

Introduction to Continuation of “Starting Over”

By Anton Žakelj, translated and edited by John Žakelj

June 2001

To our readers:

I am sorry you had to wait so long for the continuation of my diary in the “American Home.” My age and blindness have slowed me down, and my son’s busy work schedule slows down his translation. Before we continue with the diary, I want to say a few words.

Many thanks to my ex-boss Al Sebold, who has forgiven my sometimes too sharp criticism of his behavior 50 years ago. I understand it was hard to be responsible for so many workers, all with different personalities. As a result of the publication of my diary in the “American Home,” we now see each other often and have become good friends, like old war veterans.

I am thankful to Mr. Debevec, the publisher and editor of “American Home,” for his willingness to continue “Starting Over.” In the last installment, we finally acquired our own house after more than 10 years as refugees living in tents, barracks, and other peoples’ homes. In this next part of my diary, I describe our trials and successes as we worked on making this house a real home. I would like to thank everyone who helped us achieve this dream: first, the Rihtar family, who shared their small house with us for almost 3 years; Milica Žonta, who loaned us money for part of the down payment for our own home; Jerry Zupan, who provided us with a stove and other furnishings; Blaž Hace (now deceased), who repaired old toys so our children would have something to play with; Mrs. Hace, who found good clothes for us that people had given away because a

washing machine tore off a button; Jakob and Ana Jesenko’s family, who treated us like relatives and, among other things, provided us with pears from their tree; Mrs. Mary Kolenc, who gave us many pieces of furniture which we still use; many other people who helped us; and, last but not least, I am grateful to my wife Cilka.

The purchase of a home is usually a family’s largest expense. By buying a home, a family shows that it plans to settle and stay. A family with children has a special need for its own home. Of course, the man of the house must like doing all sorts of home repairs; if he doesn’t, it’s cheaper to live in rented space. In Slovenia, we only painted houses every 30 years; in America, we have to paint every 5 years. And you need to be able to install and fix water pipes, electric wires and gas pipes! This is all part of owning a house in America.

Some people have asked, “How could we afford to buy not only one house, but two, so soon after coming to America?” The two houses at 5516 Carry Ave have 11,500 square feet and we bought them for \$11,500. Why were they so cheap? First, because both houses are on one lot. The lot would actually be worth more if it only had one house on it. Second, both houses had been greatly neglected and needed many repairs and improvements. They were about 80 years old, built when people still used gas for lighting. Third, the houses were cheap because two of the apartments were occupied by hillbillies who had not paid rent for many months. They made fun of the landlord when he tried to collect at least partial rent. They believed they had nothing to fear because they were protected by tenants’ rights. (This was not

true of the two Slovenian families who lived in the rear house and regularly paid their \$20 rents.)

When we came to America, we had \$30.20, which I had saved from my work delivering mail during our last six months in the refugee camp in Austria. It wasn't a paid job, but people voluntarily gave me more than I had previously been making doing hard labor. I got the mail job from Jerry Zupan, who left for America before we did. People gave me especially good tips when I delivered packages from America. Sometimes, I would carry a large backpack full of packages. Before that, I worked on sewer construction, digging 10-foot deep trenches by hand. As a result of that work I was hospitalized with a hernia. After the operation, I sometimes still had very sharp pains as I made the rounds delivering mail in the refugee camp.

In Slovenia, my education included training as an accountant. In America, I have used that training in keeping our family's books. I record every penny of income and expense. I balance our accounts every month and I do a summary by category every year. (In 1999, at the age of 92, I was declared legally blind, and I can tell you that keeping accounts is extremely hard to do when you can't see, but I still do it as best as I can.)

Here's a summary of our income and expenses during our first 6 months in America (on the farm in Wisconsin):

Income from farm work	\$142.00
Sales of bobbin lace	73.70
Gifts	32.08
Loans from friends	<u>166.00</u>
	\$413.78
Expenses:	
Health care	\$ 97.53
Transportation, incl. train from New York	97.00
Postage for packages to Slovenia	13.04

Miscellaneous	41.21
Remaining debt as of June 1950	<u>165.00</u>
	\$413.78

We arrived in Cleveland with few personal belongings and \$165 in debt to friends. Here's our total income for our first 4 years in America:

Income from farm work	\$ 142.00
Other income Jan-June 1950	74.00
Factory work June - December 1950	1,226.00
Factory work 1951	\$3,750.00
Factory work 1952	\$4,152.00
Factory work 1953	<u>\$4,608.00</u>
Total income 1950-53	\$13,952.00

During those years, we paid:

Federal Income Tax	\$1,078.00
Social Security Tax	<u>\$ 180.00</u>
	\$1,258.00

So our net income for our first 4 years was \$12,694. From that, we saved \$5,200 for the houses (\$4,000 for the down payment and \$1,200 for payments during June - December 1953.)

Before I continue with the diary, I'd also like to tell some stories from my job at Risher's which are not mentioned in the diary:

I remember an American who worked in our shop, who always wore his wedding ring. One day, he was removing a drill from his drill press and somehow his ring caught on the chuck. He didn't lose his finger, but he got quite a cut and lost some skin. After that, we all had to work without our wedding rings.

Frank Lorber, Sr., was a very hard worker in our shop. In Slovenia, Lorber was the director of a stocking factory; here, he drilled steel with the rest of us. Once, I noticed that he was pressing down on the drill press as hard as he could. He complained, "I've never seen such a hard piece

of steel.” I noticed that the drill wasn’t biting into the steel at all and I said “How about if you try drilling in the other direction?” Then he noticed that he was drilling in reverse. Another time, he showed me a handful of hair which his drill had torn from his head when he got too close. And another time, he and Ferdinand Zupan got into a big argument about which of them liked Germans more. Finally, Lorber hit Zupan on the cheek, and you could see marks from all five of Lorber’s oil-stained fingers on Zupan’s cheek. But the hardest blow came later, when Lorber’s son was promoted to foreman and he told his father the shop no longer had work for him. That was very hard, but eventually Lorber Sr. came back, and his son went on to other work.

If they had offered the foreman’s job to me, I would have said “No, thank you.” I’d rather do the work of two people myself than be responsible for three.

Jože Gotvajn from Ormož was another first class hard worker. He always worked at full steam; if we told him “Take it easy!” he would think we were teasing him and would work all the harder. In Slovenia, he owned a large store, but after the war, the communists deported him and took everything. He sued Yugoslavia in the world court in Hague to try to get his property back. After a few years in Cleveland, he moved back to Europe to pursue his lawsuit.

I also worked with Štupnik, who would go from cigarette to cigarette and throw the butts into the metal hutch that held the steel shavings from his drilling. The shavings were covered with oil, which we had to use to keep the drills from overheating. Once I noticed that his shavings were starting to burn, but I didn’t say anything because I didn’t think there was any danger. But Bill Risher, the shop owner, noticed the fire from his office; he came over and asked Štupnik why he didn’t see the fire. “One more time, and I’ll give you your last paycheck!” said Risher.

The next time that happened, I alerted Štupnik before he got caught.

I had my share of problems at the shop. Once, Risher asked me to work on a machine that required use of a micrometer. The worker who usually used that machine told me it was set to drill the correct depth. But, when I finished a few pieces, Risher came, looked them over and noticed that I didn’t drill the holes deep enough. Angrily, he said, “Don’t you know how to read a micrometer?” “Mr. Risher, I know how to read a micrometer, but I can’t see the numbers.” “Why didn’t you tell me that?” “Because I was afraid I would be let go if you knew that I need glasses.” Well, he let me fix those pieces, but from then on, he always had me working on a machine that did not require a micrometer.

I would often bring new workers (other new refugees) to the shop. I remember how some of the other workers criticized me because they worried the new workers would take our jobs.

Now, let’s get back to the diary:

STARTING OVER IN AMERICA

A New Home in Cleveland

By Anton Žakelj, translated and edited by John Žakelj

Photographs by Anton Žakelj

Tuesday, May 5, 1953

Mr. Globokar came to get me at the shop. We went to sign the papers for the KSKJ loan, then to North American Bank and St. Clair Savings, where we took out all our savings. Cilka and I signed the final papers and turned over the money. I have three dollars left. After three and half years of hard work in America (and saving almost half of everything we made), we are now the proud owners of two houses at 5516 Carry Ave.

If all goes well, I hope to pay off the mortgage in 5 years, maybe 7 at the most. May the Lord provide me with good health and work!

Sunday, May 17, 1953

We got the keys to the house and went to look at our future home. It looks even dirtier than before. I was afraid that Cilka wouldn't be happy,

but she likes our new house. It will be lots of work, but it will be our home.

Monday, May 18, 1953

In the evening, I went to the last class of an English course I've been taking. I got an EXCELLENT on my report card.

Thursday, May 21, 1953

The weather is so hot, I can't sleep at night. Since we can't move into our new home for at least another week, we have to continue to put



Our sons John, Joe and Tony in our new home, July 1953.

up with the heat in our attic apartment.

Friday, May 22, 1953

Rain. We chose the wallpaper for our new home. We don't know how to put up wallpaper, so we begged Mr. Bonča to put it up for us, and he agreed.

Saturday, May 23, 1953

This week, I worked on the tapping machine in the shop every day from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m.; in the evenings, Cilka and I worked on cleaning our new home.

Sunday, May 24, 1953

This afternoon, I invited my friends Lorber and Erznožnik to come see our new home. They both said we could do the wallpapering ourselves when the shop has vacations in July. In the evening we went to St. Vitus to hear a concert by the "Lira" singing group.

Monday, May 25, 1953

This afternoon, I went to Milner's on St. Clair and E. 125, where I bought the wallpaper and everything we need to wallpaper our new kitchen.

Wednesday, May 27, 1953

Karl Erznožnik painted the trim in the kitchen. Rudi Drmota also helped. Mrs. Oblak helped us order a truck to move our belongings this Friday.

I received our first rent payment - \$20 from the Habjan's, who live in one of two 4-room apartments in the rear house. The front house has three apartments, all occupied except for the down front, which is where we will live.

Thursday, May 28, 1953

Mr. Rihtar brought the first part of our belongings - toys and things like that. Then he built two doors and a clothes closet.

Friday, May 29, 1953

Two men from Schultze Moving arrived at 8 a.m. and moved all our belongings by 10:30 a.m. I paid them \$30.78. I also bought a bed from our friend Milica. In the attic apartment, we only had one bed for the three boys.

I went downtown and filled out the forms for gas and electric.

Saturday, May 30, 1953, Memorial Day

We slept in our own home for the first time. We're too tired to start on the wallpapering. We're still just getting things arranged.

Monday, June 1, 1953

I went to Smrekar's and bought tools, pails and paint. Worked till 9:30 p.m.

Tuesday, June 2, 1953

Frank Puc started work at the shop as my assistant.

I bought a nylon watering hose. Cilka likes to work in the garden we have behind the rear house. It's large enough so we will be able to grow all our own vegetables. The rest of the yard has enough room for about five fruit trees. The garden will be for Cilka, and the fruit trees will be for me.

To the west of our two houses is a similar house which Mrs. Faletič willed to her second son. People tell me that men used to play "balinca" in the yard between the three houses and Mrs. Faletič used to serve them with forbidden medicines which she kept in the basement. People also tell me that Mrs. Faletič used to hide

money inside the hollow brick walls of our basement. I'm not going to spend my time looking for that - I'll leave it for the next owner. But people also say that there were tens of thousands of silver coins found in two houses down the street. Children found the coins in old garbage cans in the basement. The owner of those houses also sold alcohol.

Now there are about 5 taverns in the neighborhood, one just for truck drivers, and another featuring the famous musician Louis Trebar. The church, the school, the streetcar - everything except my job are close by. Almost all the storekeepers speak Slovenian. And we're not far from the Slovenian National Home where we can go to concerts and where the Glasbena Matica (under the direction of Anton Šubelj) produces concerts and plays - just as if we were in Ljubljana.

Mr. Rihtar put a new roof on the garage, which I've rented to Matevž Hočevar for \$15 a month. He says he'll fix the interior himself, so I'll only charge him \$10 a month for the first 6 months.

Wednesday, June 3, 1953

Frank Puc, my new assistant at the shop, was very tired. I asked foreman Sebold to give Frank some easier work, but Frank insisted on staying with me and Rudi Knez.

In the evening, Jerry Zupan drove to Kolenc's on the West Side and picked up a couch, chair, rug and other furnishings for us. While Jerry did that, I burned some large dry weeds in the back yard. Our neighbor, Mr. Modic, soon came over and protested that I was on his land. I invited him into the kitchen and he stayed till 12:15 a.m. Soon after he arrived, Tony Cizel came and gave the children each a "kvoder" (that's how Slovenian-Americans refer to a quarter.) I think he had been drinking. He asked Modic why he didn't give the children anything. They started arguing and Mr. Modic

grabbed him by the neck and started choking him. Finally, they worked things out, wished us well and left. A strange welcome!

Mr. Modic owns 7 or 8 houses, and he wants to buy ours as well. He had hoped he could get our two houses cheap, if he waited long enough. Meanwhile, his wife died (last March) and apparently, he was not aware that we had made an offer. He missed his chance to match our offer.

Thursday, June 4, 1953

Karl Erznožnik bought a 1940 Mercury for \$200. He doesn't have his driver's license yet, but that's what many of my friends are doing. First they buy a car and then they learn how to drive.

Friday, June 5, 1953

We've been working overtime at the shop and I'm very tired. We all wanted the extra pay, but now we're tired of the extra work.

Monday, June 8, 1953

I paid the first \$100 on the mortgage from K.S.K.J.

Our shop's owner, Mr. Risher, handed out notices indicating how much each employee will receive in paid vacation this July. A pleasant surprise - I will get 80 hours! I need a vacation!

Tuesday, June 9, 1953

Last night we had thunder and such large hail that I couldn't get to sleep till after midnight. I hear that a tornado destroyed 100 houses elsewhere in Cleveland, especially on the Westside, and 10 people died. In Flint, Michigan, 100 people died.

Sunday, June 14, 1953

This afternoon, son John and I took the bus to the Lourdes Shrine on Euclid. Bishop Rožman led the litanies in honor of those who suffered and died under communism.

In the evening, I helped Karl study for the drivers' license test.

Saturday, June 20, 1953

It was so hot last night I only slept two hours. The temperature in the shop this morning was 98°F.

In the afternoon, Rudi Drmota helped paint the door and window trim in three rooms.

Sunday, June 21, 1953

This morning we went to Rev. Francis Rebol's first Mass.

In the evening, the weather finally cooled off. We had visitors: Karl Erznožnik, the Tominc family and Jerry Zupan's family.

Thursday, June 25, 1953

The Gas Co. shut off the gas to the M. family in the rear apartment for non-payment. They also determined we have a gas leak.

Friday, June 26, 1953

I looked for a plumber and finally found Mr. Lustik, who agreed to come this evening. I waited for him till 10 p.m., gave up and went to bed. He came at 11 p.m. and worked till midnight. We have gas leaks in 30 places. The plumber found the leaks by smelling and tightened the pipes wherever he could. He'll need to come back to fix the rest.

Sunday, June 28, 1953

The plumber came back this morning and fixed about 10 leaking gas pipes. The electric wires are bad, too.



Karel Erznožnik shows off his "new" 1940 Mercury, parked next to Grdina playground. The view is down Norwood to the south. At that time, most Slovenian refugees had never owned a car before they came to America.

In the afternoon, I took my son John to the Stadium (for the first time), to take part in Father Peyton's Family Rosary Crusade. Despite the hot weather, there were at least 50,000 people at the Stadium - from 3 to 5:30 p.m. Speakers included Mayor Burke, Bishop Begin, Bishop Hoban, Cardinal Moroney and Father Peyton. There was a downpour during the closing procession, and they had to end the rosary after 10 "Hail Mary's."

Monday, June 29, 1953

It's the holy day of St. Peter. In Slovenia, we would have taken the day off, but here in America, everybody works.

I heard that an older man down the street talked to someone about me: "What did this person do for Hitler? Hitler must have given him a large amount of money. How else could he afford to buy two houses after only a couple years in America? I've been here 40 years and I don't have even one house!" It's true I've only been here 3 years, but I never go out to eat in restaurants. The person making the remarks goes to the bar every morning. He doesn't know how to save.

I must admit that I am disturbed by comments like the one made by the old man. I sometimes wonder if I should have done more to fight both the communists and the Nazis. I was in my thirties during the war. Fighting against the Nazis would have meant certain persecution and possible starvation for my parents and family, and probable death for me. The communists were even worse than the Nazis. There were no good choices.

During the Nazi occupation of Slovenia, I chose to be the assistant manager of a shoemaker's cooperative, similar to work I had been doing before the war. We made good shoes and we sold them to according to

the regulations of the Nazi occupation. I did save some money during the war - a total of 2,000 Reich Mark, or the equivalent of 10 months' salary. The week before the war ended, we needed to pay our workers, but the bank wouldn't release any funds from the cooperative's account. So I used all my savings to pay the workers. I thought I would get my money back, but the next week, the communists took control of Slovenia and everything fell apart. (The complete story is more



This is the kitchen in our new home, after much cleaning, painting and wallpapering. For most of the past 10 years, we either had no kitchen or had to share one with other families, so we were very pleased to now have a kitchen like this. July, 1953.

complicated, but that's basically what it came down to.)

Thursday, July 2, 1953

The T. family, who lives in the apartment above ours, hasn't paid rent since we bought the house. I had heard that tenants have many rights and it may be difficult to do anything. Our neighbor, Mr. Modic, recommended seeing attorney John Mihelič on 1200 Addison Rd. I asked Mr. Mihelič if we could evict the T. family. "Are they paying on time?" "No, they've missed a number of months." "That's all you need. If you don't get your rent, you can't pay your taxes." He wrote out a notice stating that they had to move out in three days, or he would sue them. He put the notice in an envelope, told me to slide it under their door and wait three days.

Our neighbor had told us that Mr. Mihelič is an excellent attorney. Apparently, Mr. Mihelič wanted to be a judge (and would be well-qualified), but his friend Gov. Lausche refused to appoint him to an open judgeship because Lausche didn't want to look like he was giving preference to a friend.

Saturday, July 4, 1953

My long-awaited vacation finally began today. I lay in bed till 8 a.m. and then painted the bathroom and bedroom all day.

Sunday, July 5, 1953

I took the boys on a walk to see the new E. 55 St. bridge across Lake Shore Blvd.

Monday, July 6, 1953

It's three days since I left Mr. Mihelič's notice with our upstairs renters. I asked them if they got the notice. They replied: "We got it, but we're not going anywhere. You can't evict us - we'll evict you. Don't you know about tenants'

rights?"

I went to Mr. Mihelič and told him what happened. He said, "Fine, we'll see." He promised to have them out in a month, but said it would cost me \$50.

Tuesday, July 7, 1953

Frank Lorber and his son Božo came at 8:30 a.m. to help with the wallpapering. We worked till 8:30 p.m. and finished both bedrooms.

Wednesday, July 8, 1953

Again we worked from 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m., wallpapered the bathroom and the living room. We had to plug many holes in the walls. I am tired.

Thursday, July 9, 1953

Frank Lorber helped me wallpaper the kitchen. All together, he's worked 31 hours, and his son 18. I paid them \$1.50 per hour and meals. The wallpapering has cost me about \$150.

The plumber came again (the fourth time now) and installed a new gas pipe for our heater and added shut-off valves for the heaters in the other apartments.

Saturday, July 11, 1953

I worked in the attic, trying to take out the old gas pipes that used to fuel the ceiling lights. There's still gas in the pipes, and I haven't been able to turn it off. The pipes are dangerous and as long as they stay in the ceiling, I can't install electric wires. But I couldn't get the pipes out, so I called the plumber, Mr. Lustig. More expenses.

Monday, July 13, 1953

Cilka got some old clothes for her brother Polde

in Zagreb. We wrapped them in a package and I took it to the post office. Polde and his family really need help because the communists took everything they had.

Wednesday, July 15, 1953

Finally, I got the gas pipes out of the ceiling in the rear apartment. I installed one electric light, but I don't have money for any more.

I had hoped to put together packages for three of my brothers in Slovenia, and buy a washing machine, curtains and many other things. But I've spent all my money. I didn't plan to spend so much on the plumber, on court costs, electric wiring and other costs for the houses. And I didn't know that the T. family wouldn't pay their rent. Our finances are a mess.

Thursday, July 16, 1953

At 8:45, Mr. Mihelič drove me to the city courthouse for the T. eviction. Our proceeding started an hour late, but then took only 10 minutes. Mrs. T. didn't show up. The judge only asked me how much time I'm willing to give the T. family to find another apartment. I didn't hear him and didn't understand his question. I don't know why I replied, "Two times." Mr. Mihelič explained that I had just come from Europe, so I don't know English well. The judge gave the T. family 15 days to move out. We paid \$40 and left.

During the ride to the courthouse, Mr. Mihelič had warned me that I might have to talk English. We practiced and I did well in the car, but not in the courtroom.

I went to the bank and withdrew \$30, which they had just paid for interest back to January, before we had withdrawn everything to pay for the house. (The bank calculates the interest on savings accounts every 6 months.)

Friday, July 17, 1953

I bought another electric ceiling light and installed it in the rear apartment. In the afternoon, I painted outside doors and windows.

Sunday, July 19, 1953

We took the boys to the bazaar at St. Vitus. John rode the merry-go-round five times, Tony only once.

Monday, July 20, 1953

It was too hot to sleep last night. After 14 days of vacation, I returned to work today feeling exhausted and sick. Not much of a vacation!

Monday, July 27, 1953

Yesterday a peace treaty was signed in Korea - after 3 years and one month of a "police action." This peace is without honor for America! Many people think Truman was wrong when he replaced General McArthur. McArthur wanted victory.

The police action in Korea resulted in a half million casualties, including 25,000 American dead and 100,000 wounded. It cost \$16 billion and ended without a victory. Korea is still divided, just like it was before the war.

Tuesday, July 28, 1953

Today we heard that our friend and former neighbor Rafko Žonta has been missing in Korea since July 19.

Thursday, July 30, 1953

At the shop, we were told we will no longer work overtime on Saturdays. We've been working 6 days a week for 3 months. I'm ready to have Saturdays off, but it will mean \$75 a month less in pay.

The shop will have a picnic on Sunday, but I don't plan to go; my knee is hurting and I don't have a car.

Saturday, August 1, 1953

Habjan (one of the renters in the back house) is the only tenant who's paid his rent.

Sunday, August 2, 1953

Last night I went to see the movie "Titanic" - a poor movie!

Mrs. M, the renter in the rear half of the front house, paid her rent. I asked her to clean up the apartment and the basement and to not have so many "friends" staying overnight. I will probably need to ask her to leave; last night she had 3 men with her all night. I think she's a prostitute.

Monday, August 3, 1953

The other workers said they enjoyed the shop picnic yesterday.

Wednesday, August 5, 1953

I worked slowly at the shop today. They say that we may run out of work.

Friday, August 7, 1953

Last night there was such a racket in the apartment upstairs (the T. family), that I couldn't get to sleep till 2 a.m. Cilka finally called out, "Shut up, by gosh!" That seemed to help. The neighbors to our side and the renters in the back house are demanding that I restore order.

Saturday, August 8, 1953

Again there was such a racket in T's apartment that I almost called the police. I finally got them

quieted down myself. When we had visitors at 7:30 in the evening, I was so upset that I said, if I had a gun, I would shoot our rowdy tenants.

Monday, August 10, 1953

The T. family finally moved out. We had a peaceful night. Mrs. M. (in the rear apartment) had men visiting her again, but they left by midnight.

Wednesday, August 12, 1953

Last night there was a racket in M's apartment (behind ours). I went to Starič's to call the police (since we don't have a phone), but he wasn't home.

Thursday, August 13, 1953

We had arguments at work today. I came home upset and sad. Cilka was also upset. She had hoped our friend Milica could move into the empty apartment, but it's looking like that will not be possible.

Saturday, August 15, 1953

I talked with our renter, Mr. M., who works on the road during the week and is only home on weekends. I told him about the visitors that have been coming to see his wife. He had no idea what was going on.

Tuesday, August 18, 1953

I offered our upstairs apartment to the Cerar family. They had expressed interest a number of times; somewhat reluctantly they agreed to a rent of \$33 per month. I agreed to paint and wallpaper the apartment, and they agreed to do whatever else was needed.

In the shop I cleaned the electric lights, since there was no other work. We only have 50 workers left out of 64, and many of the 50 have

no work.

My friend Karl failed his driver's license test because he doesn't know enough English.

Thursday, August 27, 1953

Last night, the police came to Mrs. M's apartment at 10 p.m. and again at 11. Mrs. M. says she called them because she was being threatened by burglars. Actually, there were two men asking her to let them in, but she wouldn't open her door like she usually does. Apparently, her husband talked with her about her visitors. I called our neighbor Vokač to translate to the police.

I went to see Mr. Mihelič today and asked him to prepare a notice asking the M. family to move out.

Friday, August 28, 1953

I've been working evenings and weekends to prepare the upstairs apartment for the Cerar family.

Monday, August 31, 1953

It was 94°F in the shop today. I worked hard. Our foreman Al said "take it easy!"

In the evening, I went to see Mr. Mihelič and signed the eviction notice for the M. family. Cilka found their cat dead in the basement. When Mrs. M. leaves the apartment or when she's busy entertaining her "friends," she leaves her two year old son tied to the fence outside - like a dog.

The Cerar family moved their furniture into the upstairs apartment.

Tuesday, September 1, 1953

It was so hot last night I slept outside on the



Our son Joe at 6 months, September, 1953.

porch. Today it was 94°F in the shop and 98°F outside.

Wednesday, September 2, 1953

I slept on the porch again. The temperature hit 102°F today.

Mrs. M. begged me to let her stay. She offered me rent money and promised there would be no more trouble. I wasn't convinced.

At the shop, I worked hard despite the heat. I felt sick and was going to leave early, but then Mr. Risher said we might not work at all for the next 6 days. After a while, he corrected that and

said we would work 5 hours a day. I decided I couldn't come back at all if it didn't cool off.

Thursday, September 3, 1953

I didn't go to work today. I feel sick and it's still terribly hot. My weight is down to 123 pounds from 140 last year.

Saturday, September 5, 1953

Our neighbor John Vokač recommended I drink tea with gin. I went and bought a pint (my first time). I don't like it.

The temperature finally dropped to 80°F and I can sleep again.

Sunday, September 6, 1953

Nice weather today. In the afternoon, we walked with the boys to look at the freeway construction on E. 55th and Lakeshore.

In the evening, Roman Švajger and Milica Žonta came to visit. Roman will be going to the seminary in Cincinnati.

Monday, September 7, 1953, Labor Day

I installed electric wires for Cerar's refrigerator and fixed the windows. Everything takes more time than I expect.

The temperature dropped to 64°F during the day and 49°F at night. Now I

can work again!

Thursday, September 10, 1953

Mr. Mihelič came to tell me that the court approved our request to evict the M. family. They will have to move out in 10 days.

In the evening, Matevž Hočever brought a tape recorder. For the first time, I heard a recording of my own voice.

Friday, September 11, 1953

My friend Karl finally passed his driver's test, but he had to pay about \$200.

Thursday, September 17, 1953

Mrs. M. begged for a delay in the eviction until the end of the month. After checking with the attorney, I agreed, on the condition that she pay



We often took walks to the lakeshore to look at the freeway construction. This is the view looking east from East 55th. The coal-fired power plant put out so much black soot that it was sometimes hard to dry bedsheets on the clothesline before they got dirty from the soot. September, 1953.

September's rent by Monday. She no longer has visitors night or day.

Roman Švajger returned from the seminary in Cincinnati after 8 days. He realized that the priesthood is not right for him.

The Cerar family (in the upstairs apartment) bought a television and invited us to come watch.

Sunday, September 20, 1953

Beautiful weather. In the afternoon, I took son John to see Karel Mauser's play "Kaplan Klemen" in the St. Clair Slovenian National Home. It was produced by Liga (the League of Slovenian American Catholics) and was well done.

Tuesday, September 22, 1953

At the shop, the foreman was upset about the poor quality of our work. The cast iron is so hard and brittle that the threads crumble as we cut them.

Wednesday, September 23, 1953

Mrs. M. hasn't paid her rent as she promised.

At the shop, they brought lots of new parts to work on. We'll have enough work for Saturdays and 10 hours a day next week. O.K.!

Thursday, September 24, 1953

The M. family received a letter from the court that they will be forcibly evicted tomorrow if they don't leave by 10 p.m. tonight.

Saturday, September 26, 1953

Nothing happened with the M. family yesterday. Today they finally moved out. Mr. M. said this house isn't worth \$3,000 - it's all rotten in the

basement. He's partially right.

Sunday, September 27, 1953

At St. Vitus, we got a new priest, Father J. Varga.

In the afternoon, the Kete family came to look at the empty apartment; then also Rudi Drmota, Jakob Fortuna, Karl Erznožnik and the Ovsenek family. Jože Kete came back in the evening with \$48 for October. We chose a wallpaper. Then two hours later, Mrs. Kete came back and canceled everything. I gave her their money back. Mr. Kete promised to work for me for a day to make up for the trouble.

Monday, September 28, 1953

Mr. Kete came and prepared the kitchen in the empty apartment for wallpapering.

In the evening, our sponsor Mary Brezic from Willard, Wisconsin arrived for a visit. We still call her "Aunt" as we did when we lived with her and Mr. Brezic on their farm during our first six months in America.

We would normally be very happy to see Aunt Mary, but just now, everybody in the family is sick and throwing up.

Tuesday, September 29, 1953

Although I still felt sick, I went to work this morning. I only lasted till noon and went to see the doctor. He gave me a shot and pills.

At 10 p.m. I went with "Aunt" Mary to the railroad station downtown. She complimented me on the houses: she thinks we made a good purchase.

Monday, October 5, 1953

I enrolled in an evening English course taught

by Mr. R. Moore.

After 5 years, I received my first letter from Frau Rühlicke, an old friend in East Germany. Our correspondence began during the war, when I ordered a machine from her husband's factory. I didn't have the proper ration cards, but she was willing to accept a different type of ration card. Our business and correspondence continued through the war. When the war-time shortages and other problems got much worse in Slovenia, I complained to her about that. In her reply, she tried to revive my spirits by reminding me that fortune never falls on sagging shoulders.

But hard times came for her, too. Towards the end of the war, two bombs fell on their factory. The first bomb buried her husband, but the second one uncovered him, still alive. Other bombs destroyed everything in the city. The only thing left standing was the factory's chimney, but after the war, the neighbors took that down and used the bricks to rebuild their houses. Her husband became so depressed, he shot himself. She went to Munich, where they had a home, but found that the Allied troops had thrown out all the furniture and burned it.

I wrote to Frau Rühlicke and reminded her of the encouragement she had earlier given to me.

Friday, October 9, 1953

Our ad appeared in the "Ameriška Domovina" today: "5 room apartment with bathroom for rent. Inquire at 5516 Carry Ave."

Very soon a number of people came to look at the apartment: Mrs. Zupančič from Glass Ave., with some friends. then Melaher, Petrovčič, Valenšak and others. Finally Mr. T., who didn't seem completely satisfied, offered me \$60 and I agreed.

Sunday, October 11, 1953

Mr. and Mrs. Hace are celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary today.

Monday, October 12, 1953

I worked on preparing the apartment and missed the English course.

Wednesday, October 14, 1953

I bought six 4' x 8' pieces of plywood at Fleishman's and other lumber at Erie Lumber.

At Erie Lumber, I asked how much of a discount they would give me if I paid cash. They said I could get a 3% discount if I paid on 30 day credit, but no discount for cash. I can't understand this. In Europe, the sooner we paid, the less we paid. I'm beginning to believe the saying, "Whatever was right in Europe must be wrong to be right in America."

Thursday, October 15, 1953

Mr. Rihtar helped me put up new plywood walls in the empty apartment. Cilka worked on the plaster walls and prepared them for wallpapering.

Sunday, October 18, 1953

Mr. T. cut linoleum for the kitchen floor all afternoon. He doesn't know what he's doing and he's not willing to listen. He and his wife have one child. They don't have anything and they don't pray.

Monday, October 19, 1953

In the evening, I worked on connecting the heater in T's apartment and missed the English course again.

Friday, October 23, 1953

The papers are writing about a possible war

breaking out for Trieste, which was not settled at the end of World War II. The Anglo-Americans want to give it to Italy, but Tito is threatening war. They say that all men aged 18 - 55 in Yugoslavia are being drafted.

At the shop, there was a collection for Mr. Gosar, who has been in the hospital for 3 days for a hernia.

Saturday, October 24, 1953

At 7:45 a.m. we went to a Mass at St. Vitus for Rafko Žonta, who died in Korea this July.

Thursday, October 29, 1953

The paycheck today was for \$140 plus a bonus of \$74 - more than I expected!

In the evening, I went to the first meeting of the Norwood Community Council. The speaker was police chief Storey.

Saturday, October 31, 1953

I worked all day in the Cerar and T. apartments. In the evening, we watched a Slovenian program on the T.V. in Cerar's apartment.

All our renters have paid their rent for November, altogether \$122 for 4 apartments.

Tuesday, November 3, 1953

Božo Lorber had his first child, a girl.

Thursday, November 5, 1953

I went to Brodnik's on St. Clair and to Sears to shop for a gas heater for the T. apartment and a washing machine for us. In the evening, Mr. Brodnik came to our house. I ordered both for \$254 and paid \$150 down.

Friday, November 6, 1953

Mr. Brodnik delivered a Maytag washing machine and a Thompson gas heater without a thermostat. I'm not satisfied.

Saturday, November 7, 1953

I installed an electric outlet for the heater fan and a pipe for the gas. Mr. Brodnik convinced me to keep the heater.

Monday, November 9, 1953

I waited for Mr. Brodnik to come show us how to light the heater and missed my English course again.

Tuesday, November 10, 1953

Mr. Brodnik came, but he didn't know how to make the heater work properly.

Wednesday, November 11, 1953

The "gas man" came and he also didn't know how to get the heater working right - it burns too hot.

Saturday, November 14, 1953

From 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. I worked on pulling out the old gas pipes in the ceiling of Cerar's apartment. That's how they used to light the ceiling lights. I fixed two electric lights and installed a new one in T's apartment.

Sunday, November 15, 1953

In the afternoon, we attended the blessing of the new bells at St. Vitus.

Monday, November 16, 1953

Last night, I forgot to wind the clock and overslept this morning. I was almost an hour late to work.

In the evening, Mr. Gordon, the traveling salesman for Electrolux vacuum cleaners, came with the receipt for our payment.

Sunday, November 22, 1953

The Erznožnik family came to help us celebrate Cilka's nameday. Mici brought "štraube", Cilka made a potica, and I bought some Bordeaux wine.



Tuesday, November 24, 1953

Son Joe is already walking at 9 months; Tony and John are playing with toy cars they received from St. Nicholas. December 6, 1953.

The shop gave me a 15-pound turkey for Thanksgiving.

Thursday, November 26, 1953, Thanksgiving

Cilka says we've "ordered" another child - a fourth boy?

My sister writes from Slovenia that the police are asking for my picture and address.

We went to church at 9 a.m, then I worked on the heater in Cerar's apartment.

At noon, we had Thanksgiving dinner: soup with "omlete" (thin, cut up pancakes), potatoes, lettuce, turkey, cranberry and potica.

In the afternoon, I worked on our heater, fixed the windows in the basement and other things.

Friday, November 27, 1953

It's ten years since the communists drafted me at gun point (from which I escaped) and since they killed my friends Anže Zajc and Jože Žakelj-Prapošk.

This month I earned the least (\$278) and spent the most (\$600).

Tuesday, December 1, 1953

We have enough work at the shop for 40 hours a week. Rudi Knez and Lorber are also working on the tapping machines.

Thursday, December 3, 1953

Cilka went to see Dr. O'Donnell, who said everything is fine.

Saturday, December 5, 1953

This morning, I went downtown: I bought grapes at the market, a blanket at Richman's, and got a book about John Cabot (for the English course) at the library. In the afternoon, I bought pajamas at Bronffman's, a coat at Anzlovar's, and snow boots at Majer's for the boys. I spent \$40.

In the evening, I went to listen to a speech by Bishop Rožman.

Tuesday, December 8, 1953

The shop foreman called together all the workers to talk about quitting time. From now on, we have to work at the machines until 5 minutes before closing. Then we clean up the machines, and only at quitting time can we go to the bathroom to clean up ourselves. Up till now, we've been turning off the machines at 15 minutes to the hour. After talking with all the workers, the foreman took me and Rudi Knez into the office and said the boss was angry that Knez and I started cleaning the machines yesterday at 20 minutes before closing.

Friday, December 18, 1953

The waterpipes in the bathroom froze. I warmed them for more than an hour, then used rags to wrap the pipes that are next to the window.

Sunday, December 20, 1953

I went to Mass at 7 a.m., then listened to the Slovenian radio hour from 8 - 9 a.m. Then we had visitors: Mary Kolenc, Maksa Strel, the Erznožnik family, Frances Salmič, and in the evening, Tone Zupančič. The women were in our neighborhood to pay their respects for Marijana Puc, who died on Dec. 16 at the age of 84. She used to live in this area, then moved to Arizona and elsewhere. She used beads to buy furs from the Indians, learned many languages and lived through many things.

Monday, December 21, 1953

I got my paycheck and a bonus of \$83.40. I'll be able to pay back \$500 of the loan from Milica for the house. I'm very happy.

Wednesday, December 23, 1953

The shop gave me an 18 pound turkey, but it looks bony. Yesterday we set up a Christmas tree on our Edison gramophone. The boys are happy.

Thursday, December 24, 1953

We worked at the shop from 7 - 11:15 a.m., then cleaned the machines. At 11:30, we had a party. We had sardines, ham, bread, pop and whiskey. I took pictures and didn't eat and drink much. At 1 p.m. we wished each other "Merry Christmas" and went home.

At the party and later at home, I thought about how I will probably not be working at Risher's a year from now.

In the evening, we prayed one decade of the Rosary with the Cerar family in their apartment, then two more in ours. They brought a statue of the Virgin Mary from Švajger's. At 11:20 p.m., Cilka and the Cerar family went to midnight Mass while I stayed home with the boys and listened on the radio to singing from the cathedral.

Friday, December 25, 1953, Christmas

Our fifth Christmas in America. We went to Mass at 8 a.m, and to devotions at 2:30.

Milica joined us for dinner. She still can't accept that her brother Rafko died in Korea. It's been almost 6 months since the tank he was in drove over a mine. If the war had ended a few days earlier, he would still be alive.

In the evening, we had prayers with the Cerar family. The Rihtar and Švajger families visited.

Sunday, December 27, 1953

Menart's radio hour is the best Slovenian program.

In the afternoon, Tone Peternel took us to a board meeting of K.S.K.J. number 172 on West 130th.. After the meeting, there was food and Santa Claus brought presents for the kids.

Wednesday, December 30, 1953

Our shop's owner, Mr. Risher, laid off 4 workers from the day shift, and 4 from the night shift.

I sent a package to my father in Slovenia for his nameday.

Thursday, December 31, 1953

Mr. Risher laid off another 2 workers. He said they'll be called back soon - he hopes. I have a headache and pain in my knee.

At home, our heater stopped working and I can't get it going again.

Saturday, January 2, 1954

In the evening, I went to hear a presentation by Mr. I. Račič and Anton Grdina. Mr. Grdina advised us to

travel: "Travel as much as you can! Money spent on travel is a good investment."

Mr. Račič often writes in the "American Home." I thanked him for publishing information to help us convert from European to American sizes for shoes, clothes, hats, etc.. Without that, it's very hard to explain what we need when we're shopping. I asked him to get a picture of a thermometer showing both Celsius and Fahrenheit so we would know how cold it is. He asked me to bring him a picture and said he would get it published. (Later he somehow got one himself and then had it published a number of times. I still have it.)

Sunday, January 3, 1954

Matevž Hočevar tape-recorded my translation of



Matevž Hočevar often visited the Žakelj family. He rented our garage, where he worked on his inventions. He hoped to get patents for his ideas for better automobile brakes and other things. Also on the picture is our Christmas tree, set on a hand-winding Edison gramophone. The gramophone played 1/4 inch thick 78 rpm records. January, 1954.

regulations regarding patent protections. We worked on that both afternoon and evening, and still have more to do. He is using our garage to work on various inventions, including better automobile brakes and a boat that would hover over water.

Monday, January 4, 1954

It was morning before I fell asleep last night and then I slept so soundly I didn't get up in time for work. Cilka woke me at 6:20. I took the bus to work and arrived a half hour late. Not a good way to start a new year!

Wednesday, January 6, 1954

In the evening I went to English class and read about an American researcher, John Cabot.

Thursday, January 7, 1954

There are rumors about more layoffs at the shop, but they're not true. In the evening, Matevž and I finished recording my translation of the patent protection regulations.

Friday, January 8, 1954

Many of my co-workers earned more than \$5,000 last year, but I earned only \$4,867, because I was out sick for more than a week. If I continue to earn this much, I'll be able to pay off our mortgage in three years. But people are predicting a recession; I will be satisfied if I earn as much as I did in 1951 and 1952 (which was much less than 1953).

Tuesday, January 12, 1954

It's cold and we've had 4 inches of

new snow, but our new heater is on strike. Sometimes it won't light, and sometimes it goes out when it shouldn't.

Wednesday, January 13, 1954

I waited for the "gas man" till 10 p.m. and missed English class again.

Thursday, January 14, 1954



The author with his three sons. January, 1954.

Our shop owner, Bill Risher, says we will start working only 3 days a week. This year is not starting well.

Friday, January 15, 1954

The “gas man” finally fixed our heater.

Saturday, January 16, 1954

In the evening, I went to a meeting of the S.K.A.S. (the Slovenian Catholic Academic Elders). Karel Mauser spoke about Slovenian Catholic writers.

Monday, January 18, 1954

Bill laid off Paul Kaal, Joe Kristanc, Rudi Knez, Lipovšek, Lamernik and an American. There will be 4 - 6 more layoffs coming. Now there are 30 of us left; I am 12th or 13th in seniority.

The cast iron we are working on is poor quality and difficult to machine properly. It's easy to produce scrap. A worker can get fired for producing scrap.

Wednesday, January 20, 1954

The laid off workers got their paychecks, and then were told they could come back next Monday. But some have already found work elsewhere. Joe Kristanc got a job at the Hill Co. on St. Clair and E. 23rd. Božo Lorber got a job at “Jet Die-Development,” where he will work six 10-hour days per week at \$2.35 an hour.

Thursday, January 21, 1954

The future looks better at the shop - they say we'll have lots of work in February. I got my second paycheck - the income tax withholding is lower, but Social Security is higher.

Thursday, January 28, 1954

In the evening, I helped Božo Lorber with his income tax filing for last year.

Sunday, January 31, 1954

In the afternoon, I took son John to the church auditorium, where Anton Grdina was showing movies from his world travels.

Monday, February 1, 1954

Everyone in our family, including Cilka, has the flu.

Tuesday, February 2, 1954

I bought a bottle of wine for Blaž Hace's 75th birthday. He's given us many toys for the children and furnishings for our house.

Friday, February 5, 1954

Johnny Legan worked for 4 hours in Cerar's apartment to install copper pipes for a new kitchen sink. We bought the sink at Grdina hardware for \$127. Mrs. Cerar loaned me \$50 to help pay for it. I'll pay her back at \$2 a month.

I had been worried about all the requests from the Cerar family for improvements in their apartment, but now I see that they're very reasonable. They understand that I don't have the money to do everything they want. If they really want something, they pay for it and then we work out something like we did for the sink, or we deduct it from the next rent.

Saturday, February 6, 1954

At 1 a.m., water came running down into our kitchen from Cerar's apartment above us. The new pipes were not sealed. I turned off the water, but didn't get back to sleep till 5 a.m.

Sunday, February 7, 1954

Johnny Legan and I worked for 5 hours to install the new sink. He asked for only \$10 for 6 hours of work.

Friday, February 12, 1954

Our son John received 21 Valentine's day cards at school. He's happy.

Saturday, February 13, 1954

I went to the new notary public, Anton Novak, at 6218 St. Clair, for help with my tax return. I'll get a refund of \$108.47. He charged me \$5, which is the amount by which he increased my refund.

Tuesday, February 16, 1954

It's too hot - almost 70°F. I went to Mandel's shoe store to buy a pair of new shoes for myself for \$13.30. They took back another pair I had just bought which were already falling apart.

Dr. Meršol came to see our son John this evening. John is coughing and has a temperature of 39°C. Dr. Meršol said he has measles; Tony and Joe will probably get them, too, in 11 days.

Wednesday, February 17, 1954

John is covered with red blotches. He sleeps a lot and talks loudly in his sleep.

Thursday, February 18, 1954

At the shop, an oil can fell on my toe. The toe is black and hurts.

Saturday, February 20, 1954

I fixed the water leak damage in our kitchen ceiling and then worked on the locks in our apartment and Cerar's. Our refrigerator needs repair and the heater needs a thermostat. We've

had lots of unexpected expenses this month.

In the evening, I went to a meeting of the S.K.A.S. at St. Vitus school. Mr. Sodja made a presentation about the Christian philosophy of life. About 30 people attended. Mr. Sodja was the director of the regional health insurance fund in Ljubljana, so he also talked about that. He said the Ljubljana region (which included our home town) had one of the best programs. I told him about the problems we had getting coverage for urgent medical needs in our town. When I had ulcers, I couldn't get the newer, more effective medication. When the doctor said I urgently needed dental work, the health insurance wouldn't pay for me, even though I knew they were paying for dental work for the doctor's friend. For most of us outside of Ljubljana, the prescription for all illnesses was powdered aspirin (they didn't have tablets then).

At the meeting, I also told them about three young men from our town who became very sick, but the health insurance refused to pay for their hospitalization. One of them was my wife's brother, Polde; his hospitalization was finally paid for by the fund for war orphans, since their father had died in World War I. Polde and the second man got better, but the third one could not get the medical care he needed and he died. After I talked about this at the meeting today, Mr. Sodja said, "Why didn't you come see me back then? I would have taken care of this." If we had such good insurance, why would we need special intervention?

My brother Vlado sent me the first part of "The History of the People of Yugoslavia." Anton Košir visited us for the first time.

Thursday, February 25, 1954

Last night, at 2 a.m., a car ran over Joe Slak and Viktor Potokar at E. 55th and Marquette. They were walking home from a bar.

Friday, February 26, 1954

At the shop, I washed parts in a chemical solution all day. My hands hurt from the chemicals.

Saturday, February 27, 1954

At 10 a.m., Matevž Hočevar and I went to Mass and then to Calvary Cemetery for Slak and Potokar's funeral. There were about 50 cars in the procession, all belonging to D.P.'s (displaced persons).

In the evening, I went to a meeting of the S.L.S. (the Slovenian People's Party) in Knaus Hall. About 200 people listened to Dr. Krek talk about the political situation in Europe. He sees no prospects for change. We will probably never be able to return to our homes.

Sunday, February 28, 1954

Our sons Tony and Joe have the measles.

Our renter, Mr. T, broke a step on the porch and demanded that I immediately make new steps.

Monday, March 1, 1954

We had about 8 inches of snow in the morning, and then 14 by evening. I made it to work on time. Some of the workers didn't get there till 9:30 and 4 didn't make it at all.

In the U.S. Congress, three Puerto Ricans fired about 25 shots and wounded five congressmen.

Tuesday, March 2, 1954

From 6 - 6:20 a.m., I helped Miro Erdani shovel snow, so he could get his car out on the street. My heart was beating hard.

I've paid for half of the house. I still owe \$5,700.

Wednesday, March 3, 1954

Last night we had rain, then snow this afternoon. Bill Risher said we don't have to come to work tomorrow if the roads are bad. Many factories and schools are closed.

Thursday, March 4, 1954

We had another 8 inches of snow. Miro Erdani tried to drive some of us to work in the blizzard, but we only made it as far as Gordon Park. This is the first time we've missed work because of snow. By noon we had 24 inches. Many stores are closed. Erdani said we won't try to get to work tomorrow.

Friday, March 5, 1954

Only 16 out of 32 workers made it to work yesterday. Mirko Boh came back home at 9:30 p.m. instead of 4. Lake Shore Blvd and St. Clair are completely blocked. The police are directing plows and earth-moving equipment to move the snow.

I prepared an order for an electric drill and a pot from Pillsbury Mills. When we buy flour, they include coupons which we can use for rewards.

Monday, March 8, 1954

We went back to work today; the roads are open.

Thursday, March 11, 1954

Mirko Boh and Roman Švajger have been drafted and will have to report for military duty in April. Non-citizens are subject to the draft, just like citizens.

In the evening, we watched the film "Quo Vadis?" It was beautiful!

Saturday, March 13, 1954

I went to Public Hall downtown for the “Home and Flower Show.” Very nice!

Sunday, March 14, 1954

In the afternoon, we went to a Baraga celebration in the Slovenian National Home.

Friday, March 19, 1954

Lorber and I have been working on the tapping machines all week. We have plenty of work.

Saturday, March 20, 1954

Today I drew bobbin lace patterns all day for Mrs. Salmič.

I argued with our renter Mr. T. Their apartment has water dripping from the walls and ceilings. He’s mad because I won’t let him divide their apartment in two. He wants to rent out one part. I asked him to find another place to live.

Wednesday, March 24, 1954

At English class this evening, I spoke (in English) about my vacation in Austria in 1943. It was my first and best vacation.

Saturday, March 27, 1954

I went downtown and paid Real Estate Tax of \$65.57 for 6 months.

In the evening, I went to a meeting of Christian workers. Mr. Melaher spoke to the 13 people present about dishonest insurance companies. Then there was a debate led by R. Lukež, who argued that, as prices rise, workers’ pay should rise in the same amount. Jakob Žakelj argued that that wouldn’t work.

Sunday, March 28, 1954

I continued thinking about the debate last night and couldn’t fall asleep till 1:30.

In the afternoon, we went to visit Blaž Hace, who is sick. Mrs. Hace gave us a lot of clothes for the boys.

Friday, April 2, 1954

Mirko Boh and Roman Švajger put in their last day of work before they leave for the military. After work they invited us to Kozan’s for a farewell drink. I had half a beer.



Blaž Hace was the school crossing guard for St. Vitus students, usually at Norwood and St. Clair. Here he’s posing on Glass Ave. with our son John, who was then in kindergarten. May, 1954.

Saturday, April 3, 1954

I went to Lake Erie Lumber on Marquette and bought lumber to fix the steps broken by Mr. T, and to make a new outside door to the basement on the back house. I put up the door by 4 p.m. in 20°F.

Sunday, April 4, 1954

Son John is sick with a fever and stomach pain.

At 8 a.m I went to St. Vitus to hear a sermon by Father Odilo, a missionary. He spoke again at 10 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.

Monday, April 5, 1954

At 5:30 a.m. I went to Father Odilo's Mass, then to work at 6:15.

Tuesday, April 6, 1954

Dr. Meršol said John has angina because he drank cold pop Saturday evening at the Slovenian school program.

Our foreman Al is in a bad mood because we have lots of raw material, but not enough orders.

Wednesday, April 7, 1954

In the evening, I built new steps for both the front and rear porches.

Saturday, April 17,

1954

Tomorrow is Easter. I went to the market downtown and bought 6 pounds of grapes at 12 ½ cents a pound, 2 dozen oranges (one at 30 cents and one at 45), 3 dozen eggs at 55 cents a dozen, and other things. In the afternoon, Cilka, John and Tony took food to St. Vitus to be blessed.

Sunday, April 18, 1954, Easter

I went to the Easter service at 5 a.m., then to Mass at 8, and litanies at 2:30. We only had one visitor today. A boring day!

Tuesday, April 20, 1954

Small holes have begun to appear in the windshields of many cars. People think these may be caused by the atomic bomb tests on the Bikini Islands on January 26 and March 31.



Our son Tony is playing on a tractor that was given to us by Blaž Hace. His brother Joe is next to him. The view is down Carry Ave in front of our house toward East 61st. May, 1954.

Thursday, April 22, 1954

We received a letter from Cilka's brother, Rupert, in Slovenia. Her other brother, Polde, died in Zagreb on April 16, of tuberculosis.

We're so far away from home. What about our parents and our other brothers and sisters? Will we ever see them again?

Friday, April 23, 1954

I arranged for 10,000 dinars (about \$20) to be sent to Polde's wife Mici and daughter Irena by way of Cilka's sister Julka in Ljubljana.

In the evening, I worked in the yard and bought a lawnmower (rotary push mower) from Joe Kovačič for \$5.

Sunday, April 25, 1954

This afternoon we had visitors: the Salmič family, Karel Erznožnik and Jakob Fortuna. Mrs. Salmič brought flowers and lettuce. In the evening, I helped Ernest Zupan study for his driver's test.

Friday, April 30, 1954

R. Jablonsky replaced one-fourth of the roof on our house for \$125.

Saturday, May 1, 1954

Mr. T. said he can't pay his rent. He hasn't

worked for two weeks, and won't be getting assistance for another 5 weeks. What should I do? Is he going to cheat me out of a month or two? I told him he had to pay for this month by tomorrow. I know he can afford it.

Monday, May 3, 1954

Mr. T. still hasn't paid his rent. Cilka talked with him, and he promised he would pay.

Tuesday, May 4, 1954

John Foster Dulles (the American Secretary of State) lost the support of Britain and France in the diplomatic battle for Korea against Russia and China. I think America will need to prepare itself for World War III ...

Mr. T. paid his rent, but I told him he will need to move out by the end of the month because of all the problems we have had with him. He



On our front porch are: (in the back) Jakob Fortuna, Cilka Žakelj, Rudi Drmota, Rudi's sister Mary Jereb, Mici and Karl Erznožnik; in the front are Anton Žakelj, Jolanda Erznožnik, Joe and John Žakelj. June 1954.

didn't say anything.

Wednesday, May 5, 1954

After 7 months we're working on Saturdays at the shop again.

In the evening, I went to Knaus Hall for the S.L.S. meeting. Prof. Lipovec spoke to about 100 people about Slovenia's geopolitical situation.

Sunday, May 9, 1954

I went to Lieberman's and bought cloth for my sister Julka. I put together a 12 pound package to mail to my mother.

Friday, May 14, 1954

Son John and I went to Norwood Library to watch movies about clocks, harpsichords and California.

Sunday, May 16, 1954

This afternoon, I went to the Arena (for the first time) for the "Do It Yourself" show. Then I went to Grdina's bowling alley to watch the K.S.K.J. bowlers.

Tuesday, May 18, 1954

A mover took the T. family's furniture to Missouri, but Mr. T. will be staying till June 2. They caused a great deal of damage to the walls, doors and

windows because they didn't heat the apartment last winter. As a result, moisture constantly collected on the cold walls.

Mr. T. is very strange: when his child got one type of sickness, he treated him with gasoline; when he got a different sickness, he used petroleum. He's such a jealous husband that he never lets his wife out of the house.

Mr. Sodja is interested in the apartment, but I've already promised it to prof. Ovsenek.

Sunday, May 23, 1954

We went to "open house" at St. Vitus School. There were many things that we couldn't understand. Most of the nuns and teachers do not speak Slovenian.

Tuesday, May 25, 1954

I got a report card for my English class. I received the second best grade in the class. Out



Ernest Zupan with his new 1950 Chevrolet. July, 1954.

of about 50 students at the beginning, only 18 continued to the end and 10 of those passed. We had a party till 9 p.m. with singing, music and food. No more school for me!

Sunday, May 30, 1954

Mr. and Mrs. Ovsenek came to look at the apartment, but Mr. T. wouldn't let them in.

Monday, May 31, 1954

I told Mr. T. to have the apartment clean by tomorrow and to return the keys before they leave. At 11 p.m., the T. family left in a taxi. They left the keys in the kitchen and everything in disorder. Mr. T. had used an ax to try removing the linoleum from the walls and floor, but the glue was too strong.

Tuesday, June 1, 1954

I went to Brodnik's to exchange the heater that hasn't been working right. John Brodnik had promised he would take it back if we had problems, but now he refuses. He said Frank Brodnik would come look at it.

Saturday, June 5, 1954

I received a letter from Slovenia that my acquaintance Anton Anzelm hanged himself soon after he was released from prison. Before the war, he had a store that sold shoemaking supplies. During the war, he tried to hide his supplies, but the communists discovered them. They took everything (about 17 wagonloads) and, after the war, sentenced him to life in prison for not cooperating with the revolution. After about 8 years, he was pardoned and returned home. But the loss of everything he had owned was too much for him to bear and he decided to end his life.

Today, for the third time, we took son John to

Dr. Ukmar for pains in his throat and coughing.

Sunday, June 6, 1954

Mr. Rihtar drove us to the Chardon Rd shrine to a Mass for the victims of the revolution in Slovenia.

In the afternoon, we walked to the lakeshore. The new freeway is almost done.



Cilka Žakelj paints the porch on our new home while son Tony peeks from behind the door. Not visible up on the ladder is Karl Erznožnik, who would go up where I didn't dare. July, 1954.

Wednesday, June 9, 1954

Max Erste, John Krepfl and others began working at the shop.

Saturday, June 12, 1954

Prof. Ovsenek and I prepared new linoleum for their apartment. Every day he thinks of a new improvement and never asks about the cost. I told him it will cost more if he wants a modern apartment. He wants to move in by the end of the month, but I'm not sure I want that. Mr. T. caused so much damage that I've started hating renters. All the painting and wallpapering I did for Mr. T. was destroyed.

Sunday, June 13, 1954

Today, on my 47th birthday, I weigh 126 pounds, compared to 140 pounds two years ago. The heat and my worries keep me from sleeping.

Cilka gave me a birthday cake and the children gave me candies. Karl and his family also came and drove us to Eddy Rd. But I was still in a bad mood about all the damage done by Mr. T.

Rudi Drmota bought a 1949 Oldsmobile for \$650, Karl Erznožnik bought an air conditioner for \$350. Others are enjoying what they have, but I just work every day till 10 p.m.

Wednesday, June 23, 1954

The Ovsenek family moved into the rear

apartment. We still haven't talked about the rent.

Thursday, June 24, 1954

Prof. Ovsenek finally asked about the rent and paid for one week.

Wednesday, June 30, 1954

90°F. At work, Bill Risher said the tapping machine is "not a two-man job." That means I no longer have someone to help me.

Thursday, July 1, 1954

We received checks for the upcoming two week vacation. We didn't work much: everyone is talking about vacation plans. I will work on our houses.

The new E. 55th street to Lakeshore Blvd. is open.



The Žakelj family, July 1954 .

Saturday, July 3, 1954

At Erie Lumber, I bought wood to fix the porch; at May Company, a double ladder (36 feet); at Kresge, a screen for the door; at the market, grapes and other fruit.

Sunday, July 4, 1954

In the morning, I walked with the boys along the new E. 55 to Lakeshore. In the afternoon, I visited Ernest Zupan, who has a new car.

Thursday, July 8, 1954

At 8 a.m., Karl Erznožnik, Cilka and I began preparing the house for painting. He worked higher up on the ladder (where I don't dare to go), and Cilka and I worked on the first floor. Karl is our best friend. I never have to ask him for help - he always just comes on his own. Sometimes I wonder how he knows when we need him.

Saturday, July 10, 1954

Every day we're painting from 8:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. I can't fall asleep till 1 a.m., but then I can sleep till 7 or 8. Sleeping late is the one good part of this vacation.

At Karl's suggestion, we painted the porch green. It's beautiful! This afternoon, Helen Cerar also helped. I'm pleased that we've got so much done.

Tuesday, July 13, 1954

It's so hot I slept only one hour last night. Even so, we worked till 7 p.m. and finished the painting. Karl wouldn't accept more than \$50 for five days of work.

Wednesday, July 14, 1954

This afternoon, it was 103°F - too hot to work,

and I was too tired. I was painting for 9 days at 10 - 12 hours a day. Painting both houses cost \$184, including \$80 for the paint, \$53 for the ladder and \$50 for Karl.

Thursday, July 15, 1954

Last night was cooler. I slept for 10 hours and would have slept longer, but the children woke me.

Sunday, July 18, 1954

This afternoon we went to the bazaar at St. Vitus. In the evening, we had friends visiting.

Monday, July 19, 1954

At 6 a.m. I went back to work after a two-week vacation. It's 90 °F. I'm tired.

Friday, July 23, 1954

I'm glad we won't be working overtime tomorrow or next week. The paycheck will be smaller, but 40 hours a week is enough work!

Tuesday, July 27, 1954

I was angry with Al, the foreman, when he threw out everybody's milk, including my quart bottle. Bill (the owner) had found a bottle of spoiled milk in the refrigerator and he told Al to throw everything out. I liked bringing hot coffee in my thermos and adding milk at the shop. Now, milk is no longer allowed in the shop refrigerator.

Wednesday, July 28, 1954

I told Al that I received a letter from my friend in East Germany and she sends him greetings (he immigrated from Germany some years ago). Both Al and I forgot about the milk.

Saturday, July 31, 1954

This morning we went to Mass for Rafko Žonta, who died in Korea a year ago. Then I went to the downtown market for fruit and other groceries.

Sunday, August 1, 1954

Last night we had a rainstorm. Today was 74°F and nice. We took the children to the Cleveland Zoo. Joe was very interested in everything, but Tony preferred to either go climbing or sleep.

Wednesday, August 4, 1954

Erste, Krepfl, Kristanc and others left our shop for work elsewhere because they're worried that we will soon all be laid off.



Thursday, August 5, 1954

I got my paycheck and a bonus of \$56 for April - June. The bonus is only half of what we got last year, so everyone is disappointed.

Cilka went to see Dr. Ukmar. He said that she either had a miscarriage or that there may be a fetus growing outside her uterus. He said she has weak blood and needs to rest more. Cilka is feeling very frightened.

Sunday, August 8, 1954

K.S.K.J. had a parade in our neighborhood, but

not many people showed up.

Karl and his wife visited this afternoon. Their daughter Jolanda is in Lakeside Hospital to have her tonsils removed.

The Žakelj and Erznožnik families on a picnic in the woods at the K.S.K.J. St. Joseph farm on White Rd. Son Tony is looking back at his father, who has just run to join the group after setting the camera's self-timer. September, 1954.

Last night I had a dream that I was fishing in deep, crystal clear water. I was trying to catch a fish which appeared to be large and bloody. When I caught it, it turned out to be a beautiful trout. This means that Cilka is not in danger!

Wednesday, August 11, 1954

Cilka is feeling better. She went to see Dr. Ukmar again and he says she will probably be all right.

Sunday, August 15, 1954

Rudi Drmota came with his new car. He said he just got his driver's license and invited us on an outing. Cilka put together food for a picnic and we went to the K.S.K.J. St. Joseph's farm on White Road. The children enjoyed playing in the woods and drinking ginger ale. This was Tony and Joe's first time outside the city.



The children often played on the horse swings at Grdina playground. This is our son John with Mike Rihtar and our youngest son Joe. September, 1954.

Monday, August 16, 1954

Son John is 6 years old today. Dragica Ovsenek gave him two pairs of socks.

Cilka has had 10 shots and is feeling much better, but Dr. Ukmar still isn't sure whether she's pregnant.

Saturday, August 21, 1954

Our neighbor, Mr. Modic, asked if we want to sell our houses. I said I would sell for \$25,000. Of course, I can't get that price.

Sunday, August 22, 1954

In the morning we walked with the boys to the lake, and in the afternoon, we went to the Catholic war veterans bazaar.

Monday, August 23, 1954

There's not enough work at the shop. Anyone who has not used up their vacation time has to stay home.

Saturday, September 4, 1954

In the afternoon we took the children to see the arrival of the first iron ore ship from Labrador. In the evening, I went with Rudi Drmota and Prof. Ovsenek to the 9th Street pier for the big celebration of the first ocean ship in Cleveland.

Sunday, September 5, 1954

In the morning, I went to Lieberman's and bought cloth for suits for two of my brothers in Slovenia.

In the afternoon, Karl drove us to a picnic at the K.S.K.J. St. Joseph farm. We gathered four baskets of elderberries. It was hot - 98°F.

Monday, September 13, 1954

I received letters from my brothers Joseph and John in Slovenia that our mother was very sick. She was unconscious all day on September 2, but then she became better.

My youngest brother, John, just returned from service in the Yugoslav army. This was the second time he had to serve in the military. The first time was with the Germans, during the war.

In January 1943, my brother John “volunteered” to serve in the *Reicharbeitsdienst*, the German work brigades. We were afraid that, if he had not done that, our family would have been forcibly relocated to Serbia or elsewhere. After six months in the work brigade, he was required to “volunteer” for the German military. He was sent to the Russian front, was captured by the Russians and became a prisoner of war. Even though the Russians had previously said they would treat Slovenians like brothers, he suffered terribly in the Russian POW camp. After the war, he returned home but then he was drafted into the Yugoslav military. They sent him to Primorsko, where he was assigned to build barracks. At first, everything went fine, but then his officers learned about his German military service. They treated him like a traitor, cut back his food rations and made him work hungry.

During the war, we were in constant danger from both the Germans and the communists, with the communists being much worse than the Germans. The Germans kept track of all men who were fit for military service. If they heard about anyone joining the communists, they would come with busses or trucks, capture everyone in that person’s family and relocate them to Serbia, or to Bavaria, to assign them all to farm labor. Sometimes the communists



On Sundays we often took walks along East 55th to the shore of Lake Erie. Here are sons Tony, Joe and John next to the East Ohio Gas Co. September, 1954.

would falsely tell the Germans that someone was helping the communists, so that the Germans would get rid of a family who was actually opposed to the communists.

The communists (“partisans”) decided to “mobilize” all men aged 16 - 40, supposedly to fight the Germans, but more importantly for the communists, to take over the country. Who gave them that right? They would come around

at night and take people away at gunpoint. That was how they tried to “recruit” me and Cilka to fight for them. They were like kidnapers, except they didn’t need any ransom, because they didn’t need money. People gave them everything they had - sometimes willingly and sometimes forcibly. When the communists did need money, they would go to a store, buy something small and pay for it with their own worthless 1,000 dinar bills. Then they would demand change back in German Marks.

Later in the war, I realized that the Germans knew that, under the Geneva accords, they were not allowed to draft men into the German army in the occupied countries. Shortly before the end of the war, the Germans asked me to be a policeman, but I refused. At the same time, my brother told them I could not go into the German military or police. The Germans then stopped bothering me.

Saturday, September 18, 1954

This morning, I walked with son John to Slovenian school at St. Vitus. Then Matevž Hočevar drove me to the post office so I could send two packages of new and used clothing to my brother Joseph. In return, my brother sometimes sends me money, sometimes bobbin lace which we try to sell here.

Wednesday, September 22, 1954

I received a letter from my brother Stanko in

Slovenia. At first, I was happy to get the letter. I didn’t notice that the envelope had a black border. Then I read the news - **our mother died on September 15 at 10:30 a.m.**

Thirty-two years ago, I went on a pilgrimage with my mother to Brezje. I prayed to God that I would die before she did. I did not think I would ever be able to bear her death. Next year in February, she and my father would have celebrated their golden anniversary.

Tonight, I went to bed and cried. I haven’t cried like this for many years. I couldn’t pray. I didn’t think a mother’s death could hit a person this way.

Thursday, September 23, 1954

At the shop, I couldn’t forget about my mother’s death, but I didn’t tell anyone.



Following old traditions, a funeral procession accompanied my mother’s body from our home to the cemetery. The children are in the lead, followed by a horse-drawn carriage carrying the coffin, and behind that the family and friends. September 17, 1954. Photo by ?

Friday, September 24, 1954

Jolanda finally returned home after her tonsil operation.

Monday, September 27, 1954

We have plenty of work at the shop. They're even telling us to work faster.

Wednesday, September 29, 1954

The Cleveland Indians lost a World Series game against the New York Giants 5 - 2.

Friday, October 1, 1954

The Indians lost another game against the Giants, 6 - 2.

Saturday, October 2, 1954

The Indians lost the fourth and final game of the Series. They call it "World" Series, but it only includes the U.S.

Monday, October 4, 1954

In London, an agreement was signed allowing Germany to re-arm itself. In Paris, another agreement divides Trieste between Italy and Yugoslavia.

Monday, October 11, 1954

I received two more

letters about my mother's death. On September 1, she had a heart attack while she was working on bobbin lace at home. My father was making shoes when he heard her fall. He ran over and found her on the floor unconscious. When she regained consciousness later, she was happy to see seven of her children around her. She said, "Because I was not afraid of you, now there's so many of you here with me." She didn't seem to notice that I was missing. I'm glad that she wasn't worried about me during her final days. She was sick during half of her life, often deathly sick and in great pain. We prayed for her often. Maybe that's exactly why we were all good children and stayed out of trouble.

When I was buying our home last year, she wrote and asked if there was any way she could help. I said that even if she had 1,000 dinar bills to send me, they would hardly buy me a needle here.



Holding candles in my mother's funeral procession are: my father (second from the left), my sisters Julka and Mici, and brothers Stanko, Ciril and Vlado (with his wife Alenka). September 17, 1954. Photo by ?

I haven't said much to my friends about my mother, so I'll write more about her here.

My mother was born Marija Gantar, on May 28, 1885, on a farm near my home town of Žiri, Slovenija. Her father died in an accident in the woods when she was 12. Her mother was a very tough woman. She built her own horse-drawn wagon and could curse like a butcher. But all her good qualities were erased by her love of alcohol. My mother's brother, Franc, went to work in America and came back with enough money to pay off their family's debts. For a while everything went fine. Then he got married and hardly a year later, he died and the family lost their farm. My mother went to live with her aunt, where she earned her keep by making bobbin lace. There she met my father, who was working nearby as a shoemaker's assistant. They got married when she was still 19. In a year, they had a son (Joseph), and a year later (in 1907), they had me. In all, they had 6 sons and 2 daughters.

The hardest part of my mother's life began when the first World War broke out, on July 26, 1914, when I was 7 years old. It was just three weeks after she had my twin brothers Ciril and Vlado. My father was among the first to be drafted for military service. It was the Austrian army, since Slovenia was still part of Austria at that time. My mother was left home alone with 6 young children and heavy debt, since they had just remodeled a house. Before he left, my father tried to make my mother feel better; he said he would be back in 14 days. The Serbs would soon be punished for murdering Franz Ferdinand, the successor to the Austrian throne.

But the war lasted not 14 days, but 4 years and 3 months. Soon everything was hard to get. Other countries got involved in the war: Russia declared war on Austria, Germany on Russia, France and England on Germany, and so on. My father became involved in heavy battles along the border between Italy and Austria.

From 1915 to 1918, we were at first hungry, and then literally starving. We had nothing at home except a small garden and a pig. Our aunt let us farm a field up on a nearby hill, but it was very rocky and impossible to plow. We would carry our wood ashes up there to fertilize the field, but it didn't produce much. Other people let us use part of their field for a year or two, but that one was too steep to plow and it was a half hour's walk from our house.

The government did help us somewhat, but not enough to live on. They gave us some corn flour and marmalade. We baked bread with that flour - it was so dry that it fell apart into crumbs and we had to always eat it from a bowl. The government also handed out white, wheat flour, but only to families that loaned large sums of money for the war effort.

The hunger, work and worry were such a strain on my mother that she became very sick. One morning, we noticed that her face was ashen, her eyebrows were swollen and her skin was shriveled. She said, "I have dropsy." As she often did when someone was very sick, she consulted a book by Kneip about home remedies. The book recommended the following treatment for dropsy: soak a linen sheet in the coldest water possible (with a little vinegar in the water), wrap the naked person in the sheet and cover them with blankets.

At first the person will tremble, but soon the cold wrap will so revive the blood that the person will begin to sweat profusely and the sweat will cleanse the body of all its sickness and impurity.

All day we urged our mother to take the Kneip treatment so she would get better, but she insisted on waiting till the evening. That night, she took the treatment, and the next morning we immediately noticed that the color had returned to her face and the swelling in her eyebrows had disappeared. She showed us the water in the bucket where she had rinsed the linen sheet after her treatment. The water was thick, as if someone had been washing intestines in it.

A few days later, Dr. Papež arrived in town on his usual circuit. He examined my mother and said that her blood had become weak due to



The author's family, at home in Slovenija. His mother and father are in the front. Also included are the children of his older brother and a friend of his priest brother. (The author took the picture on a self-timer and is standing on the far right). July, 1936.

malnutrition and lack of rest. But he didn't give her anything. She recovered well enough on her own to continue caring for us.

The fall of 1918 was the hardest. Even the corn flour ran out. When my father finally returned from the war on All Saints Day, all we had was a little potatoes, cabbage and carrots.

During the 1920's, mother again became very ill. My aunt had to help take care of us. We were very worried that mother would die and we prayed like never before. She got better, but then she became sick again many times. At first she had tuberculosis and then asthma.

When I was about 14, my mother had just recovered from one of her bouts of illness. I went with her on a pilgrimage to Brezje to thank the Blessed Virgin Mary for my mother's recovery. The train ride (my first) was quite an experience for me. After the train ride, we walked to Brezje, which was quite a distance, especially for a sick person. On the way, we met a woman who told us about a friend who had come there last year and had died soon after. My mother gave me a very thoughtful look. That made me worry and I prayed all the more fervently for her complete recovery.

We arrived towards night and found a room for the night. The next morning we went to confession at the church. In the church, I was impressed by the hundreds of crutches and artificial limbs that people had left (presumably after their cures.) It seemed strange to me that the famous picture of Mary was in a side chapel, with the main altar dedicated to St. Vitus.

My mother was always a very devout woman. If at all possible, she went to Mass every morning and tried to get her children to go with her. For her, every month had a special meaning: May was Mary's month, June was the month of the Blessed Heart of Jesus, October was rosary month, November was the month of all souls

and all saints, and December was the month of early morning services. First Fridays and first Saturdays were also very important. I would usually rather sleep than go to church. Once I asked my mother, "Why today? Because it's the first Monday in the week?"

My mother never took advantage of her illness; she worked whenever she could. In 1941, the Germans occupied our part of Slovenia and we learned that we might be forcibly evacuated. Mother did not happen to be sick at that time, but we begged her to stay in bed and look sick so we would not be relocated. Everyone knew that she was often sick, so it would be believable. But she refused and said, "I'm sick often enough, I don't need to also pretend. God will take care of us."

She believed so firmly in God's support that she often expressed her opinions publicly. When we warned her that it could be dangerous to speak out like that (especially under the communists), she replied, "What can they do to me if I speak the truth?!" She was absolutely convinced that God would not abandon people who were honest and forthright.

My mother's trust in God came from her unshakeable faith and her reading of the Bible and the lives of the saints. We were never allowed to doubt the teachings of the church. She followed the same rule as religious orders which require complete obedience to their spiritual superior. I remember a couple occasions where this led to a disagreement with my father.

My father was a board member of the church credit union, which was poorly managed by the pastor. My father recognized the problems and sometimes criticized the pastor. He never told our mother about this, but she found out from others. She asked him why they were arguing. He would never answer questions like that from her. If she started to preach that we all had to

love each other, he would get up from the table and leave.

I had the impression that my mother was not happy in her marriage. She often urged us (her children) to never get married: "Stay home, enjoy each other and work together."

In our family, we never talked about anything that had anything to do with sex. Everything sexual was considered dirty; every look and touch - unless it was absolutely necessary - was a sin. When I became a teen and had my first discharge, my mother noticed the stained bedsheet. She gave me a stern look and asked, "What were you doing last night? Don't you know that God sees and knows everything?!"

This upbringing, which denied or forbid everything sexual, left me with completely wrong ideas about something which is so important for human happiness. I was convinced that, for a married woman, life with a husband and caring for children and family must be total suffering and sacrifice for others. Because of my love for my mother, I respected all women and I could not imagine loving a woman, since that would mean condemning her to eternal suffering. Even later, when my friends got married and I stayed single, I didn't want to get married. I just wanted a friend that I could talk to. The sinfulness of sex was so instilled in the depths of my soul that I could not imagine how that could suddenly change after marriage.

My mother and father were like all other parents at that time: it would have been a scandal to kiss or hug in public or to show any sign of love. Like others, they never even referred to each other by name. In front of us, they were always just "ata" and "mama." It was impossible for us children to suddenly change from their primitive, puritanical customs to any public display of love.

Even so, our mother noticed whenever her children failed to show their love for her. Once, when she was sick, she wished she could have an orange. I went to all the stores in our town and rode my bike to the neighboring towns, but it was Sunday and most of the stores were closed. I returned without an orange and quietly endured her reproach that I must not love her, since I was not able to fulfill her wish.

Mother lived according to the Holy Bible and taught us to do the same. She often reminded us to never return evil with evil: "If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." Or, "Help anyone and everyone you can. If you can't help them, then leave them alone!"

Her feelings about government were based on her religious faith. Since she believed that government power was divine and that kings and emperors were God's representatives on earth, she condemned the assassination of Franc Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914. She supported the war against Serbia as punishment for that crime.

She often recited to us the song about the Spartan mother and the son who deserted his army: "The mother takes her son's sword and stabs him in the heart ..." The Bible story about the Maccabees encouraged her to fight the Germans when they occupied Slovenia. She was the first partisan. When she heard that the Germans were going to sterilize the women and send the men to work in underground munitions factories, she said: "I don't care about us women, but you men must never allow yourselves to be sent to Germany. I will make three backpacks: one for each of the men in our house. Into each pack I will place one change of underwear, socks and clothes; I will add dried bread and fruit, sugar and other food, so everything will be ready if you need to flee. You will have enough for three days; after three days, you should be able to find some honest people who will help you."

In 1943 I took that backpack with me when the communists “recruited” me at gunpoint. That was often their first step towards liquidating anyone who didn’t support them. The next day I fled from the communists but I was not able to take the pack with me. I never saw it again.

Even though mother wanted us all to stay at home, she was not opposed when I became seriously interested in Cilka. Mostly, she wanted what was best for her children. Later, when we were in the refugee camp, she wrote and said I should go anywhere in the world but not home, since everything was so bad in Slovenia after the war. Imagine a mother realizing that she may be telling her son to never come home again - there is nothing else that can express how sad and terrible those times were.

Wednesday, October 13, 1954

80°F today. Miro Erdani bought a 1951 Ford for \$1,300 plus his old car.

Thursday, October 14, 1954

Cilka and I went to the Arena to see the Ice Capades!! We celebrated our eighth anniversary.

Thursday, October 28, 1954

The shop is not paying any bonuses for the last 3 months. We don’t have much work, and it looks worse for the future. President Eisenhower says that the number of unemployed will go down from 3 million to 2.7 million, but I don’t believe him.

I received a letter from Slovenia with 12 photographs from my mother’s funeral. There were busloads of workers from the hospital in Ljubljana, where my brother Vlado is a doctor. They must like him a lot.

Saturday, October 30, 1954

I went to Slak Optical and got new glasses for \$15.45. In the afternoon, I worked in the basement. It seems everything in the house needs fixing!

Wednesday, November 3, 1954

I worked at the shop for 4 hours, after which Al said, “Go home!” There was no work to be done.

Thursday, November 4, 1954

The final results from this week’s elections were announced. In the Senate, we will have 48 Democrats, 47 Republicans and 1 independent. In the Congress, 232 Democrats and 203 Republicans. In Ohio, Governor Lausche was re-elected for the fifth time, with 212,000 more votes than Rhodes.

Tuesday, November 9, 1954

At the “Bled” agency, I ordered packages of food for Cilka’s mother (\$10.50) and for my father (\$18). I went to Broffman’s and ordered \$11 of cloth for my sister Mici. They still have shortages in Slovenia.

Wednesday, November 10, 1954

I took packages to the post office downtown and went to see the “Food and Home” display in the Public Auditorium. At May Co. I bought a “White” electric sewing machine for \$200, on the condition that I could return it if my wife doesn’t like it.

Cilka felt the sewing machine was much too expensive, so I took it back.

Friday, November 12, 1954

A salesman came to our home and showed us sewing machines for \$58 and \$190. The first one was no good, the second too expensive.

Saturday, November 13, 1954

We went to the St. Vincent de Paul store on Superior and E. 53rd. I bought an old suit and Cilka found a sewing machine for \$7. It uses a foot pedal for power and works fine.

Sunday, November 14, 1954

This afternoon, Karl Erznožnik drove us to the Westside, 4730 Broadview, where Ruth Jesenko will have her wedding. On the way back, we stopped and visited Mary Kolenc on W. 22. She showed us some furniture that we could have.

Wednesday, November 17, 1954

Both Cilka and I are often having dreams about our next child, always with bad signs: dirty water, fish, meat, priests and dead people. Last night I also dreamed about my mother, the first time since she died two months ago.

In the evening, Fortuna and I stripped the paint off the sewing machine, so I can refinish it.

Thursday, November 18, 1954

Bill Risher (the shop owner) finally asked who wants a turkey for Thanksgiving and who wants ham. I want turkey! There is also talk about 5 layoffs.

In the afternoon, a friend drove his truck twice to Kolenc's on West 22 to pick up a tall wardrobe, two chests of drawers, a chair, two beds and other things for us. I gave him \$8 for both trips.

Saturday, November 20, 1954

I received books from my brother Vlado in Slovenia: a grammar book for prof. Ovsenek, a cookbook for Cilka and an English-Slovenian dictionary for me.

Sunday, November 21, 1954

I wrote a letter to my father, then filled out citizenship forms for Mrs. Cerar.

Tuesday, November 23, 1954

The shop gave me a 23 pound turkey for Thanksgiving.

Wednesday, November 24, 1954

Today's check did not include a deduction for Social Security, which means I've earned more than the maximum taxable for Social Security, which is \$3,600.

Friday, November 26, 1954

I worked all day on refinishing the furniture we got earlier this week.

Tuesday, November 30, 1954

The shop received a new shipment of cast iron pieces to work on. Now some of us will need to work 10 hours a day.

In the evening I went shopping for presents for St. Nicholas. Mrs. Ovsenek helped pay for the presents.

Sunday, December 5, 1954

Last night, while the children slept, St. Nicholas brought lots of presents: a toy car for each boy, new slippers and many other things. The children were happy and played all day.

Monday, December 6, 1954

Al (the foreman) is not happy with the new pieces we are working on. The fault lies with the foundry that cast the iron. I noticed right away that the color was not right; you could see that the pieces were set out in the rain when they were still hot; they cooled and hardened too quickly.

In the evening, our heater went out. I tried to light it, but it wouldn't light. I called Brodnik's where I bought it, but no answer.

Wednesday, December 8, 1954

Mr. Brodnik said someone would come out to fix the heater, but nobody came. It's so cold in the house that the moisture is condensing on the walls. It's very cold!

Saturday, December 11, 1954

Finally a man came and fixed our heater

Sunday, December 12, 1954

This afternoon we went to see a play in the



The boys gaze with wonder at all the presents brought by St. Nicholas in the night. He brought new slippers, apples, cookies (store-bought, not homemade), photo flashbulbs for father, and for the boys, cars, trucks, and cowboy outfits. December 6, 1954.

Slovenian National Home on St. Clair. Mr. Dovjak acted and directed well.

Wednesday, December 15, 1954

In the evening, we went to the S.D.Z. Christmas party at the Slovenian National Home. The children got balls, candy, cards and other things - more than last year.

Thursday, December 16, 1954

I received a letter from the city telling me that I have to change the house from three apartments to two, and that I should not have worked on the house without city permission.

Saturday, December 18, 1954

The Parker Co. brought 100 pieces for us to

work on in the shop, since their machine broke. I worked on their pieces. For the first time, I also worked on some magnesium pieces. Magnesium is highly flammable and burns with a very bright light. We used to use it for photography in Europe. At the shop, we have to take the shavings far from the shop and burn them.

Sunday, December 19, 1954

This morning we went to Father Pajk's first Mass. In the afternoon, Mici Erznožnik came to our house and cut the boys' hair.

Thursday, December 23, 1954

The shop gave me a 21 pound Christmas turkey and a bonus of \$47 - more than I expected.

I went to the League and ordered 100 pounds of flour for my father in Slovenia.

Friday, December 24, 1954

At the shop, we worked till noon, then had a Christmas party till 1. We ate white and rye bread, eggs, cheese, and sardines, and drank whiskey with Canada Dry.

In the evening, Rudi Drmota came to our house and we prayed all three decades of the rosary. Then we listened to Christmas music on the radio.

Saturday, December 25, 1954

Christmas. Mr. Fortuna and the Erznožnik family visited in the afternoon. We also went to Ovsenek's apartment, where the children admired the Christmas tree and got more presents.

Sunday, December 26, 1954



During the 50's, children loved TV cowboys like the Lone Ranger and Roy Rogers. Even though we did not have a TV, our son John loved them, too. Here he proudly displays his complete cowboy outfit. December, 1954.

I took son John to the annual meeting of K.S.K.J. #172 on West 130th. After some arguing, the old board was reelected. Then St. Nicholas handed out presents, but only to those who shoved their way to him. Son John didn't get anything until Mrs. Ovsenek helped him.

Friday, December 31, 1954

Again, we have lots of work at the shop. They say that Miro Erdani will be the foreman on the second shift.

All evening, I measured and sketched plans to comply with the city's order to change our house.

We received three boxes of donation envelopes from St. Vitus for the coming year - one each for me, Cilka and John.

As a former accountant, I keep our family's books and I do a year-end report every year, so my wife and I can see whether we're gaining or losing. At the close of 1954, we're ahead in some ways and behind in others. My total wages were \$4,135 or almost \$900 less than last year, but rental income more than made up for that. Rents totaled \$1,611, including two apartments at \$20 a month, one at \$30 (all 4-room apartments with two bedrooms), and one at \$40 with three bedrooms. The first two apartments are in the rear house and cost less because they have a shared toilet and no bath, and a basement which is used only for coal. There's lots of work needed on that house.

Here's our family's financial report for 1954: (If you want to convert to 1999 dollars, multiply by 6; according to the Consumer Price Index, a dollar was worth about 6 times more in 1954 than in 1999.)

Income:

Cash on hand as of 1/1/54	\$21.18	0.3%
Wages	4,134.88	64.3%
Rental income	1,610.78	25.1%
Side jobs	17.50	0.3%
Sale of bobbin lace	85.26	1.3%
Loans	310.50	4.8%
Interest on savings	7.88	0.1%
Tax refund	108.47	1.7%
Bank withdrawal	<u>130.00</u>	2.0%
	6,426.45	100.0%

Expenditures

Food	\$ 763.84	11.9%
Clothing	155.68	2.4%
Furniture	81.35	1.3%
Water, gas, electric	113.28	1.8%
Home repairs	973.66	15.2%
Fraternal insurance	285.98	4.5%
Social Security	74.50	1.2%
Hospital insurance	97.20	1.5%
Federal tax	151.70	2.4%
Transportation	135.78	2.1%
Mortgage and loan payments	2,733.72	42.5%
Church	53.02	0.8%
Gifts to family in Slovenia	209.98	3.3%
Health care	112.12	1.7%
School, reading, postage	53.74	0.8%
Other gifts	30.12	0.5%
Entertainment, travel	16.42	0.3%
Deposits	312.00	4.9%
Miscellaneous	45.64	0.7%
Cash on hand as of 12/31/54	<u>26.72</u>	0.4%
Total expenditures	6,426.45	100.0%

We have now paid more than half of what we owed for the houses, so I hope we will have it all paid off in three years. The interest is low,

only 4%, but even so, more than 15% of our payments now are for interest; as we pay off the mortgage, less will be needed for interest and more will go towards the principal. At the close of 1954, we still owe \$3,600. We could pay it off sooner if we didn't have to make so many repairs. But if we didn't do all the repairs ourselves, it would cost even more. Before we bought the house, some people advised us to only look at new houses, since they thought we couldn't do our own repairs. We proved them wrong.

In America, you can get lots of "how-to" books, even whole encyclopedias, but they're not very practical. You don't have time to read long books or go to school. When I first bought electrical supplies at Sears, they noticed that I needed help, so they offered me a simple pamphlet, which clearly explained what kinds of wires to use for what purpose, how to install a light, a doorbell, a stove, etc. The main thing is to shut off the power before you start working on the wires.

If you're working on gas or water pipes, it's important to get the right materials. In Slovenia, we used skilled craftsmen to do these sorts of things. In America, I noticed other people doing things themselves and I said, "If they can learn, why can't I?"

When I became a landlord (which I never wanted), I soon learned that working on houses is much easier than working with tenants. There are more kinds of tenants than there are types of building supplies. Good tenants are rare, because the good ones soon get their own house. If you're starting out as a landlord, I recommend you always use a lease (Apartment Lease No. 45R) which spells out the rights and duties of each party. If a tenant doesn't pay on time or causes damage, you can make them move out in 3 days. Don't let anyone move in without a signed lease or without a security deposit equal to two months rent. If they can't



Prof. Ovsenek's family lived in the apartment behind ours. Our children marveled at the size and beauty of their Christmas tree. December, 1954.

afford a security deposit, they won't be able to afford the rent.

I wish you all good luck, and for myself, good health.

Zakelj Diary Home Page:

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