a 20% discount. I paid back 1,000 Schillings which I had borrowed from various people. I have 1,300 Schillings in the bank for our lacemaking business.

Monday, November 18, 1946

Cilka, Mici and I worked all day cleaning over 300 pounds of sugar beets.

Dr. Čačinovič pulled out a tooth. Now I have only one tooth left.

Tuesday, November 19, 1946

This morning, we used Šepin's machine to cut up the sugar beets, and in the afternoon, we started cooking them in barracks 14 (after an argument about using barracks 24).

This afternoon, I went to the city for a meeting of representatives of refugee craftspeople. We chose candidates for a board that will set prices for 7 categories of products. Lace falls into the textile category.

Mr. and Mrs. Božiček returned home to Slovenia today. Eleven months ago, the communists had forced them out so they wouldn't have to pay him his pension (he was a retired tax collector.) Now they have agreed to let him return. (Later, I learned that he waited in vain to get his pension back. He suffered for months and when he finally realized he would never get his pension, he hung himself.)

Wednesday, November 20, 1946

I cooked sugar beets all night till 5 a.m. First you have to cook the beets for 10 hours, then you strain them through a sieve for 3 hours, and then cook the syrup for 18 hours. You can get about 60 pounds of marmalade from about 300 pounds of sugar beets.

I mailed home 5 little boxes of saccharin which we will no longer need here, now that we have beet syrup.

Thursday, November 21, 1946

We had a meeting of our craftspeople from 1:30 - 3 p.m. in our camp hall. We have 77 craftspeople of both sexes in our camp, more than in the Ukrainian and Croatian camps combined.

I gave my sister Mici a large photo album for her nameday.

Friday, November 22, 1946

I gave Cilka a small photo album for her nameday. We had a special lunch - štruklje (a type of dumpling.)

At the camp board meeting in the evening, I stayed quiet - it's not worth it to speak up.

Saturday, November 23, 1946

I obtained about 300 pounds of pine firewood to heat our room.

Sunday, November 24, 1946

Cilka, Mici and I walked to Murdorf for Mass, then to Fohnsdorf (about 6 miles round trip). We sold 250 Schillings of lace and visited the Gabrovšek-Nass family.

Monday, November 25, 1946

All morning, I went around the camp, inviting our crafts people to the first meeting of the refugee crafts board, which met this afternoon from 2 - 3 p.m. This is the board which will set prices for our products. The members were appointed by UNRRA - 4 from the Murdorf camp and 3 from our camp (even though the Murdorf camp has only 34 craftspeople, while our camp now has 90). Our people do not expect anything good out of this new board.

Tuesday, November 26, 1946

This morning was supposed to be another meeting of the board to set craft prices, but only Mr. Büchsel showed up. Mr. Büchsel is a Prussian refugee who got a good job with UNRRA because he knows English well. During the war, he was a German officer, but he doesn't want to go back home because Prussia is now under Russian occupation. I told Mr. Büchsel that I do not want to participate because I'm tired of working for free.

Wednesday, November 27, 1946

UNRRA staff said they would give me new shoes, but their warehouse was broken into and everything stolen.

There were two young men - former Domobranci who seemed to be very reliable - who had been hired to work in the UNRRA warehouse. At night, the Austrian police (who frequently spied on the refugee camp) found those two men carrying backpacks full of goods out of the warehouse. The young men were trying to use a time when the electricity was out so they would not be seen while they were stealing as much as they could.

Thursday, November 28, 1946

UNRRA staff finally gave me the shirt and shoes that I have been requesting for some time.

I attended a meeting of the board to set crafts prices: all the proposed prices were approved or even increased.

In the evening, I told the president of our camp board that I am quitting my position on the board. I asked Franc Kokelj what he would do if he were in my position. He told me he would quit, too.

Friday, November 29, 1946

I wrote my first letter in English, to Mire's cousin Eleanor Kolenc in Cleveland and sent it to her with some bobbin lace. (25 years later, I happened to see this letter and I was surprised how well I had written it. In the letter, I described the lace I was sending, and the fact that it required 56 hours of labor and 600 yards of thread. I go on to say: "We can produce all kinds and sizes of laces. I shall be grateful if you can send me as reward nylon stockings or women's undies for my bride." In fact, Mrs. Kolenc sent both.)

I attended a meeting of the camp board from 2 - 4 p.m. Bizjak agreed to take my seat on the board. Everyone except Dr. Erman feels there should be new elections.

In almost 6 months on the camp board, I had no success getting things done with others. Whatever I accomplished, I did myself. One of the things I worked on was to stop the production of brandy in the camp. People often used scarce potatoes, grain or fruit to cook brandy for their own use, or for sale. The camp's paid leadership received free brandy themselves and never supported my efforts to eliminate its production. Once, Franc Zupan tried to convince me: "Why don't you cook some brandy yourself? You could make some good money doing that!" I was so angry that I blurted out, "By God, we may all die from starvation. I am not going to destroy good food to make alcohol!" I knew that many people who had started cooking brandy to make money started drinking it themselves and wound up spending more than they made.

When I carried out my duties on the board, I always tried to do what was right, and not necessarily what the authorities wanted me to do. If UNRRA or the local authorities wanted me to send workers somewhere, I always made sure that the conditions and the pay were at least reasonable. This was rarely the case with the Austrian employers. The only employers that had decent working conditions were the British and UNRRA. Whenever they had a job opening, I always posted it so everyone could have a fair opportunity. But the better UNRRA jobs were usually handed out without my knowledge, and without regard to the skills of the person who got the job.

People thought I was paid well for my duties on the camp board. Actually, UNRRA gave me a couple extra cigarettes for each of the first few weeks, but then stopped that. For a while, they gave me extra soup made from mouse

droppings.

Through my work on the board, promoting the products made by our refugees to the local Austrians, I hoped that our hard work and honesty would bring the Austrians on our side - just in case we would have to settle in Austria. I think many Austrians were very impressed by the quality of our products, especially considering that we made them out of nothing.

Monday, December 2, 1946

This morning, I took 11 samples of our bobbin lace to the new UNRRA store which will sell refugee products in the city of Judenburg. The store had its grand opening this afternoon, with speeches and gifts for the UNRRA director and his family. Greta Nazor wore a Slovenian national costume.

Tuesday, December 3, 1946

I worked on bobbin lace designs all day.

Wednesday, December 4, 1946

Miss Russon gave me 1,830 meters of thread, which will help our lacemakers, but it's less thread than we used for the lace we delivered to the UNRRA store.

I argued with other UNRRA staff about supplemental food rations for our laceworkers. I was only able to get extra rations for 5 workers.

Thursday, December 5, 1946

This afternoon, Dr. Erman played St. Nicholas in a play for the children, and then another play for the adults in the evening.

Friday, December 6, 1946

For the first time in many years, I didn't receive any presents for St. Nicholas day. The only thing each person received were some biscuits from UNRRA.

Mr. Kocmur arrived from Celovec (Klagenfurt). He took pictures of the children playing in the new snow. I think he's interested in my sister Mici.

Saturday, December 7, 1946

I delivered 32 pieces of bobbin lace to the UNRRA store and received nothing back in return.

We have had about 10 inches of new snow.



Life in the refugee camp included some play time. My sister Mici is standing next to a snowman, in front of the barracks where we lived (#27). Photo by Marjan Kocmur .

UNRRA gave each person about 2 pounds of white bread. Other than that, they have been providing only turnips, tea and very watery stew. If we didn't cook our own polenta and potatoes in our room, we would be very hungry.

Sunday, December 8, 1946

We hear that the "big four" world powers have reached an unexpected agreement. We were sure there would be a third world war, but now that is appearing less likely. We don't know what all this means for us refugees.

Mici has been taking anti-itch medicine for a month. Today, Cilka found a whole farm of headlice in Mici's hair.

Monday, December 9, 1946

I delivered another 33 pieces of bobbin lace to the UNRRA store. We used more than 10,000 meters of thread for the lace that we have delivered to them - and still nothing in return.

Tuesday, December 10, 1946

Headlice have appeared in my hair, too. Usually the headlice don't like me, but bedbugs think I am their delicacy.

Saturday, December 14, 1946

I received our first payment from the UNRRA store for our bobbin lace - 118

Schillings. One of the UNRRA staff recommended that I put myself down as a laceworker so I could get a supplemental food ration. I refused, thinking that they are trying to catch me cheating.

UNRRA announced that our bread ration will be cut from 400 grams to 300.

Sunday, December 15, 1946

Last Friday, Cilka told me she may be pregnant, but today she said her period started again. She's not feeling well and is staying in bed.

Mire played cards in Zupančič's room all night. He didn't even come eat last night. He played for 30 hours without any rest.

Monday, December 16, 1946

UNRRA gave each person 60 cigarettes, which



Mici Žakelj, Cilka Žakelj and Vinko Kržišnik play with the children in the refugee camp near Judenburg, Austria on December 7, 1946. The refugee barracks are in the background. Photo by Marjan Kocmur.

are worth about 30 Schillings. I spent 240 Schillings to buy 480 cigarettes from the other refugees, hoping that I will sell them later for a higher price.

This evening, one of our refugees, Ervin Markovšek, died in an accident. He was traveling from work in Zeltweg, leaned too far out from his vehicle and got hit by the oncoming vehicle. He died instantly.

Tuesday, December 17, 1946

We cleaned sugar beets all day. It's getting very cold!

Wednesday, December 18, 1946

The temperature dropped to -5° to -12° F below zero. At 10 a.m., we went to the funeral for Ervin Markovšek.

Mici and Cilka cleaned sugar beets all day. We moved our supply of potatoes from the workshop (where they would freeze) into our room. Cene alone has about 1,000 pounds. (These are potatoes we found by digging through farmers' fields after they were done harvesting.)

I worked on bobbin lace designs.

Saturday, December 21, 1946

For the last 3 days, we've been cutting sugar beets, cooking them, straining them through a sieve and cooking them some more. We take turns to keep them cooking all night. Last night, Cilka and I cooked together till 2 a.m., then I was on my own till 4 a.m., then Mici took over from 4 - 8 a.m. We cooked over 600 pounds in 22 hours and got about 50 pounds of syrup. Everyone in our room contributed for the firewood and the beets, with some paying more in money and

some paying their share in extra work. I calculated that each pound of beet syrup cost us about 15 Schillings.

I delivered another 39 pieces of bobbin lace to the UNRRA store in Judenburg. They owe us 1,600 Schillings. The store is not getting many customers. Customers still come to us in the camp, but we no longer have the lace to sell.

Sunday, December 22, 1946

I cut a little Christmas tree in the woods and brought it into our room. We have over 10



My wife Cilka and my sister play with the children in our refugee camp on December 7, 1946. The camp barracks are in the background. Photo by Marjan Kocmur .

inches of snow and a temperature around 12°F.

Monday, December 23, 1946

I was in the city all day, shopping for Christmas presents and other things. I was able to use our ration cards to buy a quarter liter of rum.

Tuesday, December 24, 1946

I waited in a butchershop for over an hour to buy some meat, without success. Finally, I found another shop that was willing to sell me about 7 pounds for 11 ration cards.

Cilka received potica, wine and cocoa from the master shoemaker where she has been sewing shoes. Mici baked a potica for myself, Cilka and 3 of our other roommates. Mire wanted her to bake him one, too, but all he has is flour. He was upset when Cilka told him we can make bread, but not potica if he only has flour. He went to the baker and traded his flour for a couple loaves of white bread.

Mire continued to nurse his grudge. He lay down and started snoring loudly. That made Pavle angry enough to wake him up.

I received a letter from my brother Vlado with their wedding picture. They were married in Slovenia a couple weeks before Cilka and I got married. Vlado's wife Alenka looks very pretty!

This evening, we prayed the rosary and marched in procession around our barracks, just as we usually did on Christmas Eve at home in Slovenia. After that, the others went to sleep while I read the local newspapers.

Wednesday, December 25, 1946

We went to three Christmas Masses.

UNRRA provided a Christmas package for each refugee. Each man received 10 cigarettes, 10

shaving blades, soap and shaving cream. Each woman received a comb, nylon stockings, shampoo and a ring. We also received lemons and some rye bread. For lunch, for the first time in a long time, we had soup with pork and potatoes. But our potica was not baked enough: what a shame!

In the afternoon, we had a special children's program in the camp hall. I didn't think it was very good. UNRRA gave presents to the children.

Thursday, December 26, 1946

Today, we cooked dumplings in our room - very good. The food in the camp kitchen was also better than usual: soup with macaroni and sauerkraut.

I wrote letters to my father and mother, Cilka wrote to her uncle and her mother.

Friday, December 27, 1946

I copied cooking recipes on the typewriter all day. Cilka sewed at Russheim's, the shoemaker.

Nine days before Christmas, people started carrying a statue of Blessed Virgin Mary from one barracks to the next. Each barracks has the statue for a day. Our turn was on Monday. People are also maintaining a vigil to Christ the Savior in the camp chapel. Each barracks takes a turn to make sure someone is always praying in the chapel. It's hard to pray and stay awake all night. But the bedbugs make sure we don't fall asleep for too long.

Saturday, December 28, 1946

The cold is no longer as bad - around 25°F.

Levičar visits us every day and talks with my sister Mici, but she isn't very friendly with him. He asked her to tell him by the year's end if she

would marry him. She told him she didn't need to wait till the year's end and could tell him "No" right away. He asked if that meant he couldn't visit any more. She replied that it would be better if he didn't. He tried everything to change her mind. He even said he would be marrying someone else, but that didn't help him.

Tuesday, December 31, 1946

The refugees put on a play this evening - "Poor Little Andrew." It was very well done.

And so our first full year in refugee camps comes to a close. We accomplished many things this year, but we are still separated from our families in Slovenia and we do not know when it will be safe to return home.

For me, the most important event this year was our marriage. Cilka and I began seeing each other almost 8 years earlier. We celebrated Christmas 1940 by setting a date for our marriage - June 1941. But World War II and the German occupation of Slovenia changed everything and delayed our plans. People often accuse me of being a pessimist, and I expected the worst when war began. But the reality of World War II was worse than my worst expectations.

In late 1943, I escaped from the communist controlled area of Slovenia and started a new life in Kranj, which was still dangerous during the war, but safer for me than my home village of Žiri. A friend arranged for an apartment in Kranj so Cilka and I could get married and live there. But again, our plans were changed by bigger events: the war ended, the communists took over Kranj, and Cilka and I had to flee north to the refugee camps in Austria. I wanted to delay our marriage until two conditions could be met: I wanted to have enough income to support a family, and I wanted us to be married by my priest brother Stanko. In 1946, we had

nothing, and my brother was locked up in a communist prison. I gave up hope that my conditions could be met. We went ahead and got married, and I'm glad we did.

To be continued