

STARTING OVER IN CLEVELAND - 1955

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Photographs by Anton Žakelj

Saturday, January 1, 1955

This is the beginning of our sixth year in America. It was warm today: 45°F.

Wednesday, January 12, 1955

Our sons John and Tony have sore throats.

Friday, January 14, 1955

Now my wife Cilka is sick, too. Dr. Ukmar gave her a shot of penicillin.

Frank and Helen Cerar completed their citizenship test.

Saturday, January 15, 1955

Cilka is very sick, so I decided to stay home and not go to work. Cilka fixed breakfast and then stayed in bed all day, which is very unusual for her.

Tuesday, January 18, 1955

Cilka is feeling better, but still very pale.

Wednesday, January 19, 1955

At the shop, Gotvein and I worked on the heaviest pieces. We're both exhausted. Risher has 31 workers now - last week he

bought 4 more machines and hired Ciril Zlate, George Lange, Schimpf and Barringer.

Thursday, January 20, 1955

Cilka and I had dreams again about fishes, this time about beautiful trout in clean water. Dreams about healthy fish in clean water are good, but dreams about headless fish in dirty water are bad.

Saturday, January 22, 1955

I worked 58 hours this week and made \$117.25 (\$1.75 per hour).

Tuesday, January 25, 1955

Our sponsor's daughter, Helen, in Willard, Wisconsin, sent us a package of old clothes. We appreciate any help we can get.

One of our renters in the rear house, Tony Habjan, was drunk and almost set the house on fire.

Thursday, January 27, 1955

At the shop, I started working on the heavy pieces by myself. There were 3 workers who didn't have anything to do who wanted to help me, but Al Sebold (the foreman)

wouldn't let them. At 11, I talked with Joe Zlate (the other foreman), who talked with Al, who sent Rudy Knez to help me. Rudy is a good worker, but he's not used to heavy lifting. I was worried he would get a hernia. Once before, Štupnik helped me with this work for a day; the next time I asked him to help again, he said, "No more slave labor for me!"

At 11:30, Bill Risher (the shop's owner) noticed that Rudy was helping me and he immediately went to Al. They both came to me. Al asked me how many holes I was drilling in each piece. "5," I said. Risher replied: "Only one worker is needed when you drill 5 holes per piece." (The hardest part of this work is lifting the pieces on and off the machine. More holes to drill means less lifting. Risher thought I should be able to rest while I was drilling.) I said, "Mr. Risher, these pieces are heavy, I'm tired!" "If you're tired, you're not capable of working here! This machine is a one-man job," said Risher. I replied: "I have to lift (and set back down) 200, 300, up to 500 pieces a day - sometimes 1 - 2 per minute." Risher: "What do you mean, one per minute, 500 per day? If you're doing one hole per piece, you can have a helper, but not for 5 holes per piece! I can't stand to see a worker just standing next to another worker."

Three times I told Risher that I never asked for help if I could do the work myself, but today there were others who had nothing to do. "If someone doesn't have work to do, that's my problem," said Risher. We continued to argue like that for a while and he finally agreed to let Rudy stay with me. Later, Al had Lunder take Rudy's place, and

Al found work for the others.

At lunch, the workers all supported my firmness with the boss, but I couldn't eat. I know that I won't be able to stay here long. (Later I often regretted that I didn't just quit then.) I've been working for Risher for 4 and a half years. I brought him 15 - 20 good workers, and I've worked myself as if I were paid by the piece. Now this is my reward! In the evening, I was grateful to be able to talk with Prof. and Mrs. Ovsenek. (They rent one of our apartments and he works with me at Risher's.) Prof. Ovsenek knows what it's like when Risher picks on a worker. It's too bad that "Red" (Mr. Humphrey) isn't at the shop any longer; he had the brains, Risher just has money.

Friday, January 28, 1955

Last night, I fell asleep three times, but only 15 minutes each time. I'm still too upset about work.

Monday, January 31, 1955

I finished 80 pieces today. I worked on the 4-hole pieces by myself. Erdani and Gotvein helped me with the 1 and 2 hole pieces. Al said he can't give me any help for 4-hole pieces.

Tuesday, February 1, 1955

Matevž Hočevar drove Cilka and Tony to Dr. Ukmar. They still have sore throats.

Wednesday, February 2, 1955

I worked on 12 of the heaviest pieces, which weigh 115 pounds each. Al lifted them with

the towmotor.

Thursday, February 3, 1955

I slept very poorly again. I woke at 3 a.m, dreaming that I was fighting a gigantic snake. The snake bit me and my cousin. I was glad that the enemy won - maybe it means I will finally be done with this job. I couldn't get back to sleep.

I ordered a radio for my father in Slovenia and a bag of flour for Cilka's mother.

Friday, February 4, 1955

Again, I only slept a few hours. All day I worked on 51 of the heaviest pieces. Al helped with the towmotor. I also got some help from Mac, a new worker.

Monday, February 7, 1955

Bill Risher argued all day with one of the new workers. I worked on the newer, heavier pieces and produced a lot of "scrap."

Wednesday, February 9, 1955

Mac worked 3 days and quit.

Thursday, February 10, 1955

Bill Risher seems calmer, but we're still producing lots of scrap with these new pieces.

Monday, February 14, 1955

Bill gave me a long sermon about the new, smaller pieces that I'm working on. Although I followed the "thread gauge"

exactly, he said I cut the threads too deep. He had told us to not use the "taper gauge." He yelled at me, saying that, after three and a half years, I know less than I did before I started, that his shop will go out of business because I ruined 300 pieces, etc. He had never talked with me that long before.

I didn't care if he fired me right there, so I didn't remain silent. I told him that I was working exactly the way he and Al had taught me. That only made him angrier. He threatened to make big changes. He said Frank Lorber wasn't any better. Inspector Mirko Boh came by and supported me, saying that I was using the right gauge.

Everybody was upset, except for Anžič, who stayed calm: "Mr. Risher, I'm strong enough to work on those heavy pieces." Bill didn't take him up on his offer.

At quitting time, everyone was still upset. The other workers said I should have left the tapping machine a long time ago. Nobody else would stay with the most difficult job for 4 years. In the evening, Prof. Ovsenek visited again to comfort me, but today I didn't need any comforting. Today I stood up and spoke up for myself. It's when I suffer quietly that the pain becomes unbearable.

I'm thankful to inspector Boh for standing up for me.

Tuesday, February 15, 1955

I slept for only 3 hours, actually more than I expected. When I arrived at work, Rudi Knez was at my machine, with a pile of ruined pieces on the floor next to him. Bill

Risher arrived at the same time, surprised by the bad pieces, and said “What’s this?” “There is no way to thread these pieces properly,” replied Rudi.

I asked foreman Al what we should do today. He told me to keep working, but be more careful and use a new tap (cutter) in my machine. Al was very pale - it looked like he had slept even less than I did. I tried cutting a piece with the new tap, but it still came out bad. All morning I worked slowly, trying different things. Bill didn’t look at me, but he noticed that the other workers were talking with me much more than usual - even the older American workers, such as Louie, Jim and Clyde.

In the afternoon, I tried using a new tap again and I finally made a good piece. Bill became friendlier. He begged me to continue working more carefully, so I wouldn’t ruin so many pieces. I told him that I’ve always worked carefully and that the scrap was not my fault. I told him that I want to look for work elsewhere and asked him to not say bad things about me if people ask for references.

(At that time, nobody knew the real reason why I was producing so much scrap. Much later I learned that the problem lay with the new type of steel I was working with. Previously, we had only worked with cast iron, but this was cold rolled steel, and nobody knew that this had to be drilled a different way. When you drill cold rolled steel, the drill gets so hot that the shavings begin to get welded to the drill, which then drills too deep and too wide. And then you can’t “tap” the proper threads inside that hole.)

Wednesday, February 16, 1955

When I came home from work, I was surprised to see Dr. Ukmar. Cilka had called him because both she and son John were feeling so sick. “They both have a sore throat and Cilka had some labor pains,” said Dr. Ukmar. He warned me to watch my wife with care. He said her pregnancy is outside the uterus, and it looks like twins. This will be a very dangerous birth. If she has labor pains again, I should take her to the hospital immediately.

I haven’t been getting much sleep as it is; now it looks like I won’t be getting any at all!

(After this I became so nervous that I could no longer stand children crying or screaming. My whole body would shudder. Dr. Ukmar gave me some big white pills for my nerves. He said I should take one every evening before I went to bed. I tried one and still couldn’t sleep all night. The next day I was so sleepy at the shop, I decided to not take any more of those pills. Dr. Ukmar said, “If you don’t take these pills, you won’t get better. Štupnik is taking his.” Instead I bought a book called “Mental Health Through Willpower.” The author emphasizes that mental illness is an inconvenience, but not really dangerous. I wrote to my brother Vlado, who is a doctor in Slovenia. He said the first step toward healthier nerves is to eliminate whatever is causing the problem. If it’s caused by your job, you should change your job.)

Thursday, February 17, 1955

Matevž Hočevar and Starič visited and helped me fill out an application for work at "Hydreco."

Friday, February 18, 1955

Cilka woke me at 3 a.m. She was shaking and had already gone to the bathroom three times. I immediately got dressed and went next door to the Ovsenek's to call a taxi. (Since we don't have a phone, they've left their doors unlocked in case I need to get Cilka to the hospital.) At 3:30 a.m., we left for Doctors Hospital at University Square. I left Cilka there and returned home to care for our 3 sons. When I arrived, Mrs. Ovsenek was with them. Son John was not sleeping - I think he was praying for his mother.

I didn't go to work today. With the problems at the shop, and with Cilka's pregnancy going poorly, I'm sometimes feeling such a pressure around my heart that I become afraid of what may come next. Especially when I go to work, the squeezing feeling around my heart gets stronger the closer I get to work.

I cooked bean soup for lunch - it was bad. At 1 p.m., I called the hospital - still nothing. Cilka is still waiting. Meanwhile, Mrs. Sršen had a baby boy.

Saturday, February 19, 1955

I was home again today. Son John is sick. He has a rash which Dr. Ukmar said is a reaction to the penicillin. I called the hospital at 9 a.m. They said that Cilka is healthy and that she will probably have to come back home without having given birth.

So all this dread was premature!

I went to the A&P on 74th with Karl and bought \$32 of groceries. When I returned, Mrs. Ovsenek said that Dr. Ukmar had called and I should immediately get my wife from the hospital. Karl drove me there. At the hospital, they told me that they didn't know when Cilka would give birth - it could be tonight, or it could be in two weeks. An Italian woman told me about the time she was taken to the hospital too early. As they were bringing her back home, the shaking and stopping of the vehicle caused her to give birth. "Maybe a good shaking would be good for your wife," she said.

In the afternoon, I went shopping and put together two packages for our families in Slovenia.

Sunday, February 20, 1955

Karl and his family didn't visit as they often do - I wonder if he took offense that I didn't pay him for driving us around.

Monday, February 21, 1955

Back to work. Louie asked if I was handing out cigars. The others asked if Cilka was alright.

Tuesday, February 22, 1955

Bill is friendlier, but I can't forget his yelling at me. He had hardly ever talked with me before - now all this yelling.

Wednesday, March 2, 1955

Max Erste starting working at the shop

again. There's plenty of work and not enough good workers. For two months, they've been talking about a second shift, but they haven't hired enough workers. I think Bill still remembers what the previous co-owner, Mr. Humphrey ("Red"), told him - take care of your Slovenian workers, because you won't find any better.

We worked 11 hours today. At the same time, other shops are letting their workers go. According to the news reports, there are 3 - 4 million unemployed in the country, and they expect 5 million by the summer. If you have a job, hang on to it!

Saturday, March 5, 1955

I went to Smrekar's and bought \$10 worth of seed to send to my sister and brother in Slovenia.

Sunday, March 6, 1955

Cilka is feeling worse and is becoming more worried. I'm worried too

Monday, March 7, 1955

This afternoon at the shop, Kristanc had an accident at his machine. He broke his left arm.

Saturday, March 12, 1955

Frank and Helen Cerar got their citizenship papers.

Cilka went to see Dr. Ukmar: "Everything's fine!"

Sunday, March 13, 1955

It's been nine months and we're still waiting.... Cilka is pale, but feeling good. She's often tired and worried that she might be getting tuberculosis (she had something similar in Slovenia), since she is coughing so much.

Monday, March 14, 1955

At the shop, they've hired Perpar, Štepec and three Americans. I'm feeling indisposed and hopeless. I should have gone to work at "Hydraulic" in January.

Cilka is feeling worse, and worried. This is not at all like it was with our first three children.

Tuesday, March 15, 1955

I was tired at work. My arms and my heart are hurting.

The Cerars got word that their sister Mara would be coming from Yugoslavia on Thursday.

Wednesday, March 16, 1955

We have 50 workers at the shop now. Zupan helped me at my machine.

In the evening we went to church and then to a movie - "Quo Vadis?" - it was beautiful.

Thursday, March 17, 1955

Every night I've been watching and waiting for Cilka to give birth. Last night I fell asleep after midnight. Cilka woke me around 2 a.m., shaking with fever. I immediately called Dr. Ukmar and Yellow

Cab. The taxi came in 5 minutes. At 3 a.m., we were at Doctors Hospital, and at 3:30 I was back home. Mrs. Ovsenek helped me care for the children. We prayed and couldn't sleep.

I asked son John what he was hoping for and he said "a baby." (Earlier, he had asked if Mama was going to "buy" a baby.)

At 6 a.m., I phoned Erdani (who often gives me a ride to work) and told him I wouldn't be working today. Then Dr. Ukmar called and said that Cilka had given birth to a baby girl. They're both fine, and the baby is strong.

At 8:30, I called the hospital and asked about Cilka and the baby. After a long wait, I was told that there was nothing new and that Cilka was "in good condition." But I misunderstood and thought they said "not good." I asked what happened, and expected the worst. My heart was beating so heavily that I had trouble hearing on the phone. They repeated that both were fine and "in good condition." Thank God! All those warnings from the doctor about this dangerous pregnancy turned out to be false and unnecessary.

It was a nice day outside, with a light snow. I asked our renter in back, Mrs. Želko, if she could come at 11 a.m. to care for the children, so I could go visit Cilka.

Every time my wife has given birth, I've felt guilty that I contributed to her pregnancy and caused her to go through so much pain and danger. So today I felt especially guilty

because this pregnancy has caused her so



This is Mary Jane - our little red dumpling, in 1955.

much more suffering than before. At 11:30, I walked into her room like a dog who slowly approaches his master, knowing that he deserves to be punished. But instead of the reproach I expected, Cilka greeted me with a glowing face and said, "Look at what a beautiful daughter we have! I just fed her."

I didn't think the baby looked beautiful at all. How could anyone think that this round, red dumpling could be a "beautiful daughter?" This little nothing caused her

mother so much worry and suffering! But maybe all mothers love their children just because they suffered so much for them. Fathers can't love them as much, because they view them as intruders who come between a man and his wife and who endanger the wife's health and even her life. Why didn't God with his almighty power decide to have people reproduce some other way, not like animals? In some ways, it's even worse than animals. God gave animals a passion which brings them together only once or twice a year. But human love is stronger and goes against a desire for freedom. Somehow, love and sex work together to fulfill each other and thus help a man and wife overcome their crises. Whatever God made, he did it right. Every marriage sometimes has frictions, but nature comes to help so the frictions are resolved.

I thanked God with all my heart for my loving wife and for our intruder. We will love and happily accept this little red dumpling.

We named our new daughter Mary Jane - Mary after my mother, and Jane (Ivana) after Cilka's mother.

At 2:30 I returned home and ate the lunch that Mrs. Želko had prepared. I talked with our neighbors - two brothers, about 60, both bachelors without children - who thought we should not have any more children. "Don't worry," I said, "if God gives me health, I will provide for our family."

Then I paid taxes, bought some wood, washed the dishes, did the laundry and cooked supper. At the same time, Mara Cerar arrived from Yugoslavia to be with the

rest of her family in the apartment they rent from us upstairs.

Friday, March 18, 1955

I slept well. At 6 a.m., I took the bus to work. Mrs. Ovsenek is caring for the children.

The closer I got to the shop, the more I felt a squeezing around my heart. I thought I would have a heart attack. But I thought, I have to overcome this, I have to work! Don't even think about getting off the bus and going back home! I have a bigger family now and I have to provide for them!

At the shop, I handed out 40 cigars. The work went alright, but I was sleepy.

In the evening, Mrs. Ovsenek cooked bean soup and fried "omlete" (thin pancakes) for the children and me. She complained that the children, especially Tony, had misbehaved. I put Tony and Joe to bed and took a bus and "rapid rail" to visit Cilka in the hospital. The new "rapid" just started running this week. When I came home, John was crying because I was gone for so long.

Saturday, March 19, 1955

Our son Joe (now two years old) didn't sleep from midnight till 2 last night, so I didn't either. Even so, I went to work in the morning. Yesterday and today, I worked on 300 pieces. I felt the squeezing around my

heart the whole time. At 2 p.m. today, I felt so weak that I could no longer work. When Bill's brother Homer found me in the bathroom, he immediately called Bill, who called Dr. Ukmar, who wasn't in. Bill wanted to drive me home (he didn't want me to die in his shop), but I asked him to let me rest till 3. He invited me into his office, where I rested for an hour and then left for home with the other workers.



The Cerar family rented the apartment above ours. Pictured are Frank (standing), and (sitting, from left) Mara (just arrived from Slovenia), Mrs. Cerar and Helen. The picture on the table is of Joe Cerar, who drowned soon after he arrived in America. March, 1955.

From home, I went straight to the doctor. He said it was nothing serious: my blood pressure was 122-70. He gave me a shot and some medicine, all of which cost me \$8.75.

In the evening, Mici (Karl's wife) cared for the children. She was angry that I had not called her sooner, but she was also worried that her daughter Jolanda might catch chickenpox from our children. She said Karl would drive me to see Cilka tomorrow.

Sunday, March 20, 1955

It was a nice day outside. I was going to do the cooking, but Mrs Ovsenek insisted. At 11, Rudi Drmota visited and asked if he could come with me and Karl to visit Cilka.

When Karl arrived, he noted that Rudl had his own car and said, "One is enough! I'll go work at Zupan's." Is he angry with me?

Rudi took me to the hospital, where we visited Cilka for almost an hour.

Monday, March 21, 1955

I didn't go to work today. At 10 a.m., our neighbor John Vokač drove me to the hospital to pick up Cilka and Mary Jane. We came back on East Blvd, Shoreway, 9th St. and Lakeside, since E. 55 was closed.

Wednesday, March 23, 1955

The baby's crying kept me up last night.

Outside, a storm knocked down some trees.

Thursday, March 24, 1955

This morning, Frank Lorber and Ferdinand Zupan had an argument at the shop. Lorber called Zupan “Gestapo” and Zupan called Lorber “Communist.” (During the war, Zupan was a “Werkshutz”, a factory guard, and Lorber was the manager of a stocking factory.) I don’t know how the argument started.

When Lorber slapped Zupan, Al went to get Bill. Bill called both of them into his office and punished Lorber with three days of “vacation.” He said he will not tolerate politics in his shop. When Lorber wouldn’t leave immediately, Bill chased him out. Lorber finally left without a word. When they all came out of the office, I impulsively laughed when I saw the clear imprint of Lorber’s dirty fingers on Zupan’s left cheek. (Zupan was so offended by my laugh that he didn’t talk with me for a week.)

Friday, March 25, 1955

Earlier this week, I asked Al for a different job in the shop, but he said he would have someone help me with my job. I agreed to try it. He assigned Anžič, who is very strong and is helping me with all the heavy pieces. But I’m still getting tired quickly. My heart has been pounding as if my chest were about to explode.

I said that I couldn’t lift heavy pieces any longer. Al had me talk with Bill, who said he couldn’t give me any easier work. I replied that it would be best if I could take a few weeks of vacation. Bill agreed, and

foreman Joe Zlate said he would find a different machine for me when I returned. In the evening, I saw Dr. Ukmar, who immediately prescribed two weeks of vacation. I talked with Ivo Kermavner, who has also been having heart problems.

Saturday, March 26, 1955

I slept till 8 a.m, then I worked on windows and doors and other things that needed to be fixed in our rental apartments.

Sunday, March 27, 1955

Karl drove us all (except Cilka) to St. Vitus for Mary’s baptism. There were 6 boys and 2 girls who were baptized. Then we celebrated at home. Mr. and Mrs. Ovsenek brought a cake. Helen Cerar gave Mary a baptismal dress that had been made by Mimi Veider. We got 10 inches of snow.

Monday, March 28, 1955

I stayed home and worked on our tax return.

Wednesday, March 30, 1955

After 3 days inside, I stepped outside, somewhat dizzy and feeling blind. I asked our neighbor Modic if he could help me get a job at AGA (American Gas Association). Starič works there as a janitor and is very satisfied. The pay is low, but the work is easy and you don’t produce scrap. However, you have to be an American citizen, which I have not done yet.

Thursday, March 31, 1955

I went to the shop and picked up my check,

which was less than usual, since I worked 3 days less. Bill inquired about my health and said that I had been working too much. He said I would probably have the same job when I return, but not more than 8 hours a day.

Friday, April 1, 1955

I spent my entire paycheck on taxes, K.S.K.J. dues, electric bills, etc. I went to see Dr. Ukmar, got a haircut, and bought groceries at A&P.

Monday, April 4, 1955

After a week at home, I'm still feeling sick. I don't feel the squeezing around my heart any more, but now there's a sharp stinging feeling.

Wednesday, April 6, 1955

I went to Dr. Ukmar and got another shot. I worked around the house.

Thursday, April 7, 1955

I'm feeling worse again.

Friday, April 8, 1955

Mrs. Ovsenek asked when I'll go to work again. I said next Monday, but I'm not looking forward to it. She promised to ask for work for me at Eaton, where she works in the kitchen.

Saturday, April 9, 1955

Tomorrow is Easter. I walked to church with the children for the blessing of food.

Sunday, April 10, 1955, Easter

Mrs. Ovsenek brought Easter eggs for everyone. In the afternoon, we had many visitors - Milica, Karl's family, Rudi Drmota, Max Stanonik with his bride, and Fortuna. Too many visitors! When they left, I was shaking. Is it the shots I've been getting from Dr. Ukmar?

Monday, April 11, 1955

After missing two weeks of work, I went back to work today with Erdani at 6:15 a.m. Joe had me work on Rudi Knez' machine for the smaller pieces. Rudi showed me how to use it. I only worked till noon, then waited for a bus till 1 and was home at 2.

I noticed in the "Ameriška Domovina" that Sušnik (the furniture store owner) is looking for an accountant (which was part of my business training in Slovenia). Cilka suggested that I apply immediately. I went, but Mrs. Sušnik said my English isn't good enough. I would have to go to school for 5 years.

Wednesday, April 13, 1955

I worked from 7 a.m. till 3 p.m., without any pains around my heart. The foreman said I should be finishing 5 pieces an hour, but Rudi said he only did 4, and Louie only does 3. I hurried and did 3 an hour, but some of them may be bad.

In the evening, I got another shot from Dr. Ukmar and had him fill out forms for sick benefits from K.S.K.J. and S.D.Z.

Friday, April 15, 1955

The foreman said Bill is angry with me because I'm not producing enough. I asked how much other workers produce on this machine, but he didn't know. The other foreman told me to not worry about it. But I was upset and ruined 2 pieces. In the evening, I had pains around my heart again and felt so sick that I thought I could not go to work again. Prof. Ovsenek tried calling an attorney (Melaher) so we could discuss possible legal action against the shop, but couldn't reach him.

Saturday, April 16, 1955

I felt better, so I went to work. Joe asked me why I was working 8 hours a day, when the doctor recommended 5 - 6.

Tuesday, April 19, 1955

I worked slowly, but I still felt dizzy. I finished 4 pieces in 55 minutes. The foreman wanted 4 and a half.

Wednesday, April 20, 1955

This morning, the inspector from "Hydreco" (the company that buys our work) came to the shop. He said my work was worse than the others'. Bill was angry. I determined that two drills on my machine were too long. I made some other changes. At 3

p.m., I checked my work again and found that the holes in 5 pieces were too shallow by 1/64 of an inch. I'm failing everywhere!

I told Bill that I will be looking for work elsewhere. I asked him to give me a good reference and he promised he would.

In the evening I was so upset, I was shaking again. I vowed to not go to back to work.

Our friend Janko Demšar arrived from Brandon, Manitoba for a week's vacation in Cleveland.

Thursday, April 21, 1955

I called Dr. Ukmar and asked him to get me into a hospital for a checkup. He said I'll have to wait.

In the evening, I visited the Cerars' upstairs, but only became more nervous. I went for a walk at the lake and returned still upset.



We often walked down E. 55th St. to Lake Erie. We would usually see fishermen and, sometimes, sailing boats. Cleveland, 1955.

Sunday, April 24, 1955

Karl's family and Fortuna came to visit, but I soon had enough of everyone.

Monday, April 25, 1955

Janko Demšar recommended that I use the water treatments in Kneipp's book of home remedies. He had had a severe skin disease, with scabs all over his body. The doctors didn't know how to help him. His relatives in Slovenia sent him Kneipp's book, which had a specific treatment for his disease. In the winter, he went to a train station where they had a raised water tank for the steam locomotives. He undressed and allowed the freezing water to pour over him. After a week his scabs began to come off and after a few months they disappeared completely.

Tuesday, April 26, 1955

Yesterday, I tried Kneipp's steam treatment for legs, and today the steam treatment for the head. I'm sleeping better.

Wednesday, April 27, 1955

I've been easily upset, dizzy and without appetite. My head feels like it's somewhere high up; I'm afraid it will fall off. I tried Kneipp's cold wrap (being wrapped in a cold wet sheet).

Thursday, April 28, 1955

I've been waiting a week to be let into the hospital.

I filled out an application for citizenship at

the Immigration office.

Friday, April 29, 1955

I worked in the garden and felt calmer. Every evening I've been taking the Kneipp water treatments and I feel better.

Saturday, April 30, 1955

I worked in the garden again. Mrs. Ovsenek said she asked for work for me at Eaton, but when she told them that I can't do heavy lifting, they had no work for me.

Sunday, May 1, 1955

It's the month of Mary, mother of Jesus. If only she would restore my health! I would give \$20 for her new church in Toronto.

In the afternoon, Rudi drove me to the "Triglav" concert in the Sachsenheim hall on the Westside. I feel afraid to go on car trips.

Friday, May 6, 1955

I've continued to stay home, work in the garden and take water treatments.

Dr. Ukmar called to say that I would be admitted to the Polyclinic on E. 66 and Carnegie on May 11. My nerves and heart are feeling better, but I'm still feeling very weak.

Sunday, May 8, 1955

This morning we went to a pontifical Mass said by Bishop Rožman to mourn the tenth anniversary of the communists' takeover of

Slovenia.

Wednesday, May 11, 1955

I was admitted to the Polyclinic hospital on 6606 Carnegie. Lorber was also admitted today and is in a room near mine. I hope I will go home in 2 days. It's been 3 weeks since I stopped working.

Thursday, May 12, 1955

Today I had blood and urine tests, X-rays and a cardiograph test. My dizziness and sleepiness left me after I took a shower. My head, which had seemed to be somewhere up high, came back down to its place and I again walked without worrying that my head might knock me down. Dr. Ukmar says that my heart, lungs and liver are all in order.

Friday, May 13, 1955

A blood test showed too many white blood cells. Cilka and Rudi visited this evening.

Monday, May 16, 1955

I'm still in the hospital and not feeling better. It's hot and the other patients are complaining. Dr. Ukmar sees me twice a day. He says that both Lorber and I will go home tomorrow.

Tuesday, May 17, 1955

I slept poorly. Dr. Ukmar gave me a shot at 8 a.m. - only he knows what it's for. At 10 a.m., I left the hospital. When I stepped through the doors to go outside, my head felt like it shot up high and I was dizzy again. Lorber, who was in the hospital for similar

problems, also left.

Each day in the hospital cost \$24, so the bill for that and all the exams will be about \$300 - \$400, but I haven't paid anything yet.

In the afternoon, I saw Dr. Ukmar and gave him \$20 for more than 10 visits in the hospital. He gave me some sleeping pills. He hopes I will be working soon.

I received a notice from Immigration to come for my citizenship test on May 23.

Wednesday, May 18, 1955

I went to the Immigration Office and asked if I could take my test at a later date.

My head hurts. In spite of the sleeping pills, I haven't been sleeping well since I came home from the hospital.

Friday, May 20, 1955

I was in a sweat all night. I fell asleep at 4 a.m. and woke at 7. I'm becoming more nervous. The Ovseneks think I should go back to work; Lorber has already gone back. It's been over 4 weeks since I stopped working. But my friend Cene writes from Canada; he thinks I should rest for a few months, and look for a different job.

This afternoon, I took another water treatment, as I have every day, this time being wrapped in a cold, wet sheet. Then I worked in the garden. I fell asleep at 9:30.

Saturday, May 21, 1955

I slept well last night, but I'm still very

nervous: everything is shaking inside me, I can't be still; I have to walk or do something. In the afternoon I worked in the garden and started feeling better.

Tuesday, May 24, 1955

It's been raining for three days. Silvia Hoja, Olga and Rudi Drmota stopped by to visit today. Silvia was with us in the refugee camp, but now lives in San Francisco. She's visiting in Cleveland for a few days.

I received a letter from my priest brother Stanko. I had written to him about my illness and he replied: "You weren't so dumb as to fast during Lent, even though you were sick?" In fact, I haven't been eating much meat, because I don't care for it. Dr. Ukmar has been telling me that I should eat more meat, because I have different work here than I did in Slovenia.

Štupnik has also had problems with his nerves. Dr. Ukmar told him "You will get better, because you're taking the medicine I give you. Žakelj won't take his medicine." (Actually, Štupnik had many more nervous problems later. Someday I hope to write more about his tragedy.)

When I was beginning to have my nervous problems, Štupnik asked me "Don't you have a wife? Don't you get along?" I didn't know that marriage could be a good medicine for nerves.

Wednesday, May 25, 1955

I heard that the American Gas Association had a job. Our neighbor Modic gave them a good recommendation for me, but they hired

someone else. This got me worried again.

Friday, May 27, 1955

Rudi Drmota and the other workers at Fisher Body are on strike.

I worked on the house. The sleeping pills don't help.

I ordered a shower stall at Hahn and Sons. The shower in the hospital helped me feel better, so maybe it would help to have one at home.

Sunday, May 29, 1955

Cilka and the children went to a Mother's Day celebration. I stayed home and slept, even though I had already slept well last night.

Prof. and Mrs. Ovsenek went to Cincinnati for the college graduation ceremony of their daughter Draga.

Thursday, June 2, 1955

I've slept well for 4 nights in a row and I feel good. Prof. Ovsenek asked foreman Joe which machine I would work on if I came back to the shop. Joe and Bill promised I would get the "reaming machine," which should be easier to work with than the tapping machine I usually had.

Friday, June 3, 1955

After 6 weeks off, I went back to work. Again I felt a squeezing around my heart which got worse as I got closer to the shop.

Al asked Ferkulj to teach me how to do reaming. I did 15 pieces well, but then neither I nor Joe nor others could get any other pieces right.

I thanked Bill Risher (the shop's owner) for his support. He inquired about my health and said I shouldn't worry so much. Now there's 70 of us at the shop - the most ever. While I was in the hospital, Marjan Jakopič took up a collection for me - they collected \$57.

I received a letter from Vlado, my doctor brother. He thinks I should immediately get rid of the cause of my bad nerves, meaning that I should change jobs. His twin brother Ciril is having similar problems at his job.

Saturday, June 4, 1955

Even though I didn't sleep well, I went to work. The reaming machine still wasn't fixed, so I found other work. I went home at noon.

Sunday, June 5, 1955

It was hot today. I went with sons John and Tony on a Slovenian school bus trip to Drenik's farm. The children were fascinated by the cows and sheep; they drank pop and ate ice cream.

Monday, June 6, 1955

I worked from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. It was 93°F.

In the news, it looks like Ford workers won't be striking, because the company promised \$50 million for unemployment pay for its workers. This is a significant step toward a

guaranteed annual income.

Wednesday, June 8, 1955

I've slept well for 3 nights, but I still feel nervous. Yesterday and today I worked with Lunder; my arms hurt from using the large hammer.

Thursday, June 9, 1955

Al has me doing all the beginner's jobs. I got my first check since my return to work - it's only \$22.29. Some of the other workers got raises of 5 - 10 cents an hour, but not me.

In the evening, I took a steam treatment for my legs.

Saturday, June 11, 1955

The reaming machine is fixed and now works well. I worked from 7 a.m. to noon and wanted to work longer, but Al insisted I take it easy and go home.

In the evening, I went to Knaus Hall to listen to Dr. Krek talk about the 10th anniversary of the revolution in Yugoslavia.

Sunday, June 12, 1955

In the afternoon, I went to hear another presentation about the revolution in Yugoslavia, this time in the Slovenian National Home on St. Clair. Then Karl and his family, and Rudi, came to visit, but I would have rather been alone.

Tuesday, June 14, 1955

Hahn installed a shower in our basement. I remember how good the shower felt in the hospital.

At work, I wanted to work 10 hours, but after 8 hours, Al insisted that I show Clyde how to operate the machine, so I could go home.

Wednesday, June 15, 1955

For the first time in more than 9 months, I worked a 10 hour day, but I completed only 9 pieces. That's terribly slow!

Thursday, June 16, 1955

This morning I went to the Immigration Office with Joe Grdina and Mary Cizel for my citizenship exam. The exam was at 11 a.m. in Room 422. I had to write some English sentences - I wrote "I go to work" and "I am living in Cleveland, Ohio." The judge asked me who is the president of America, how did he get his job, who will be his successor, why does the flag have 48 stars and 13 stripes, why do we celebrate July 4th, etc. I answered easily, paid \$10 and was done for today. I have to come back on August 2 to take the oath.

After 5 years in Cleveland, I will be an American citizen. Is this really happening? I never even wanted to come to America, but the communists forced me to leave my home.

Saturday, June 18, 1955

I worked from 7 a.m. to noon. Work at Risher's has been better, but I still need to find different work. In the afternoon, I went to the American Gas Association, but the boss wasn't there. Zamlen and Starič are satisfied with their jobs there, except for the pay, which is only \$1.25 an hour.

Sunday, June 19, 1955

This morning, Rudi took me, my son John and the Ovseneks to Providence Heights for bishop Rožman's Mass in memory of the martyrs of the communist revolution. Even though it was 90°F, there were many people there.

Saturday, June 25, 1955

I've been working 10 hours a day, always at the reaming machine. One foreman says I'm doing it wrong, the other one says "O.K." and the inspector says "I don't know."

I am taking the bus to work each morning and getting a ride home with Erste in the afternoon.

Tuesday, June 28, 1955

The reaming machine isn't working right again. Bill (the shop's owner) is mad at me. If Mr. Humphrey were still here, he would know how to fix these problems. Bill only understands money.

My health is getting worse.

Friday, July 1, 1955

It's very hot. I finished 11 pieces (number 92) today, while the night shift worker did only 8. I got a check for two weeks of vacation pay for \$140 (we don't get sick pay, but 2 weeks of the 8 weeks I was gone sick from work is being counted as vacation time.) I can start paying off my loans again.

Friday, July 8, 1955

They were fixing the reaming machine all day, but it's still not working exactly right. For the first time, the inspector complimented me on my work.

Saturday, July 9, 1955

I hear that American Gas hired somebody else. All my hopes for a new job are ruined! How long will it take to find something else? Two, three months?

Monday, July 11, 1955

The reaming machine is finally working right. Thank God!

Thursday, July 14, 1955

I went to the Polyclinic hospital for a blood test, then to Erie Lumber to ask for work. They tried to be funny, but had no work. I asked friends about work elsewhere. Boh said Lincoln Electric has work, but it's too heavy and not healthy. Hydreco doesn't need anybody. Finally, I tried American Gas again. Their boss said they don't need anybody, but I could fill out an application. The boss looked over my application, asked a few questions and put it away in a bottom drawer. I don't have any hope anymore.

Friday, July 15, 1955

Last night was very hot and I slept poorly. This morning I did 3 pieces on the reaming machine and they all turned out bad. Then I did 130 pieces on the drill press - the machine I started with almost 5 years ago.

Saturday, July 16, 1955

I drilled 161 pieces this morning.

I saw an ad in the "Ameriška Domovina" that Columbia Mold and Die needs a janitor. That would be perfect work for me! They're located at 968 E. 69, within walking distance from home. I went there this afternoon and talked with Bob Hrebek, the owner. He said they don't need anybody right now, but he gave me an application.

Monday, July 18, 1955

Jerry Zupan has been working at Columbia Mold and Die for 4 years. He helped me fill out their application.

I went to Milica's and paid her back the rest of what she had loaned us for the house.

Thursday, July 21, 1955

I went back to Columbia Mold and Die and talked with Mr. Hrebek again. He asked if I would like to work on a milling machine, and would I be satisfied with a starting pay of \$1.65 an hour? "Of course," I said. "When can you start?" "August 1." "O.K. Come back next Friday for more specific arrangements!"

I went home feeling light and satisfied. Not only do I have a new job, but it looks like I will have a good opportunity to learn new skills, which is something I always wanted.

Saturday, July 23, 1955

Marjan Jakopič is leaving Risher's after 4 and a half years. He went to evening classes and got a job as a draftsman at Foot-Burt.

Wednesday, July 27, 1955

It's 5 years since I started working at Risher's. Today was terribly hot.

I worked on the reaming machine all day and couldn't produce a single good piece. Lunder and I determined that the pieces were not cast properly at the foundry. We looked for a way to fix that and made it work better.

Friday, July 29, 1955

Neither foreman would let us use the jig that Lunder and I developed. Again the pieces were bad.

I told the foremen that I found another job and won't be coming to work tomorrow. When the other workers heard about that, they said "You're crazy. You won't find good work anywhere else!"

After work at Risher's, I went to Columbia Mold and Die. Mr. Bob Hrebek said I could come to work there on Monday at 8 a.m. I told him that I wear glasses. (At Risher's I never wore my glasses because I was afraid I would be laid off if Risher knew I needed glasses.) Hrebek said this would be no problem.

In the evening, Rihtar and I went to a religious retreat on E. 185. We're staying overnight tonight and Saturday. About 35 men and boys are participating, all recent refugees like us. **These additional notes for July 29, 1955 were written October 2000:**

When I left my job after five years at Risher's, I left through the back door and didn't even say good-bye to my fellow workers.

I first heard about Risher's from Father Godina. At that time, it was the Humphrey & Risher Company. Mr. Humphrey ("Mr. Red") and Bill Risher were co-owners; according to foreman Al Sebold, "Red" had the brains and Risher had the money. As long as "Red" was there, our shop was a good place to work, and I would have been happy working there till retirement. But two and a half years after I started, "Red"

sold his share to Mr. Risher and everything changed.

My first job in Cleveland (before I got the job at Risher's) was for 5 weeks at a shop called "Z&W." Working at "Z&W" was like being in hell; working under Mr. Humphrey was like heaven, and working under Mr. Risher was like purgatory.

I was already 43 years old when I started my job at Humphrey & Risher. I had heard that most American companies don't hire older workers, so I was very worried that I would not be able to find another job if I lost this one. I knew that Mr. Humphrey appreciated good workers, so I worked extra hard in the hopes that hard work would assure a permanent job for me. I was very conscious of my obligation to support my family - I probably worried about that more than necessary.

During my five years at Risher's, I met more than 100 workers, most of them Slovenian "D.P.'s" ("displaced persons" was the term used by the government at that time for people who had been forced to leave their homeland). We all needed work, and when we heard that Risher's had jobs, we rushed there like the Chinese to the California Gold Rush in 1849.

It was hard for me to leave my fellow workers at Risher's. Even though we were all different in age, education and character, we all got along well and we supported each other. Here are some notes about some of them:

One of our workers was Professor Ovsenek. In Slovenia, he was the director of the state

“gimnazija” in Ljubljana. In Europe, these were 8-year schools which were like a combination of American high school and college. A big difference between the European and American schools was that the Slovenian “gimnazija” required studies not only in Slovenian, but also in Serb-Croatian, German, Latin and Greek, and had optional studies in other languages. The communists deported Prof. Ovsenek, his wife and daughter just before Christmas 1945, when he was close to retirement. When he applied for work at Risher’s, he was 60, but he looked younger. We lied and told Risher that Prof. Ovsenek was 50, and Risher hired him. Instead of beginning a well-earned retirement in Slovenia, Prof. Ovsenek took a job as an ordinary factory worker in America and began saving for his retirement all over again.

Risher’s workers also included Bizjak and Krepfl, who were trained engineers; Rudy Knez, a musician and professorial candidate; Frank Lorber, a former director of a stocking factory; Joseph Gotvajn, a respected merchant; Marjan Jakopič, a poet; Frank Puc, a medical student; and others. And we don’t want to forget men such as Paul Košir and others who started at Risher’s and then, with their confidence and enterprising spirit, went on to other work where they proved themselves the equal of the first pioneers who built America into the world’s superpower.

At Risher’s, we drilled iron and steel parts for hydraulic fittings for tractors, bulldozers and similar equipment for lifting heavy loads, building roads, etc. After Mr. Humphrey left, Risher didn’t understand or appreciate the work we did. It became more

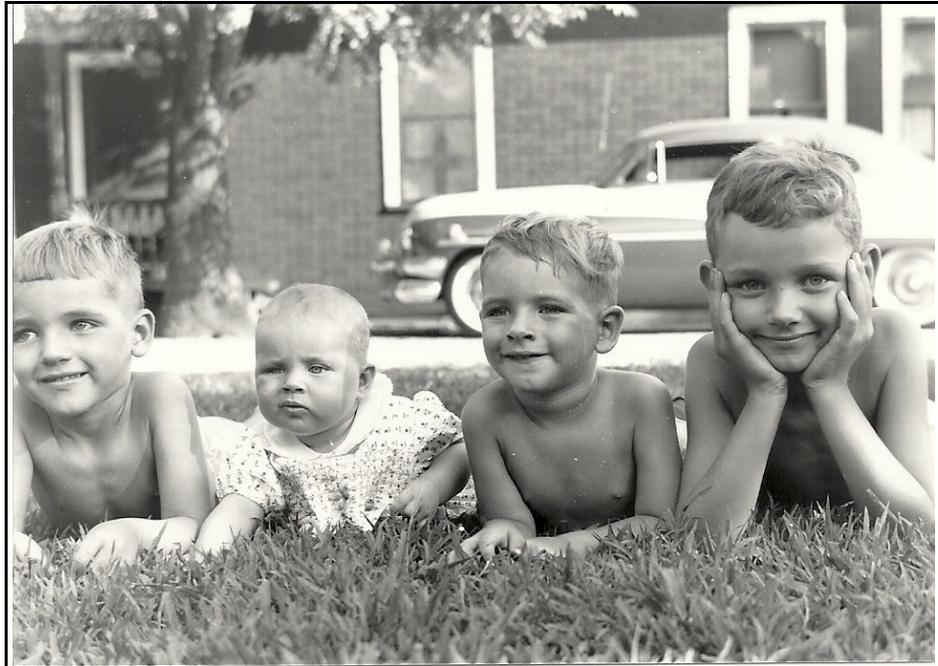
and more difficult for me to lift 80 pieces an hour onto my machine, with each piece weighing 50 - 100 pounds. I was always afraid that Risher would give me my last paycheck.

At first, we only worked with cast iron, which did not require cooling oil while it was being drilled. Later, we worked on cold-rolled steel, which was lighter but such a hard material that no amount of oil could cool down the overheated drill. The chips from the drilling became welded to the drill, which then caused the holes to be too large. Risher didn’t understand that, so he blamed me for ruining 300 pieces. When he said the factory would have to close because of my poor work, I knew I had to go. I told him I was working exactly as I was told, and that the bad pieces were not my fault. Inspector Mirko Boh supported me, for which I am still grateful.

After Risher yelled at me, I tried working on a different machine, but it seemed as if I was cursed - nothing went right for me. I tried harder than if it had been my own shop, but everything went wrong. More and more I became convinced that God was telling me to look for work elsewhere.

At the same time that I was having problems at work, my wife Cilka went through a difficult and dangerous pregnancy. The stress was too much for my nerves. I applied for work at many places, looking for work that would be easier on my nerves, but without success for many months. When I finally got a job offer to be a machinist at Columbia Mold and Die, it wasn’t what I wanted, but I accepted that job and quit my job at Risher’s.

I am thankful to Mr. Risher for his understanding during my last months in his shop. He didn't fire me the way he did Karl Janež, who was the man who had first brought me to Risher's. He let me try other machines and he agreed to not give me a bad reference when I applied for work elsewhere.



Saturday, July 30, 1955

Our children Tony, Mary, Joe and John on a hot summer day in August, 1955.

We got up at 6:20, went to Mass at 7, breakfast at 8, a talk by the priest at 9, then a walk in the park by the lake.

I didn't sleep well. It's hot and there's a lot of noise from the cars and trains.

Sunday, July 31, 1955

We had communion at 7 a.m., listened to the last talk at 1, had lunch at 2 and went home. It's terribly hot.

Later at home, my brother-in-law Miro Kolenc visited from Canada, with Mary and John Kolenc. They stayed for 2 hours.

At 9:30 p.m., I was in bed when we got more visitors from Canada: Vinko Kržišnik, the Kokelj family (Franc, Ančka and John)

and Karl's family. They stayed till 11 and then went to sleep at Karl's. We own two houses, but we don't have any place to put up visitors. Our own apartment has only two bedrooms: Cilka and all four children sleep in the larger room (they have one regular bed and a double bunk-bed); I sleep alone in the smaller room, because I can't stand to listen to children crying.

Monday, August 1, 1955

At 8 a.m. I started my new job at Columbia Mold and Die. All day I scraped and polished aluminum pieces which look like shoes with 3 little chimneys. I sweated more than I have in many years. I drank water and sweated even more.

Columbia doesn't have any vending

machines for coffee or food: just a jug of spring water. They also don't take a coffee break in the morning, but I went to the closet anyhow and got something to eat and drink. Bob Hrebek (the shop's owner) noticed, but didn't say anything. (Later, Bob would sometimes notice me snacking and would say, "How do you do, Tony?" I would always reply, "I am eating, Bob.")

I told Bob that I would rather be a janitor than a machinist, but he said "No, you will work with the machines!"

I told Bob that I won't be able to work tomorrow. He was angry and said "What, you're taking a vacation after your first day of work?" When I explained that I have to go to the Immigration Office to finalize my citizenship, his expression changed and he said "Oh, that makes sense!"

I got home at 5:30, exhausted. I'm not going to be able to make it at this job! But I have to!

Tuesday, August 2, 1955

It was so hot, I laid outside till midnight, then came in, but still couldn't sleep. At 8 a.m. I went downtown for the citizenship papers. By 11, I had taken two oaths and signed three papers - sleepy the whole time. Among the 100 new citizens were Poles, Greeks and Lithuanians, but I was the only Slovenian.

Wednesday, August 3, 1955

Again I couldn't sleep and decided to not go to work this morning. I worked in the garden until it became too hot.

Thursday, August 4, 1955

I felt better and went to work. For the first time ever, I wore glasses to work.

Friday, August 5, 1955

Again, I couldn't sleep. How will I work if I can't sleep at night?

I put together a package for my brother John in Slovenia. The temperature finally came down in the evening.

Saturday, August 6, 1955

I slept well last night and went to work from 7 a.m to 3:30. Rain today!

For the first time in my new job, I worked on a drilling machine. When I arrived, Bob introduced me to foreman Milton with the words: "He doesn't know much about drilling." How could he say that when I've been working with drilling machines for 5 years? (Later, I realized that I really did have a lot to learn about drilling. I wasn't learning much at Risher's and it was high time for me to leave.)

I heard that Lorber is sick again.

Monday, August 8, 1955

One of the things I use in my new job is a special knife for scraping aluminum pieces. Today, mine broke, so I asked Milton if he had another one. He gave me one, which turned out to be Bob's special knife, which he should not have given me. When Bob saw that I was working with his knife, he became very angry and said "Go home!", but

then he changed his mind and said “Forget it!” And so the whole incident was forgotten. At my old job, Risher didn’t know the word “forget.”

I wonder if Bob is angry because I haven’t been coming to work every day.

Thursday, August 11, 1955

Today I worked on the milling machine for the first time and produced my first scrap on that machine.

Friday, August 12, 1955

I got my first paycheck from Columbia: it’s only \$46.09, but I’m satisfied. At least I will be learning new things on this job. And they pay overtime whenever we work over 8 hours a day. Risher only paid overtime if we worked over 40 hours a week.

Saturday, August 13, 1955

I worked 8 hours today, scraping aluminum pieces in the morning and working on the milling machine in the afternoon.

Monday, August 15, 1955

Today is the holy day of the Assumption of Mary. I went to Mass at 6, then worked all day on the milling machine.

Saturday, August 20, 1955

It’s very hot again: 97°F. I’ve been working every Saturday.

Saturday, August 27, 1955

This evening, I was at Grdina’s, where Mirko Kambič was showing beautiful slides from Slovenia.

I talked with Polonca Košir, who had just arrived from Yugoslavia ten days ago with her son. (Her sister Ivica is married to my brother Ciril.) She brought some pictures and told me how much Ciril and Ivica have suffered under the communists. (In 1949, the secret police suddenly took Ciril, Ivica and her mother from their home and put them in prison. The police left their two year old daughter in the house, assuming she would die in a couple days. Luckily, a neighbor found her and took her to my sister. The “crime” committed by Ciril and Ivica was that they had told the truth about what the communists had done. They are now all back home, but the communists continue to make life very difficult for them.)

Sunday, August 28, 1955

Karl and I visited Mary Oblak to celebrate her 69th birthday. She has helped us in many ways since we came to Cleveland.

Wednesday, August 31, 1955

They say that this summer has been unusually hot, but it doesn’t seem as bad to me as the last few years. It helps that we’re not living in an attic apartment anymore.

Friday, September 2, 1955

I’ve been getting overtime pay, so I was able to make my first extra payment of \$300 to K.S.K.J. on the money they loaned us for the house.

Today I worked 11 hours. I drilled 286 holes in two steel plates, but I worked too fast and had to do them over.

Tuesday, September 6, 1955

Ray Želko (one of the renters in our rear house) started working at Columbia with me.

When I came home today, our neighbor Max demanded that we get our children under control, or he'll call the police.

Friday, September 9, 1955

On Wednesday, I worked 11 hours, Thursday 13, and today 13 and a half. Son John is sick with a temperature of 102°F.

Saturday, September 10, 1955

I worked 8 hours today. Bob asked me to come in tomorrow, Sunday. I told him I can't, my son is sick. He insisted "Come! I really need you!" I talked with Gordon (one of the other workers), who said I should listen to Bob. Bob owns 4 factories and he rewards good workers. I told Gordon that I always go to church. Gordon advised me to go to church and then come to work for at least a few hours. Even though I had vowed to never work on Sundays, I angrily agreed.

How can I keep this up? 8 - 13 hours a day on weekdays, and then work on Sundays, too?

Sunday, September 11, 1955

I went to 6 a.m. Mass, then to the shop at 7. Jerry Zupan was there as well. We waited

till 8:05, but nobody showed up to let us in. We went back to Zupan's, tried calling Milton (the foreman) without success. Then Miss Rogers (the secretary) and Bob called, saying they were just leaving and would be at the shop soon. We went back and waited till 9, when Bob finally arrived to let us in. I worked on the milling machine, but was annoyed because a fixture was broken. I worked till 5:30. This Sunday cost me more than I made.

Monday, September 12, 1955

I slept 4 - 5 hours last night and worked with difficulty today. I was afraid I would have an accident and get injured, so I worked slowly.

In the evening, I took a Kneipp steam treatment.

Tuesday, September 13, 1955

I only slept two hours last night and decided I couldn't work today. I stayed home, but still couldn't sleep. I'm afraid of having another nervous breakdown.

Wednesday, September 14, 1955

I felt better and worked 10 hours.

Friday, September 16, 1955

I got my largest check ever for one week's work - \$129.60.

Saturday, September 17, 1955

I drilled 21 holes too deep and ruined 5 aluminum pieces. I need my own

micrometer to set the machine properly. I ordered some tools.

Sunday, September 18, 1955

This afternoon, Karl and I visited John Ušeničnik on 18912 Neff Rd. He immigrated to America many years ago, and just returned from a visit to our home town, Žiri. Before he went there, he supported the communists, but now he's firmly anti-communist. He cried as he told us what it's like in Slovenia now. Innocent people have been tortured and put in prisons or forced labor camps. There are shortages of food and clothing. People live in constant fear of the government.

John served us whiskey and soda, and showed us his dogs, his rabbits, basement and garden.

After that, we took the kids to Euclid Beach Park, where we stayed and played till 7:30. Our youngest son Joe was afraid of the rides, but he tried them anyhow.

Friday, September 23, 1955

I'm working 11 or 12 hours every day. Today I worked with aluminum pieces all day.

Saturday, September 24, 1955

Bob fired Joe Juhas, an older worker, and hired a new one. I'm worried I could be fired myself.

In the evening, I visited Rudi and we talked with Silvia Hoja, who had just returned from a visit to Austria, with news from our home

town in Slovenia.

Sunday, September 25, 1955

We had many visitors this afternoon: Karl Erznožnik, Fortuna, the Lunders, and then Silvia, Rudi and Olga in the evening. Silvia is going back to San Francisco at midnight.

Karl got a job at Potokar's, because he's losing his job at Hydreco. He's been very satisfied working as a janitor at Hydreco for many years, but now the company is moving to Kalamazoo, Michigan. (The Hydreco workers were negotiating with their bosses for a better contract, and the bosses were agreeing, but then the workers were told to get what they wanted elsewhere. The company built a new factory in Kalamazoo.)

Friday, September 30, 1955

Jerry Zupan has been out sick with the flu all week.

Sunday, October 2, 1955

Karl and his wife Mici visited. She gave me a haircut (for the first time).

Later, Cilka and I argued about the packages we send to help our families in Slovenia. She's upset because we send more to my family than hers. I said I try to be fair, and that my brother sends me money and bobbin lace (which we can sell here), so I feel we need to pay him back.

Monday, October 3, 1955

Zupan finally came back to work.

Wednesday, October 5, 1955

This week, I have to mostly scrape aluminum pieces, while the newer workers work on the machines. It's no wonder I'm exhausted - Zupan says I do twice as much as the other workers. I make only \$1.65 an hour.

Thursday, October 6, 1955

This evening, as I was putting together a package for my sister Mici, Cilka asked if she could help. I said, "I don't know." She said, "Maybe you'd rather work on these packages by yourself!" She took her coat and left the house. I stopped her on the porch and persuaded her to come back. We talked and finally came to an understanding.

Monday, October 10, 1955

We received 20 envelopes from St. Vitus church. Every employed parishioner is expected to contribute \$100 for the new auditorium.

Saturday, October 15, 1955

I'm still scraping and cleaning the aluminum pieces at work. I've had enough of this hard work! Bob said it's OK if they're a little rough.

This evening, I helped set up a slide show at St. Vitus. Vinko Zaletel showed slides from the Koroška region. There were 250 people attending, and \$193 was collected for Slovenian schools in Koroška (which is now part of Austria.)

Sunday, October 23, 1955

We've been married 9 years. Cilka baked a cake. It's also 12 years since the communist "liberation" of Žiri, our hometown. I'm working too much and not sleeping enough.

Saturday, October 29, 1955

This week I worked on the cutting and milling machines. I broke 4 metal-cutting saws. Ray Želko says he's looking for a different job. Milton was out "sick" all week.

Wednesday, November 2, 1955

This evening, my wife and I talked for a long time about the love we felt 17 - 20 years ago.

Sunday, November 6, 1955

We visited the Lunder, Zupan and Erdani families in their new home on E. 61st and Edna. They paid \$12,800.

Monday, November 7, 1955

We're down to 9 and half hours a day, 55 hours a week.

Tuesday, November 8, 1955

I left work at 4:30 to go vote. I voted for Anthony Celebrezze for mayor and John Kovačič for councilman. I also voted for new taxes for streets and harbors and for an increase in unemployment compensation from \$39 to \$59 per week.

This was my first time voting. In making my decisions, I considered whether they were Democrats, whether they were recommended by the "Ameriška Domovina", whether they had a Slovenian name, and whether I knew them personally.

The proposed increase in unemployment benefits did not get enough votes. People are worried about business taxes being higher here than in other states; we don't want more factories moving away.

Thursday, November 10, 1955

Javornik came to look at the electric wires in our houses. He said they're not worth fixing and we should replace everything!

I'm feeling worse and have started doing the Kneipp steam and water treatments again.

Sunday, November 13, 1955

Cilka and I walked with our children to Kirtland Park on E. 49th (about a mile



**Wednesday,
November 9, 1955**

The children liked to play with their toys. Little Mary is 8 months old and just beginning to walk. In the background is the foot-powered Singer sewing machine which Cilka used often to make or mend our clothes. November 1955.

away).

Tuesday, November 15, 1955

After many visits by Russians to America and by Americans to Russia, our government has announced that it will deny visas to all future Russian visitors, including bishop Boris. I think our government has realized that the Russians use visitors as spies and are really not interested in peace.

Monday, November 21, 1955

I bought \$23 worth of gifts for St. Nicholas day at May Co. At Lieberman's, I bought cloth to send to our families in Slovenia. In the last 4 days, I've spent more than \$100 for items we will send to Slovenia.

Tuesday, November 22, 1955

I gave Cilka some pastry for her nameday. I packed 18 pounds of old clothes for Cilka's sister Manica in Slovenia, and 28 pounds for my brother Joseph.

Thursday, November 24, 1955

It's Thanksgiving. We went to church at 9 a.m. Then I worked on the electrical wiring in Cerar's apartment and the window in Ovsenek's.

Saturday, November 26, 1955

For an hour and half this evening, Jerry Zupan and I visited area businesses to ask for gifts for the Slovenian school at St. Vitus. Ten businesses gave us \$50 in goods and money. After that, we attended a meeting of the Slovenian school board till

10 p.m. They talked about plans for a St. Nicholas evening program at St. Vitus. Karl Mauser entertained everyone with his jokes.

Monday, November 28, 1955

Bob (the shop's owner) returned from vacation. My new friend at the shop, Gordon Glenville, is leaving for work elsewhere. He was very helpful to me.

In the evening, Zupan and I tried making cookie cutters in the shape of St. Nicholas, but without success.

Tuesday, November 29, 1955

We got 2 inches of snow today, 17°F. In the evening, Zupan and I visited more businesses to ask for gifts for the Slovenian school. Cherne (the jeweler and president of the business-owners association) said that businesses already give enough and we shouldn't bother them.

Wednesday, November 30, 1955

I had bad dreams all night about Cherne's negative comments. This evening I didn't help ask for any more gifts.

Thursday, December 1, 1955

I went to Dr. Opaskar and ordered new false teeth for \$200 to replace the set I've had since 1938. (I lost the last of my own teeth three years ago.)

Saturday, December 3, 1955

The Irishman who started working at the shop 3 days ago has quit.

I bought more presents for St. Nicholas day.

**Sunday,
December 4, 1955**

We went to the St. Nicholas performance at St. Vitus Slovenian school. Everyone got presents. Later, the Cerar family gave our children toys and candy, and the Ovseneks gave picture puzzles to Joe and Tony and other things for John, Cilka and me.



The boys made a snowman in our yard. Note the folded paper hat on the snowman. December, 1955.

**Monday,
December 5, 1955**

St. Nicholas came to our house last night, bringing pajamas for Cilka and the children, a pullover and pants for me, and good things to eat for everyone. He brought less than last year. In the evening, the Ovseneks took the children downtown.

Thursday, December 8, 1955

At night, I've been thinking about what Polonca Košir said about the suffering that people are going through back home in Slovenia. It bothers me. Last night, I slept poorly because of that.

Friday, December 9, 1955

It snowed all day. At work, Milton (the foreman) was pleased that I drilled 165 holes in 2 and a half days with the large drilling machine.

This evening, Cilka took the children to the S.D.Z. Christmas party at the Slovenian National Home on St. Clair.

Sunday, December 11, 1955

I was the only recent refugee at the S.D.Z lodge #14 board meeting from 9 to 11 a.m. Most of our people (the recent refugees) prefer to go to K.S.K.J., but our family belongs to both. The other organizations were (and sometimes still are) supporters of Tito, so recent refugees feel they are not welcome there.

Our children are sick with stomach flu.

Monday, December 12, 1955

I went to a meeting of K.S.K.J.lodge #172, where I listened to Joe Grdina and J. Vrtačnik arguing.

Tuesday, December 13, 1955

Now I'm sick, too. I worked till 4:30 and went to see Dr.Ukmar. He gave me a shot of penicillin and some other drugs. In the evening, my nerves were shaking again like 8 months ago. I couldn't sit still - I had to pace up and down the room. After a while, I felt better and wrote 15 Christmas letters.

**Wednesday,
December 14, 1955**

I felt better this morning, so I went to work. In the evening, I took a Kneipp water treatment.

Thursday, December 15, 1955

I bought a "mike" (micrometer) from Bob for \$7. I want to get a promotion, like Ray and Doran. Zupan and 6 others are working 11 hours a day (7 a.m. to 6 p.m.), but I'm only working 9 hours (7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.)

I got my new teeth from Dr. Opaskar.

Friday, December 16, 1955

I bought two more mikes for \$8.50 and ordered a toolbox, a hammer, pliers, 2 wrenches, 4-5 more mikes and other tools. Bob (the shop's owner) will get everything for me at a reduced price. I asked Bob how I could get ahead. He said he's very satisfied



Our family on Christmas Day, 1955.

with my work and that I should continue with the same work. He promised to give me a raise of 10 cents an hour starting with the new year. That would put me at \$1.75, which is what I was making at Risher's. I was worried because he was having me work only 9 hours a day, but now I'm feeling better.

In the evening, I went to Dr. Ukmar, Dr. Opaskar, the library, and the Košir family.

Tuesday, December 20, 1955

My new false teeth are painful. I went to Dr. Opaskar for an adjustment.

Wednesday, December 21, 1955

I feel better; I'm sleeping better and eating well. Kneipp's book of home care remedies has been very helpful. He recommends pouring cold water on your back. Whenever I become so nervous that I can't sleep and have to pace up and down and wave my hands, my wife pours very cold water over my arms and back, and I calm down so I can go to sleep. (If you don't believe this, you should try it. Just take care to not catch cold!)

Ivana Cerar arrived from Domžale,



The Cerar family received a very special Christmas gift - reunion with their sister Ivana from Slovenia. Pictured from left to right are Ivana, Helen, Mara, Frank and their mother, Mrs. Cerar. This picture was taken in their apartment on December 24, 1955, three days after Ivana arrived as a new immigrant to America.

Slovenia.

Thursday, December 22, 1955

I got a Christmas bonus of \$54.07 from the shop. I wasn't expecting it, but I'm not satisfied. I wish they would let me learn more about the machines.

Friday, December 23, 1955

Work did not go well - I produced scrap. After work I went to Sam's and bought a Christmas tree.

Saturday, December 24, 1955

It's Christmas Eve. 56°F. The children are all coughing. In the evening, the Cerar family and Rudi Drmota joined us in praying all three decades of the rosary. Cilka went to midnight Mass by herself while I stayed home with the children. It's 6 years since we came to America. We saw the Statue of Liberty as our ship approached the New York harbor in the morning mist of December 22, 1949.

Sunday, December 25, 1955

We went to two Christmas Masses this morning. In the afternoon, the Ovseneks brought cake and we gave them liqueur, bobbin lace and a photo album. They don't seem to be as friendly or as satisfied with their apartment. Why?

In the afternoon, Cilka took the children to church while I stayed home. The Cerar family had a big party in their apartment above ours.

Monday, December 26, 1955

No work today. Karl Erznožnik visited, then Tone Zupančič and his wife, who arrived from Yugoslavia a few months ago.

The visitors and the children get me upset. I'd rather be working.

Wednesday, December 28, 1955

I feel terrible and would like to die.

Thursday, December 29, 1955

Dr. Opaskar fixed my false teeth again.

Friday, December 30, 1955

Again, Bob promised me a raise after New Year's.

Tone Košir and his son Paul came to visit. Paul arrived from Yugoslavia recently, just before he turned 21. He brought 4 books for me.

Saturday, December 31, 1955

New Year's Eve. Rudi Drmota came at 6 p.m. with two tricycles for the children. He stayed with us to pray the rosary. As usual on New Year's Eve, we did a family procession, praying and sprinkling holy water throughout our home.

From 9 - 10 p.m. we visited the Cerar family. Mrs. Cerar offered to pay higher rent, since their family has grown by two people since last year. Oh, if only the other renters were like her! Raising the rent is the most unpleasant task for a landlord.

From 10 p.m. to midnight, I closed out our bookkeeping records for the year. Everything balanced exactly and easily. The last purchase recorded was - whiskey. I'm satisfied with what I earned this past year. For the first time, I earned more than \$5,400. Even though I was out sick for more than 8 weeks, I earned \$608 more than last year because I worked so much overtime.

This year I survived a difficult illness and a change of employment. My biggest worry early in the year was my wife's health, but as it turned out, I need not have worried so much. Both my wife and daughter are alive and well.

Repayment of our debts is going better than I planned. During the past year, I paid Milica everything we owed her plus interest. Now we're paying K.S.K.J. \$300 a month instead of

the \$100 we had agreed to when we got the loan from them for the houses. I hope we'll pay off everything we owe in less than 3 years. If I were more enterprising, I would have waited longer to repay Milica and instead used the money to improve our houses.

In order to repay our debts, we gave up many things that other people have - telephone, television, a car, and other things. Those things can wait. What's important is that we're healthy and we have a roof over our heads.

The new job is hard but, all in all, I'm satisfied. With the overtime, I earn more than I did before and, more importantly, Bob appreciates my enthusiasm for work. Even though he's very strict with the other workers, he's good like a father to me. Since he's an experienced machinist himself, he understands how much can be done and he recognizes when the scrap is my fault and when it's caused by the raw material or the machine.

I've started to think that God sent me the problems with my wife's health and my health, and the problems in my old job, as a way to get me to move to a new job. Sometimes I'm still disappointed, but mostly the new job is better than what I had.

The workers at Columbia Mold and Die are mostly Slovak, with only 4 Slovenians, but we all get along well. The oldest worker is Johnny: 80 years old and still working because he gets bored if he doesn't work. The worker who has been at the shop the longest is Mike; he started under Bob's father, Frank. They say that Frank was a boxer in his youth; he used his earnings from boxing competitions to start the factory. Mike doesn't let Bob boss him around; he likes to tell him that he worked for his father when Bob was still in diapers. The workers also include a protestant minister who is always very peaceful and friendly, and who arrives at work as if he were coming from an office.

The Slovenian workers at Columbia include Jerry Zupan, Ray Želko (who lives in our rear house), and Joe Perko, who also has many children and understands my problems. All together, we don't have more than 20 workers. We often get new ones, but they soon leave when they see that the shop doesn't have vending machines, not even for pop or coffee.

It's hard for me stay in a car very long, so I really like being able to walk to and from work. (Columbia is about a mile from our home.)

Bob often says he's very satisfied with my work. Does he really mean it? If anyone else were out sick as often as I was this year, Bob would give him his last paycheck. But if it's true what the others say, that I get twice as much done in one day as the others do in two, then it makes sense. Even if I only work every other day, I'll get my work done, while Bob will only have to pay me for the days I work.

Zakelj Diary Home Page:

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