

Milka Koščak (roj. Mihevc)

I was born in 1925, in Hruševje, Italy. My sister Ivanka and my father moved to Dolenjo vas with other relatives. He was a brick layer and my sister was learning to be a store keeper. These were very hard years. Then in October of 1931, my brothers Tony and Joe, my mother and I, at 6 years old, moved to Cerknica. They bought a house there and it was very difficult keeping up the payments. My mother would work hard on the neighbouring farms in return for food she could then cook for the family. We did not have much farmland (2 nive). Since there was not much work in Cerknica, Ivanka moved to Sušak where she worked and sent food home to the family. The rest of us would scower the fields picking anything that would give us a financial return. (maline, lipovo cvetje, regrat).

An opportunity arose for Tony to apprentice as a car mechanic at Meletovim. He later moved to Ljubljana where he worked for the railroad. Having started so poorly, they all managed to be successful.

Cerknica is a big town in the middle of Slovenia, noted for its disappearing lake, Cerkniško Jezero. This town is also noted for its witches. This is where I grew up and went to school completing grade six. In the country, there was not much formal education after grade six



unless you went to a trade school. My sponsor for confirmation owned a store and when I was twelve years old she took me in as an apprentice while I went to grade school to complete grade 7 and then two years to school for store management. The store was owned by Ančka Lovko and she had some health issues. Her sisters also worked there. They had a niece

Minka Resman who also lived with them. She was my age and we became very good friends. There were no secrets between us. We enjoyed singing together, going to school and doing our homework together. There was not much free time between school, homework and then working in the store. After Minka finished grade school she returned to her parents in Beograd and attended college. We continued to be friends by writing letters to each other, however, that stopped once the war broke out. She died in 1942 as a result of the bombings. She was only 18 years old. . Sunday afternoons was my day off. Many times I would go home to see my parents as they were not that far away.

There was always a lot of work at the store as it was among the largest in Cerknica, mainly due to the large stock of cigarettes. You could tell from the clientele, that war was not far away. The hall above the store hosted many social events, but now it has been converted to a first aid room.

By 1940, the Germans had occupied many of the neighbouring countries. Yugoslavia was also getting prepared for war. On April 6, the Germans occupied Beograd, shortly thereafter they occupied Štajersko and Gorensko. Hungarians took over Prekmurje. The Italians took Dolenska, Nortanjsko and Ljubljana. The Yugoslav army did not seem to provide much opposition or artillery firing. At mass on Sundays, the priest told the congregation to be calm and not to ruffle any feathers. Then after mass an official read the new laws and regulations. The store remained open however, the Italians hung a poster in the store outlining the new legal system. Men were not allowed to congregate in small groups any longer. They used to get together to sing and flirt with the girls in the town. Not anymore. The people were starting to get unsatisfied with all the new limitations.



In the fall of 1941, there were rumors of some men gathering in the woods. This group was gathering momentum and also had weapons. Eventually they were known as 'partizans' and they were trying to recruit men to help fight against the Italians. The people were helping these people by providing food for them. Once the Italians got wind of this, the Italians forbade anyone from associating with the partizans.

Thus in spring 1942, the Italians set up road blocks in Cerknica to monitor the movement of people. To prove their point, one day the Italians brought a truck load of dead soldiers. The partizans quickly scattered while the Italians started to burn the houses, killed some men and sent others to concentration camps.

In summer of 1942, Ančka, the store owner, died of a heart attack. The store was taken over by her sister Minka. There was still a lot of traffic through the store.

The partizans continued to recruit men to help the cause. It was evident who was for and who was against the partizans movement. It was hard to understand why men were starting to go missing. Therefore, the people feared the Italians during the day, but they feared the partizans at night. You did not know who you could trust.

By this time 'bela garda' (Village Guards) had been established. People had dealings from all the neighbouring villages and they passed through Cerknica, thus we heard many conversations. Therefore, we were well informed as to what was happening. In the fall, the Italians declared a

police state and no-one was allowed on the streets after dark. You needed a pass to move in and out of the city. It was a long hard winter but there was still considerable fighting.

In the beginning of April 1943, a former friend came to the store and asked to buy some material to make some pants. I was flabbergasted when she told me she was going to join the partizans. I was scared that someone overheard our conversation and that I would be accused of not reporting her to the Italians.

Since the war had been in its third year, there was less inventory in the store. Food was purchased with cards. They had enough rice and macaroni, however, there was a shortage of coffee, sugar, salt, and oil. The farmers were only allowed to sell livestock government agencies.

At this time there were many airplanes passing by on their way to bomb Germany. Then on September 8, 1943, news of Italy capitulating was a shock and left a mess. The Italian soldiers quickly left and the bela garda tried to settle things down. The partizans, who were still secretly collecting in the woods now came out. They were actually, the communists. They surfaced and fought against the bela garda, but the communists had a lot of support. They captured most of the bela garda and sent them to Kočevje. The few people that escaped Kočevje had many gruesome stories.

On September 14, two trucks and a car with Germans was passing through from Rakek when the partizans started shooting at them. They quickly turned around and went back to Rakek. Two hours later they returned with reserves. By the time the fight was over, 14 houses burnt to the ground, some livestock and farms were ruined. Nobody was injured and the Germans went back to Rakek. I quickly went home to see my parents. They were good and so was the house, so I went back to the store. Not knowing if the Germans were going to return, we packed some bags. Reluctantly, we still kept the store open. There was talk of a big meeting happening. Eventually there were about 2,000 partizans gathered but nothing really happened. However next morning during Sunday mass someone yelled out 'Germans' and everyone scattered. Since we lived close to the church, we quickly grabbed our bags and fled. The Germans were attacking and burning the houses in the village. The Lovko store where I worked was also in flames. The partizans were shooting back. You could hear the bombs all afternoon. After everything settled down there were about 200 casualties. We ended up in a farm house in Brezje which was owned by the store owners and their parents.

That day I saw a partizanka beat a 14 year old boy forcing him to take a gun and fight. A few hours later he was injured and he was returned to the neighbours' farmhouse in Brezje.

The next day most people went back to Cerknica to assess the damage and bury the dead. It took several days to find the dead bodies and bury them. Since the store was no longer there, I went back home.

In October 1943, the domobranci movement started getting momentum in Slovenija. I was 18 years old at this time. The Germans would patrol the area on occasion. Because of the uncertainty, my father thought I should leave this area. So after the Christmas holidays he walked me 5 km to the train station in Rakek and I went to live with my sister, Ivanka, in Opatijo. She was a cook for a family and lucky for me they took me on as a maid. Since the Germans were not far away, you could always hear bombings occurring, especially this one Saturday night when the partizans were attacking the Germans. On Sunday morning as I was going to church I was horrified to see a dead body hanging from a tree. It took a long time to get over this gory sight.

Since the mail was not operating, in July, I went to see my parents. I was somewhat sceptical about the journey and the train ride because the partizans placed mines on the railway tracks, but I really wanted to see my parents again. They said that the domobranci have a good stronghold in Cerknica. That's when I decided to come back home. I returned to tell my sister that I was going back home. She also decided that she would also return home. By the end of July, we were back home. The Germans were still in control and they came to recruit the women to dig trenches. After two months I landed a job in the township offices.

It is now April 1945 when my mother was cautioned to leave Cerknica because of some uncertainty. The domobranci were nervous. You could hear gunfire in the distance from Rakek. My sister Ivanka and I packed a few things. We went to bed with the moon shining through the window. We had a hard time falling asleep. Then at 3 in the morning, a friend said that everyone is on the move as the domobranci are retreating. Ivanka and I quickly got dressed and said bye to our parents, then quickly jumped out the window with our bag and fled in the direction of Begunjane. We quickly met up with some neighbours and people from neighbouring towns. We were all fleeing together along with the domobranci. This was Friday May 4, 1945.

As we walked through the villages, additional people joined us. We saw the sunrise with a beautiful sky. It was especially nice as it had been raining for the past two weeks. We continued to walk until noon when we reached Notranji Gorice. There a restaurant owner feed all of us. We were very pleased as this was the first food we ate since we left. We continued the journey and reached Ljubljana just after six o'clock. Refugees were coming from all sides into Ljubljana. They were greeted with mixed reactions from the people there. We slept the night in some army quarters. There was much confusion as to what was happening. Many families parted ways due to this uncertainty. Some left that afternoon and others left the following morning after mass in the cathedral. My group went towards Kranj. We stopped at a restaurant in Suha. They were kind enough to feed us and let us stay two nights. The women slept in the house while the men stayed in the barn or the garden. As I knew we were to be here a couple of days, I took my sister Ivanka to visit my co-worker from Lovko's store in Cerknica, Micka Štupar who lived in the in the neighbouring village.

Next day May 8, an official said that we should continue moving. We thanked the restaurateurs and went on our way. We made it to Tržič. Many people gathered around this factory called Peko carrying various shoes. It was a shoe factory. People were gathered around this pile of shoes trying to get their pick. My shoes were totally worn so I was happy to get another pair. The owner of the factory had already abandoned his factory and crossed the border only a few hours ago. We spent the night there and someone was good enough to serve us tea. So on the morning of Wednesday May 9, we continued our journey to the Ljubelj tunnel. The group of refugees had grown considerably as the people from Ljubljana joined us as well as people from Gorenjska. As we approached the entrance to the tunnel there was a long wait. Apparently there were partisans on the other side of the tunnel. Since we were near the front of the group we saw everything. There was a German soldier guarding the entrance to the tunnel. This was the escape route for the retreating German soldiers. A Četnik casually moved to the front of the group, drew his gun, shot and killed the German soldier. We walked past his dead body as if nothing happened. The tunnel was dark, long, damp, muddy and cold. But when we reached the other side into Austria, the sun warmed us up. Even though we were hungry, thirsty and tired, we were free.

About half an hour after exiting the tunnel, the line stopped again. Someone yelled "Partisans are in the city of Borovlje". Where to now? Thousands of people, young, old, mothers, children. The disappointment and confusion had everyone second guessing as to what is the best scenario. Many people turned back, others thought they should hide in the woods. Others tried to make it to the river Drava so they could escape across. The few Germans that were left offered us food and a place to sleep in their barracks. We said some prayers and went to bed wearing the same cloths we left with a week ago.

Next morning, May 10 the Germans were kind enough to serve us coffee and bread. There was nowhere to go forward and definitely not back. My sister and I were snooping around the barracks and found some cocoa. We took a one kilo bag in case we might need it in the future. People were still coming through the tunnel. The last people to come through were the domobranci. Rupnikov battalion walked through and continued on towards Borovljan. We spent another night in the barracks at Ljubelj.

As we woke up Friday May 11, there was bombings happening towards the town of Borovlje. Apparently there was a big confrontation between the domobranci and the partisans. The following morning, this mass of refugees started to move towards Borovlje. Our group continued to stay together, however, we were no longer in the front of the group as domobranci and other refugees left before us. As we come to the bridge over Dravo, we see two tanks on the bridge, one with British soldiers and the other with partisans. Shortly after the bridge there was a small hill. On the other side there was a curve in the road where there were more British soldiers. In order to pass you had to drop all your weapons. If any of the horses were injured, they shot them on the spot. Once we reached the top of another hill, there were army trucks prepared to drive the refugees to a field in Vetrinje. The field was well kept up and

we were wondering what we were doing there. Off in the distance you could see a forest as well as the top of the church and some other bigger buildings. The army trucks were bringing refugees and soldiers of various nationalities. There was over 100,000 people occupying this field in Vetrinje. The British soldiers were good enough to position refugees of the same nationality together. There was about 5,000 civilians and 15,000 domobranci of Slovenian nationality. On Sunday May 13, the soldiers made an altar on a truck so they could celebrate mass. The first night we slept under the stars. Some people had some sheets and we made some makeshift tents with them.

The British soldiers also distributed some food. There was a water well about a ten minute walk from our tent. The cans of food ended up being our dishes for eating. The neighbouring farmers were also good enough to bring us some livestock. Nevertheless, we were still always hungry. Some of the neighbours were disappointed at the loss of their fields once the refugees took it over. For toilets, the men dug ditches 20 meters long and frequently covered the sewage with branches. We would wash the clothing in a nearby creek, but with no soap, there was much to be desired.

Rumor had it that the domobranci, the Croatian soldiers and the Serbian soldiers were going to be moved to a city in Italy called Palmanova. There they were to be retrained and go back to fight. Ivanka and I went to see our brother Tony, who was a domobranci, to see if there is any truth to the story. He confirmed the story. They were happy to get things moving again and fight the communists. You could hear the domobranci singing. That first week was a lot of talk but nothing concrete.

If any of the domobranci had relatives, the British authority said they could also go to Italy with their siblings. My sister Ivanka suggested that the siblings, Ivanka, Tone, Joe and me, all go to Italy. Tony was against the idea. He thought they should all remain civilians and not mingle with the domobranci. Joe and I agreed right away but Ivanka tried to change our mind. In the end, she stayed with us. Others were also torn as to whether they should go with their brother, father or husband.

On Monday May 21, 1945 many army trucks arrived to load the domobranci and other family members. We said our goodbyes as they drove off. This went on all week. In all, they moved around 15,000 domobranci and civilians. Then on May 23, one of the domobranci returned claiming the British were returning the domobranci to the partizans in Jugoslavija. No one believed him. Then a second group of two brothers came back saying they escaped from the massacre and were chased by the partizans but they managed to get away. A customer from the store in Cerknica was on the next convoy of soldiers. I told him not to go but he said that where his sons have gone, he is going as well. Years later I met one of his sons and he said he never heard from his brother or father again.

Our camp has endured many disappointments and sadness. The church saw many prayers being said. We were always scared if we were to be sent back to the partizans. Thus we were

very vigilant as to where we were relocated. Dr. Valentine Meršol was a doctor and he also knew how to speak English. He went to the British headquarters and explained to the people in charge the situation between the partizans and the refugees. He made his point very clear as there were no more people sent back to the partizans. Thus there was about 1000 domobranci spared.

Two people in our tent got sick and had diarrhea. Ivanka and I remembered we had the cocoa and offered it. That seemed to do the trick for one of them. The other seemed to be getting worse. It got to the point where we couldn't even help her anymore. We had to call the ambulance. They took her to a hospital in Celovec where they determined she had typhus. The next day they said they were going to move us. We were very apprehensive. The men got some walking sticks. As we reached the railway station we were observing the direction the trains were travelling. They were going in the direction of Tirol which was the opposite direction of Yugoslavia. So we knew we were going in the right direction. We quickly gathered some blooms and decorated the train with flowers as we happily went on our journey. We arrived at Peggez near Lienz. We were hesitant but worked our way to the barracks. The villagers told us that they used to be occupied by Kozaks with their families, but they have been forced out and are being transported. The Kosak's were upset and some even committed suicide. The men had their quarters and the women their own. The rooms were large with some cupboards. Even though there were no blankets no one really protested as this is the first time in almost 2 months that we have been under a proper roof. The meals left a lot to be desired. Three times a day we got some variety of čorba which had a taste of gasoline and a piece of bread.

Even though we were hungry we still maintained some sort of order. We washed in the barracks and then went to mass. After a meek breakfast we did some exercises, followed by a choir practice and then of course we did some more socializing since we were all together. After lunch we may go for a walk to see the neighbouring cities and see how they lived. Sometimes we would knock on a door and ask for some food. You could see that they were not well off, but they always spared some bread. Or if there was a fruit tree, we would climb the tree and eat the fruit to help overcome our starvation. Some even went to Celovec to see how our friend was doing in the hospital. Unfortunately she passed away a day earlier. She was only 23 years old. They brought back her belongings. Many prayers were said on her behalf to see her get well again. But that did not happen.

We were kept informed as to what was happening in Slovenia as there were still some refugees that sneaked across the border safely. When they killed Narte Velikonja in Ljubljana, there was a funeral mass for him at our camp. He was well known author.

On a nice sunny day, bishop Gregoiji Rožman visited our camp. We gathered at a church in Lienz where he had mass and then afterwards, he went on to Rome.

Mid July a man came from the Italian camp Monigo. He brought all sorts of nick naks. Among the things we bought from him were; combs and bobby pins, since we needed them. He said that at the camp Monigo in Trevisio, there were many Slovenians, better life there and that they were never hungry. Some men, including Franc Koščak (my future husband), decided to try the other camp. Most of the trip was over hills and mountains. While they were avoiding the British police, they ended up among Italian partizans. They were questioning them and wanted to know what they were doing. They told them they were just leaving from the concentration camp, so they gave them food and then everyone dispersed.

It was getting more obvious that we were not going back home for a while yet. Since we did not have many cloths, we shared each others clothes. We tried helping each other as much as we could.

Under the direction of Mr. Mihelič, a salezian father, they hosted a concert in Tristach. There was about 200 singers. Next morning when I returned from mass one of the girls was crying and I went to console her. She was crying because she was too tall and unattractive as none of the males ever noticed her. I smiled but she took offense to this. Since then, I feel for tall girls.

At the end of July, Franc Koščak returned from Italy. He had lots of marks that he exchanged with his lire. Italians didn't have any use for marks, just like Austria had no use for lire. He said he was returning to Italy in a few days and if anyone wanted to join him, they could. There were quite a few of us that decided to go. Since there was so many, we divided into two groups so as not to create a scene.

So we left August 4, 1945. After 3 days of intense walking, we arrived, hungry, thirsty, tired and full of blisters to the camp Monigo. They quickly gave us some blankets and cards for food. We had macaroni and some meat for supper and then we went to rest. The kitchen staff was Slovenian and they were very good cooks. The large barracks had cement floors, so next day we went to the neighbouring farms and asked for some hay so we could sleep on it. This camp did seem like it was better than the one in Austria.

My sister Ivanka went to Trst because she had many friends that lived there. She let everyone know that we made it alive and to let everyone know in Cerknica. My 20th birthday came and went without notice. I certainly hoped to be home in Cerknica for my 21st.

By the end of September they moved us to Riccione and we spent the night there. Next morning, after breakfast we hopped onto some army trucks. On our way the scenery was beautiful and they even stopped by the ocean in Senigalia to let us enjoy the beaches. When we arrived to our destination, there was a large hotel named Albergo Bagni. There were many pretty houses and villas as well as some train tracks. In front of the hotel, we got registered and they gave us blankets and a card and we started to occupy the rooms.



The rooms were large and there were about eight people in each room. In the rooms were bunk beds. The ladies were in one room and men in the other. Or they put two families in each room. There was a place to wash and bathe, a proper washroom with a shower and there was even a clothes washer and down the hall. Beside our hotel was a villa which was occupied by our command, commandant kapetan Goerling, British soldiers, Miss Rachele Tidelman of the Red Cross and an Italian Captain Oreste Tiene, two Italian nurses from the Red Cross, a cook and her helper.

The Slovenian president of our camp was Rudolf Smersu, also a refugee. We had many educated people in our group; lawyers, artists, authors, teachers, and priests. Since there were many children in our group, the teachers got together and taught classes. A clinic was set up to administer vaccinations against various diseases. People started volunteering for various jobs even

though there was no financial reward. Occasionally, the Red Cross would come and distribute clothing. Some of us girls got together and washed cloths for the warehouse. After a few months my friend Kristina Rosi and I worked at the officers' villa in the kitchen which we called menza. This happened in January 1946 and we stayed there for about a year.

Miss Tidelman, our boss at the menzi, wore a British uniform and was quite strict. Even though she was older than me, we got along well as we spoke in Italian. One day, a villager came and asked for some food as they were also hungry after the war. So I gave her some left overs. Miss Tidelman was firm and clear that this can no longer happen. All left overs are to be thrown in the garbage not given to others. I pleaded with her because we were in the same situation not long ago where there was no food and we were hungry. Secretly, I continued to give her

leftovers without her knowing. Even after I was in Canada and Miss Tidelman was in England, we kept in touch by mail.

At the hotel Albergo Bagni there was also a large hall and we would gather there and had some fun and even put on concerts. After many months, captain Goerling was being replaced by an American. We had a going away party for captain Goerling in the hall. He liked Slovenians and we were very fond of him as well.

The American officer did not stay very long and he was replaced by another British captain. He was young and serious and his name was captain Riddle.



Senigalia was a ten minute walk from the hotel. This is where we went to church. The pastor was Don Secondo and he was very accommodating to our priests as he let them have mass in Slovenian. The congregation enjoyed our singing at the mass.

We all got along well, the food was good and the accommodations

were good. From the warehouse we got old army socks. So we disassembled them and reknitted them into sweaters. Miss Tidelman was so impressed she asked me to knit her a sweater and she supplied the yarn.

All those who had to put their education on hold moved to a student refugee camp in Bologna and went to university to continue their studies.

There was about 500 refugees in Senigalia and about 1500 in Servigliano. There was quite a distance between these camps, so there was not much visiting between the camps. Originally, UNNRA was responsible for the refugees but later IRO took over the duties.

Any news we heard from our home towns was negative. We knew we were not going home soon, especially when we heard talk of immigration. My sister came to visit me for a few days from Trst and wanted me to join her there.



Captain Riddle was being replaced by major Burnel who appeared to be very strict. Rumor had it that he was close to Tito, but no real proof. He strongly suggested we get on with our lives and go back home. The war was over. He said that where ever we would go there would always be many more women than men and that not all women would be able to get married. Some people did decide to go home.

1946 has arrived and it seemed like we were to be relocated again. They built a new camp near Albergo Bagni which looked like half barrels and joined two camps, number 7 and number 9. After a few weeks I decided to join my sister in Trst. Then I returned to the camp in mid-September where the camp moved to Barletta in southern Italy. The land was flat and everything seemed to be overgrown. The building was built with concrete and blocks. Since the winter was not cold, the chapel was built outside and that is where we had mass. Miss Tidelman also joined us after she requested to be relocated to our camp. This camp was not only Slovenians but also Jews and Albanians.

The food was good. The cooks were Slovenians and Albanians. The sick, children and pregnant mothers got additional food. We were getting tired of living in camps and hoped that we would be on our own soon. There was an announcement that anyone interested in immigrating to Argentina should make an applications. I think everyone did. IRO interviewed the applicants, but not everyone got accepted.

I married Frank Koščak on Dec 8, 1947 at the chapel in Barletta. We had already applied for Argentina and been approved and verified our health requirements. Frank's father had already promised to sponsor him if he came to Canada. My cousin Emily Arko had also guaranteed me sponsorship to go to USA. However there was no diplomatic representation by these countries. The new year had arrived, 1948, and I was concerned about the four week boat trip to Argentina. I didn't really want to go to Argentina but they were the only country accepting refugees. Three days before we were to leave, a telegram came from Rome from Frank's father, saying we should apply to the Canadian consulate for both of us. Then and there, we decided not to go to Argentina but to Canada. We said our goodbyes and went to Rome to complete our application for Canada. At this time I was pregnant and lucky that Dr. Winter let me travel. Normally we would have had to wait another year. When we arrived at the consulate in Rome, Miss Wagner was informed of my pregnancy and expedited the paperwork that day. Our ship was to leave towards the end of April. We were very thankful and returned to our camp in Barletta. Mid-April we said our goodbyes again and left for Torino by train. As we reached the port they put us up in this large hall, gave us food and a place to sleep. Five days later April 21, 1948 we hopped onto an army truck and drove to Genoa and we boarded the ship Sobieski. We stopped at Cannes and picked up another 300 passengers. There was 1200 passengers on this ship. The ship left on April 22, 1948 and hit the open waters.

You could see all the passengers were in their own world wondering what was waiting for them in the new country. Frank was apprehensive as he had not seen his father since he was nine years old. The women were placed in the first class cabins and the men were one level lower. I had two roommates, a Polish woman my age and an older Russian woman. She escaped to Zagreb before the war started and worked there as an engineer. We got to know four other Slovenian passengers. A young man who was a Četnik and engineer Truman were headed to Alberta. A married couple Rzetič were going to Toronto, like us.

We stopped again at Gibraltar for a few hours to refuel and other necessities. On Sundays a large hall was used to have mass and then in the evening it was used for social gatherings. A large cafeteria served meals three times a day and the food was good and tasty. Unfortunately, the food did not stay in my stomach very long. I had morning sickness at the camps but it only got worse on the ship.

After four days on the Atlantic and you could see dark clouds in the distance. The waves were getting bigger. The sailors were getting prepared as the thunder and lightning began. The waves were larger and were throwing the ship like a toy. I couldn't take it any longer. I had to lay down. I remembered how my mother told me how her family went to Brazil in 1898 and was on the ship for a month. There was a death on the ship and they wrapped the body in a blanket, said some prayers and then released the corpse into the ocean. I was determined not to die on the ship. I needed to live for two.

Frank went to the bar and brought me this funny coloured drink. We had never seen it before. It was ginger ale and it did sooth my stomach and I felt much better.

TRIERTE
 26 AUG 1948
 ITALIAN NON-RESIDENT
 V495LNY
 IDENTITY CARD
 CARTA D'IDENTITÀ
 OSEBNA IZKAZNICA
 OSOBNA ISKAZNICA
 No. 30493

1. Surname
 Cognome
 Prezime
 Mihovec
 Name
 Ime
 Prezime
 Gudmilla

2. Father's name
 Nome del padre
 Očevo ime
 Očuvno ime
 Antonio

3. Mother's name
 Nome della madre
 Materno ime
 Matično ime
 Apollonia Spremon

4. Address
 Indirizzo
 Naslov
 Via S. Francesco 16

5. Profession
 Professione
 Poklic
 usalnik

6. Birth
 Nato
 Rok nastanin
 Datum rojstva
 20-8-1925 at
 kraj rojstva
 Crascenic

7. Height
 Altezza
 Visina
 Visina
 1.60 m
 Hair
 Capelli
 Lasja
 rasi
 Eyes
 Očji
 Usti
 rasi
 Mouth
 Usta
 Usta
 rasi

8. Signature of holder
 Firma del titolare
 Podpis lastnika
 Foto s vlasnika
 Miroslav Gudmilla



9. Signature of issuing officer
 Firma dell'impiegato
 Podpis uradnika
 Foto s činovnika

10. Date of issue
 Giornata del rilascio
 Dan izdaje
 Dan izdajanja
 16-10-1947

11. Place of issue
 Luogo del rilascio
 Kraj izdajanja
 Trieste

Right thumb impression
 Impronta digitale
 Odles desnega palca
 Ustisk desnog palca

Foto s vlasnika
 Foto s vlasnika

The storm lasted two days and we barely moved 100 km. The sailors joked with us and told us they were fishing. Once the storm passed, we started moving at a better pace and in ten days we reached Halifax. By the time all the paperwork was completed, it was the evening of Sunday May 2, 1948. Nearby was a train waiting for us to board. They gave us ten dollars for food on the train and off we went. We drove all night and all day before we reached Montreal. After a short stop we continued all night and reached Toronto by 8:00 am Monday May 4, which is exactly three years since I left Cerknica.

We met Frank's father and he welcomed us nicely. He took us to a restaurant for breakfast and then we continued on to the place that he managed to get for us. It was a huge room with a kitchen. We only stayed three weeks and then we moved to a larger room in the same complex that Frank's father lived. He was very good to us. He also introduced us to all his Slovenian friends. At that time it was estimated that there were about 100 Slovenians in Toronto and many Slovenian families lived on the farms around the Toronto area. We even drove out to Beamsville to a nice farm owned by Frank Možina. He was instrumental in getting the guarantee for us to come to Canada. We came to be

very good friends.

About a ten minute walk from our apartment lived Rudi Zupan who arranged a job for Frank at Iron Works and his wife was very accommodating in helping us out. We also remained lifelong friends. That summer was a scorcher. We had a hard time getting used to the heat and humidity, however we managed. We started getting used to the new life and tried finding people that we met in the camps. We were not successful until we got mail from Owen Sound, about 100 km from Toronto. It was my brother Joseph. He landed a contract on a farm up there. He had to serve a contract for one year because there was no one sponsoring him.

Canada was accepting young men at this time and then they could later bring their families. They had to sign a contract to work for a Canadian for a one year term. Once completed, they could find work elsewhere. Argentina was the only country that allowed families to travel together and that is why most of the people from our camp in Italy went to Argentina including

the priests and other educated people. The majority of the people that came to Canada or the USA were from the camps in Austria. Most of the immigrating occurred in 1948 because IRO wanted to clear out all the refugees in the camps.

In July, we were pleasantly surprised with a visit from our relatives from Cleveland. We had never met them before. We all went to see my brother Jože in Owen Sound, whom I hadn't seen in three years.

August 26, we were surprised with the early birth of Carl. Our lives had changed again. We would still often remember and reminisce our lives back home.

After a year living at 393 Berkley Street, we moved further west. After serving his one year contract, Ivan Župančič bought a house. Many of the refugees had completed their contract around this time and they were spread all over Ontario but mainly in the Toronto area.



In early 1949, a priest Dr. Kolarič got permission from Mount Carmel, an Italian church, to have mass there in Slovenian every Sunday. The contract expired for my brother Jože, friends Lojze Knavs and Tone Bavdek. We didn't have much; two bedrooms, washroom, and a small garden. No one really had much but we were satisfied. However, we still remembered the hardships of the war and the camps. And of course, we would always break out into a song.

Then in April 21, 1950 we were blessed with a daughter Millie. Then years later came Wanda, Victor and Danny. Also in 1950, there were fundraisers to start a new church in Toronto. At this time there were about 400 refugees and more still immigrating. Of course everyone donated as much as they could. By 1954, the church was built

and it was called Marija Pomagaj. There were many young people and large families in this parish.

Dr. Kolarič, a Lazarist, was the first pastor, soon to be joined by another priest Fr. Janez Kopač, and Fr. Tone Zrnec who was in charge of the youth and Slovenian school. Slovenian school occurred on Saturday mornings in the church hall. The teachers were all volunteers and the nuns also helped. The nuns were Marijene Sestre; Krekova, Palmina, Dvoršak, and Cecilja Prebil.

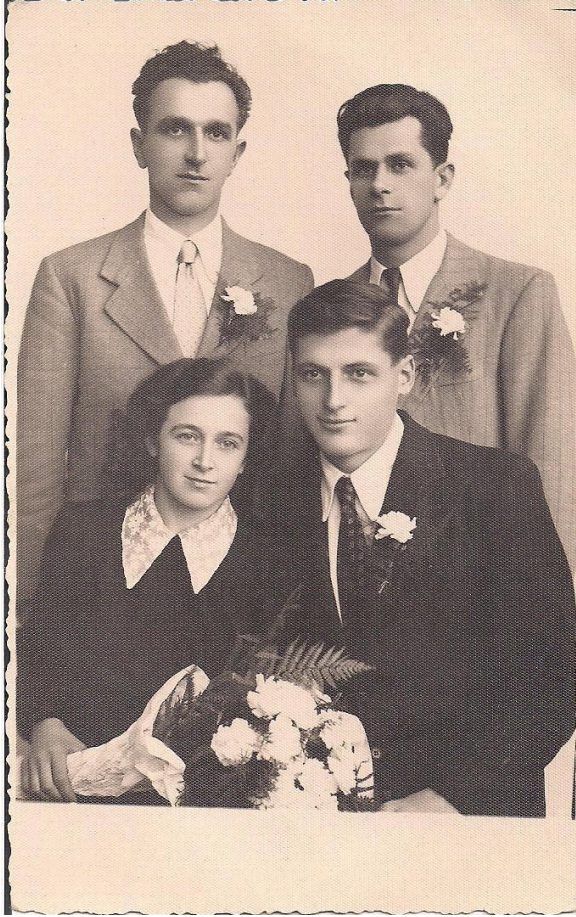
We attended mass regularly and the hall was constantly being used for cultural events, like plays, concerts, and fun nights. Close by were two Slovenian banks; Krekova and Slovenia Credit Unions. The neighbourhood looked like little Slovenia.

As many of the Slovenians were moving west to the Etobicoke and Mississauga areas, Fr. Kopač started a campaign to get another parish in the west end. In 1961, another Slovenian church was built called Brezmadežna s Čudodelno Svetinjo. Between the two Slovenian parishes there was a lot of good will and volunteer work in getting many organizations established. Now these volunteers are in the younger hands.

The Slovenian summer camp, owned by the Lazarists, opened in 1959. During the months of July and August, this was the weekend spot for many Slovenians.



65th Wedding Anniversary with Husband Frank and their 5 children



Family picture for her 90th Birthday in front of her cottage at the Slovenian Summer Camp near Bolton



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AT 11.00 PM

FROM

EASTBOURND

TO

ELIPLEX

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AT 11.00 PM

NAME(S) OF PASSENGER(S)

Mrs. KOSKAK Pawan
Mrs. - - - - -

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THIS CONTRACT OF CARRIAGE STAYS ABOVE AND BELOW ON THE RECORDS HERE AND ON THE OTHER ATTENTION BEING CALLED TO THE LIMITATIONS OF LIABILITY HEREIN CONTAINED.

The Contract here is made in accordance with the provisions of the Convention for the Unification of Certain Rules Relating to International Carriage by Sea, signed at Brussels on September 25, 1924, and the Convention for the Unification of Certain Rules Relating to International Carriage by Sea, signed at Brussels on September 25, 1924, and the Convention for the Unification of Certain Rules Relating to International Carriage by Sea, signed at Brussels on September 25, 1924.

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