

Chapter 1: Managing Life in My New Country

During the first twenty years of my life, I lived at three locations in Budapest, all within a three-square-mile area. In barely one month, the turbulent aftereffects of the Hungarian Revolution resulted in my being about 5,400 miles away from my homeland. I arrived in Canada full of youthful enthusiasm but without family, money, or knowledge of the local customs. I had wanted to be far away from Soviet-controlled Eastern Europe, but once I was in British Columbia, though I felt safe from the *ÁVO*¹, a new set of problems faced me.

After the first few days in my new country, the future uncertainties began weighing on me. Although my Canadian host family was extremely kind in making my life as comfortable as possible, I knew I would soon need to stand alone. *How will I learn English? How will I find a job? Where will I live?* These thoughts kept me awake for long hours through the night.

The small Hungarian-Canadian community on Vancouver Island rallied to help the newly arrived refugees. One of them lent me a Hungarian-English dictionary. Others canvassed the region to find jobs for those of us who stayed on the island. The local priest, Father Bullock, took me to a thrift store and purchased some badly needed clothing, including a half-length coat. Although the coastal region of British Columbia did not have severe winters, I felt cold when walking outside, and the coat was most welcome. Mrs. Kirkpatrick, "my host family mom," cleaned the clothing I had worn for the past 30 days. Some items must have been beyond hope because I never saw them again.

Knowing how difficult it would be for us to adjust to Canadian food, a Hungarian-Canadian couple, Mr. and Mrs. Szabó, invited five of us to their home for dinner a few days after Christmas. They promised a sumptuous old-country-style feast. I looked forward to finally having a traditional home-cooked meal.

Mr. Szabó picked us up in a huge station wagon that seated six people comfortably. My two escape companions, Boriska and Gábor, were in the group. We quickly exchanged our first impressions of living in Canada. I learned that the others were also staying with families in lovely homes equipped with what we considered luxury items—clothes, washers, dryers, and televisions. Surprisingly, the owners of the homes were not wealthy capitalists but ordinary workers. We all thanked our good fortune for ending up in such a wonderful country and wondered how long it would take us to become productive and self-supporting.

As we stepped into the Szabó residence, the familiar fragrance of Hungarian food welcomed us. A huge dinner table stacked with delicacies awaited. Mr. Szabó introduced us to his parents, wife, and two teenage children. Another Hungarian-Canadian couple was also there, who had met us on our arrival a few days earlier. The hostess promptly seated us, and I planned to eat enough to keep me full for several days.

¹ The State Security Agency of Hungary, the Hungarian equivalent of the Gestapo and the KGB, established by the Communists in the late 1940s.

"Let's thank the Lord before we eat," said the man of the house. With that, he and his family promptly clasped hands closed their eyes, and began to pray.

Praying before a meal was a new experience for me. I had heard that some families did it in Hungary, but I had never seen it happen. We prayed in church and (before the socialist regime) in school, but we always kept our eyes open during the prayers. I assumed the other young refugees had had similar experiences because we silently looked at each other across the dinner table.

The prayer continued for a long time as our host thanked God for many things. Gábor—who had always been a prankster—made a funny face and pretended to grab some food from the plates. Another refugee followed his example, and soon, all five of us had to fight to hold back our laughter. Fortunately, our hosts were too involved in praying to be aware of our silly activities.

After what seemed an eternity, Mr. Szabó finally said, "Amen." We immediately stopped clowning, and by the time they opened their eyes, our young group looked dignified. The following feast was worth the wait—goulash soup, roast duck, Wiener schnitzel, and several side dishes. As we finished with a dessert of homemade cake, I decided that was my best meal of the year. Our hosts watched us eating incredible amounts and commented on how happy they were to see us enjoying their food.

When the meal was over, Mrs. Szabó asked if we would accompany them to their church service. Although it was not Sunday, we thought it must be a special service as part of the Christmas season. Besides, how could we refuse anything they asked after that fabulous meal? We walked to their large station wagon, and they took us to "cleanse our souls." The children stayed home.

We sat in wooden pews and 30 to 40 congregation members inside the modestly decorated church. The minister at the altar spoke to the group in English—I had no idea what he said. When he finished, the congregation stood up and sang for a while. Suddenly, they began to act strangely. The congregation, including the Szabós, quivered, shook, jerked, and started making strange noises. After a while, they left the pews and rolled on the floor. Some of them were making incomprehensible sounds with their eyes bulged open.

I was terrified and did not know what to do. My friends seemed to be equally bewildered and frightened. Out of respect for our host, we stood in amazement until the commotion ended, and the worshippers returned to the pews. After the service, we all stepped outside the church.

"Under socialism, the government most likely did not allow people to express their true feelings as they can here," said Mr. Szabó. "It probably looked strange to you, but you don't know the feeling of total spiritual freedom until you experience it."

We tried to be polite and agreed with whatever he claimed. However, we declined the invitation when he asked if we would join them again for their service the following week.

After returning to my host family's place, I attempted to explain the unusual spectacle I had seen in the church. "Oh, they're the Holy Rollers," said Mr. Kirkpatrick, throwing his arms into the air. "We don't go to their church." He did not elaborate further. Later, I learned

that the group represented a form of the Pentecostal Christian faith and that most people considered their ways of worshipping highly unusual.

Looking for work in Canada

The next day, a member of the Hungarian-Canadian group came to see me with unexpected news. "A friend of mine has a radio-TV repair shop in Nanaimo. I heard that he needs an additional technician. He will talk with you to determine if you could do the job."

With fear and excitement, I followed him to his car. The trip to Nanaimo took about half an hour. During that time, he prepared me for the interview and offered to be the interpreter. "Mr. Leahy is a good man, and I told him about the technical high school you attended in Budapest. If necessary, he is willing to train you on the job—as long as you're willing to learn," he commented.

By the time we reached the shop, I was extremely nervous. Although I had confidence in my ability to repair radios, my limited English vocabulary worried me. Having an interpreter with me during the interview was helpful, but my friend would not be at my side if I were hired. *How would I communicate with my boss?*

Another concern was the distance between Parksville and Nanaimo, where my host family lived. I asked if there was public transportation that I could take to my work until I earned enough to rent a place near the shop. My friend told me there was a regular bus service, but it did not run during commuting hours. *How would I go to work?*

With those questions on my mind, we entered Leahy's Radio and TV Service. Standing behind a counter, Patrick Leahy was a tall man, probably in his forties. He held a coffee cup in one hand and offered his other hand to me. "Welcome! You must be Leslie," he told me after greeting my interpreter. He seated us around a small table and began the interview.

First, he pulled out a schematic diagram of a radio and had me explain the functions of various sections. Satisfied with my translated answers, he led me into the repair area. He handed me the actual table radio of that schematic and asked me if I could fix it.

I had some difficulty removing the unfamiliar mounting of the back cover. Once it was off, I used the schematic to troubleshoot and quickly located the problem—a defective radio tube. When I inserted a replacement tube, the radio worked fine. Mr. Leahy was impressed, and I silently thanked my school in Budapest for the thorough training it had provided.

Next, Mr. Leahy showed me some routine maintenance tasks, such as testing the other tubes' life expectancy and cleaning the set's tuning mechanism. "We don't want the customer to bring the radio back again with another problem," he explained. "That would give my store a poor reputation."

His attitude impressed me immensely. The customers' feelings had never been a concern in the socialist economy. People were happy to receive the scarce goods and services. It was their bad luck if a product failed or broke down repeatedly.

Finally, Mr. Leahy wanted to know if I could also repair televisions—a question I had hoped he would not ask. I had to admit that although I knew the theory and operation of

televisions, I had never seen the inside of an actual set. He thought for a while and said, "On our island, it is hard to find TV repairmen. I'll hire you and teach you how to fix televisions. You'll never be hungry as long as you know how to do that."

He offered me a job. He would pay me \$60 weekly—the same amount his other technician received. I could start working the following Monday, on the last day of 1956. Of course, I gladly accepted his offer.

Then he added, "My wife and I have one child and are expecting a second one in a few months. You could stay in the room we have set up for the baby until you find a nearby place to rent." My worries were melting. He continued, "My wife is a retired English teacher. She could even help you to learn our language."

At that point, I could not stop my tears rolling. I did not know that such kind people existed in the world. Taking me on with my limited language skills, paying the same rate as he paid his other employee, and inviting me to stay in his home were kindnesses beyond my wildest imaginings. I thanked him profusely before my driver and returned to the Kirkpatrick's in Parksville.

Something Mr. Leahy said, however, puzzled me. During our drive, I asked my friend, "What did he mean by saying that if I know how to fix TVs, I'll never be hungry? How could anyone be hungry in Canada?"

"We have people who are unemployed."

I could hardly believe his answer. Under the socialist system in Hungary, we always had full employment. Being new to Canada, I thought that unemployment in such a rich country was just another piece of Communist propaganda. It looked like I still had much to learn.

My host family was exuberant when they heard about my successful job interview. Mrs. Kirkpatrick cooked a special meal for me that night. Before dinner, we had cocktails—something I had never had before. Her husband proudly showed me his well-stocked liquor cabinet and made us whiskey sours. I did not think I would like whiskey, but the mixed drink tasted good. By the time we sat to eat, Mr. Kirkpatrick had enjoyed several refills and appeared to be in a very good mood. He was tipsy! He talked about his first job, where he disliked his boss. Although I understood only a small part of his story, I smiled and nodded politely. His wife had probably heard the story often because she tried to stop him, but he was eager to tell me everything.

This time, when the hostess offered me seconds at dinner, I immediately accepted without waiting for additional offers. I had an enjoyable evening and promised to visit the Kirkpatricks one day after my language skills improved.

Word about my new job in the repair shop quickly spread through the Hungarian-Canadian community. Miklós, the elderly Hungarian who was present at the refugees' arrival, phoned with congratulations and offered to take me on a city tour of Vancouver. He showed up Saturday, and we drove to the Nanaimo harbor. When the ferry came, he drove onto it and parked his car on the bottom deck. We then walked up to the passenger area. I was concerned about the ferry ride, remembering my seasickness the week before. This time, however, the channel was smooth, and I had no problem.

Miklós wanted to know where I was during the Hungarian Revolution. "I saw pictures on the television news, but you are the first person I know who lived through those horrible events," he said. "Tell me everything."

I gave him a quick rundown of the fighting during the ride, including my experiences. When I told him about the young Russian soldier who had possibly saved my life, Miklós had tears in his eyes. "*Jótett helyébe jót várj*" (Expect good in return for a good deed), he said, quoting an old Hungarian proverb that meant, "You were repaid for letting that Russian officer escape."

Once we landed in Vancouver, he drove us around the city and pointed out some interesting landmarks. Then he said, "My throat is parched. Let's have a beer!"

We walked into a pub in downtown Vancouver and sat at one of the tables. The place was dark as a cave and smelled like a brewery. When the waitress approached, Miklós pointed to both of us and then raised one hand with two fingers forming a "V." When I asked him what that meant, he explained that he had ordered two draft beers for each of us. "You get two for a nickel," he laughed. When the waitress set them on the table, he quickly gulped one down.

As my eyes adjusted to the darkness, I noticed a shabbily dressed man in the middle of the pub, holding a bottle and wiggling his body. It looked like something was wrong with him. Miklós saw my puzzled expression. "He is a Native Indian. He dances for anyone who buys him two beers," he explained.

"You mean he is a real Indian?"

"Yes. He probably lives on a nearby reservation."

I was stunned. My image of what a native American should look like was instantly destroyed. After reading the Karl May stories of Winnetou in my childhood, I expected him to wear a traditional native outfit and wave a tomahawk instead of a beer bottle. Seeing this stumbling drunk left me disillusioned. Present-day Indians were quite different from the braves of my storybooks.

I was still working on my first beer when Miklós ordered two more for himself. He explained that beer helped his circulation, and I took his word for it. When we finished, I was concerned about his driving ability but did not want to offend him by bringing up the subject.

As we walked through the park toward the car, I noticed a small crowd listening to a man standing on a bench. Some of the listeners cheered loudly. I became curious.

"What is he talking about?" I asked Miklós.

"He is denouncing the government, saying that the Prime Minister is a senile imbecile unfit to govern."

I looked around in panic. "Let's hurry to the car."

"What's the rush?"

"When the police arrest them, they'll pick us up too."

"Why would the police care?"

"That man insults the Prime Minister, and the people agree with him."

Miklós laughed. "You lived under Communism too long! In this country, you're allowed to express your opposition."

He sounded convincing, but I was still nervous. Only after we reached his car and drove away could I relax. I had trouble believing that people could openly speak out against the government.

That evening, I wrote a long letter to Mother, letting her know that I had already found a job and giving her the address of the repair shop. I also wanted to tell her about the man speaking freely in the park, but after some thought, I decided not to include it. If my letter were censored, such information could lead to trouble. I had not heard from her for over a month and could only hope that my illegal escape had not caused any retribution to her or my sister.

Sunday evening after dinner, Mr. Kirkpatrick gave me a small carrier bag to pack the few clothing items I owned. The following day, he drove me to the repair shop in Nanaimo. Before we said goodbye and parted, he reminded me I was always welcome to visit them.

Mr. Leahy introduced me to Herb, the other technician. We were to share a large workbench with several test instruments. The boss also showed me the file cabinet where he kept documentation and schematics of commonly used radios and televisions. He walked me into a small component room behind the repair area stacked with spare parts.

The organization of his shop was impressive. I assumed he must be doing well to be able to buy all the test instruments, service diagrams, and components. The factory where I worked in Hungary had thorough documentation of its products. However, in my occasional radio repair business at home in the evenings, I had no access to product information or test equipment other than a simple voltmeter. It was always up to me to figure out how the radio was supposed to function by tracing through the wiring of the components. Mr. Leahy's small shop was so well equipped that troubleshooting and repair would be much easier.

Although his business sign showed only radio and television repair, he told me they also handled car radios and audio systems. I was familiar with the latter but had never used a car radio. I knew that converting the car's battery supply to the high voltage required by the vacuum tubes was challenging, and I was eager to learn about those types of radios.

I looked forward to having five-day workweeks in Canada because, in Budapest, we had also worked a half day on Saturdays. However, Mr. Leahy kept the repair shop open on Saturdays. In the past, he and Herb had rotated their days off so that one would always be there. One of the reasons he wanted to hire a second repairman was so he could stay with his family every weekend. Of course, until my language skills improved, he would not leave me alone in the store long. Once I learned to speak English better, though, he planned to stay home.

My first day at the shop went by quickly. Every product brought into the shop was tagged immediately. I had to keep track of the time I spent, the parts used for each repair I performed, and provide a summary of what had been done. That last task was difficult, but Herb helped me compose the proper descriptions.

At the end of the day, Mr. Leahy drove me to his house. A little girl, not much older than a year old, rushed to him as we entered the garage. His wife, a good-looking blonde lady with lots of freckles, greeted me with a big smile. She spoke slowly to me, using

simple words. I could understand her best of all the English-speaking people I had met in Canada.

She first showed me where the bathroom was, then led me to a room with baby furniture and a mattress on the floor. "You'll sleep here until our new baby arrives." She pointed to her protruding tummy and said, "Patrick hopes it'll be a son." She opened a closet door. "Put your stuff here. We'll eat soon."

The Leahys also prayed before dinner, although not nearly as long as the Holy Roller family did. Mrs. Leahy asked about my religion and told me later that they were also Roman Catholics. I learned she was born in Canada, but her husband emigrated from Ireland after World War II. "I taught him how to speak Canadian English, so I could probably do the same for you," she said with a smile.

It was New Year's Eve, and the Leahys invited several couples to celebrate. They introduced me to all the guests, some eager to hear what the Soviet Army did to us in Hungary during the revolution. Without a translator, I could not answer most of their questions. Trying to understand them and then produce answers was an exhausting process. After a while, I just wanted to be alone.

When the party was over, and we all retired, I reviewed how much my life had changed quickly. If someone had predicted three months ago that by the end of the year, I would not have believed I would be living in a foreign country, far away from my family. Now, as we entered into 1957, it was a reality. I thanked God and Saint Anthony for guiding me safely through my journey and asked them to stay with me in the future. I also prayed for opportunities to resume my running soon.

At noon on my first Friday at the shop, Mr. Leahy handed me a brown envelope. "Here is your first week's pay."

Inside the envelope, I found six crisp Canadian ten-dollar bills—equivalent to what I had earned in Hungary in three months! Although an exact comparison of the dollar and the *forint* was difficult due to the government-subsidized Hungarian living conditions, I suddenly felt rich. That was the first time I held so much buying power in my hand.

Although Mrs. Leahy packed lunch for me every day, with all that money in my possession, I could not resist the urge to splurge. I went to the corner coffee shop to eat. While looking around to see what other people were eating, I suddenly remembered reading about an unusual American food item in Hungary. "A hot dog, please," I said to the server when she came to my table.

She wanted to know if I also wanted a Coke. Recalling how awful that warm drink had tasted back in Vienna, I firmly replied, "Oh, no."

Perhaps I made a funny facial expression because she began to laugh. "Why don't you like Coca-Cola?"

It would have taken too long to explain my reason. "It's like medicine," was the best short answer I could give. She seemed to be puzzled, but she brought me a 7-Up instead. Later, I learned that the price of the hot dog included a drink.

The hot dog did not look at all like a dog. The meat reminded me of the *Virslis*, a thin wiener commonly served in Hungary at New Year's Eve celebrations. I liked it and decided to eat more of them in the future.

Back at the shop, I asked Herb how the hot dog was named. He did not know. Mr. Leahy thought it had something to do with German dogs, but he was unsure. In my letter to Mother, I wrote about my latest strange food experience. I reassured her, however, that it had nothing to do with real dogs.

I loved my job—with one exception. When the boss and Herb occasionally drove to make "house calls" on defective television sets, they left me alone in the store. If a customer came into the store, I usually managed to make myself understood, even if I had to use gestures or my dictionary. Responding to telephone calls presented far more difficulty. When I was alone, I prayed that the phone would not ring. All I could do was apologize and take their number when it did.

A week later, Miklós stopped by the shop with my friends Boriska and Gábor to tell me that the young married couple had also found jobs. The owner of a Nanaimo motel had hired Boriska to serve as a maid and Gábor to maintain the facilities. In addition to their wages, they were given a one-bedroom unit in the motel.

"You could live with us now," offered Boriska. "I'll cook and take care of both of you."

Although I had significantly benefited from Mrs. Leahy's English tutoring, I knew I needed to leave their house before her second child arrived. It would be good to be with my friends again. The icing on the cake was the promise of enjoying Boriska's home cooking. "Thanks. I'll move there tomorrow," I replied.

The small apartment of Motel Horseshoe served as home for the three of us. I slept on a sofa bed in the living room and walked about twenty minutes to work. My two friends were busy with their duties at the motel. We spent the evenings watching television. We could not understand much, but we loved the Ed Sullivan and Perry Como shows because they were easier to follow.

Nanaimo had no track club, but Father Bullock knew of a group of young men from his parish that had formed a basketball team. They played weekly against other teams from the neighboring towns. He took me to the gym where they practiced. After hearing that I had played for a club in Hungary, the team captain agreed to let me join.

"Where do I get the uniform and shoes?" I asked him, assuming the club would provide everything, just like in Hungary.

"You buy them from the store," he replied.

I suddenly realized then that living in a socialist country provided some benefits unavailable in the West.

Another part of my new life in Canada involved the Catholic Church. My upbringing in Hungary had not been particularly religious. During my elementary school years, I attended mass because it was mandatory with our catechism classes. I did not understand the Latin liturgy, so I followed the adults when they stood, knelt, or murmured expressions. The rigid sermons went far over my head. I cannot recall having any positive feelings about being in church when I was young.

After World War II, although the socialist regime tolerated religious practices, going to church was clearly against the atheist stand of the ruling Communist Party. I gradually phased out going to mass because I did not feel a special attachment anyway. I maintained

contact with God, as well as with St. Anthony, by always praying in bed before going to sleep.

In 1955, shortly after the Party officials bullied me into buying bonds to help "our North Korean brethren," somebody told me about the great sermons the priest delivered at the nearby Rókus Chapel. My curiosity took me to the church the following Sunday to hear him speak. To my amazement, that day, he preached about compromising under pressure without sacrificing one's beliefs. His message had a hidden political undertone. It helped me to let go of the frustration I had faced since caving into the Party's demand to buy the Korean War Bonds. After that day, I attended his early mass every Sunday and found his sermons spiritually uplifting. At the end of each mass, the congregation sang our national anthem. The combination of the sermon and the patriotic song filled my heart with joy.

Those uplifting services were why I responded to Father Bullock's invitation to Sunday mass at his church in Nanaimo. My boss and his wife worshipped there and were happy to see me. After my experience with the Holy Rollers only a week before, I was glad to see the familiar setting of a Catholic church. However, by the end of the mass, I did not have the same emotionally charged spirit I had found in Budapest in my late teens. I could not understand the English sermon, and the Canadian congregation did not sing the Hungarian anthem. Still, I did not want to admit my disappointment to my two benefactors. I continued attending Father Bullock's mass for the rest of my stay in Nanaimo.

After several weeks of anxious waiting, I finally received a letter from Mother. "I am so unhappy that you left me without saying goodbye," was the opening sentence. *I knew that part was there in case her letter was censored.* She was relieved I was safe and had already found work in my profession. Then she dropped some unexpected news about my sister. "Éva and her husband have also left the country. They are now in Vienna and plan to immigrate to Brazil."

I dropped the letter in astonishment. *Éva is married! She is in Vienna! My mother is now alone! How could all this happen?*

Being a beautiful, personable young woman, Éva had no problem finding dates. I had met several of her past boyfriends, although not the one she had been seeing lately. The word "marriage" had never come up. I was glad to hear she was safely out of Hungary, but I was concerned about Mother—how would she manage to be alone? Also, why would Éva want to go to Brazil? I was puzzled and confused.

The rest of Mother's letter described how much she missed us and explained that my old girlfriend Julika had moved in with her. The young woman could no longer stomach her domineering Communist father's control and had decided to distance herself from him. Mother hoped that by having Julika officially registered in the apartment, the government would allow her to keep the entire place instead of putting her into a smaller one. She did not mention any repercussions from the authorities for our escape.

I felt better learning that she did not have to live by herself and that, so far, our illegal departure had not caused any trouble. In the past, if someone managed to escape from Hungary, the family that had been left behind had to face the wrath of the Party. Any suspicion of collaboration—even without proof—led to severe charges. However, because

about 200,000 of us had escaped to the West after the revolution, I hoped that persecuting the remaining relatives would be an unmanageable task for the officials.

The thrift store where Father Bullock had previously taken me offered an amazing selection of lightly used clothing items for low prices. It became my favorite place to shop. I picked up an entire sports outfit for a few dollars but found no used basketball shoes. After buying them new from Sears & Roebuck, I began playing with the church team thrice weekly. Even though I was not the best player on the team, they utilized my speed for fast breaks. Interestingly, my Hungarian track coach had never regarded me as a natural sprinter, but on the basketball court, I was the fastest.

Being among English-speaking people at work and on the basketball court helped me to improve my understanding of my new language. However, Boriska, Gábor, and I always spoke Hungarian back in our motel unit. Mr. Leahy suggested that I should try to speak English in the evenings. We tried it once, but our conversation became so slow that we gave it up after a while.

The boss and Herb brought a large hi-fi cabinet with a loudspeaker problem to the store one day. While on their service call, they learned that the movers had dropped the cabinet during the customer's recent relocation. Since then, the speaker had sounded scratchy. After the initial inspection, Mr. Leahy informed the customer that the expensive speaker had suffered irreparable damage and would have to be replaced.

The customer was more concerned about the time required to receive a replacement than the cost of the speaker. I asked Mr. Leahy if I could help by attempting to fix the defective part. "When a speaker makes scratchy noises, nothing is to be done," he replied. "It is a problem that cannot be changed."

I explained that the factory where I worked in Budapest produced large, high-powered speakers for concert halls and sports facilities. I frequently saw the technicians repair defective speakers in the assembly area. "Let me try it, please."

"Well, we have nothing to lose," answered the boss skeptically. "Go ahead."

It took me less than ten minutes to repair the speaker, and it sounded new. Mr. Leahy happily passed on the good news and took me to deliver the unit to the customer's beautiful home. After the man heard that I fixed the speaker, he pulled out his wallet and offered me a tip.

Although I felt highly insulted, I did not show it. Instead, I smiled and politely refused the money. The man seemed surprised while putting the money away. As we were leaving, however, he shook my hand and told me how happy he was to have his hi-fi back so quickly.

In the car, Mr. Leahy asked, "Why didn't you accept the money?"

"Only taxi drivers and waiters take tips!" was my proud reply. "I am a professional."

The boss shook his head and laughed. "The next time someone offers you money for honest work, take it. There's nothing shameful about accepting a reward for a job well done."

That was another lesson I learned in Canada about capitalism.

When Father Bullock heard that I did not know my sister's status, he suggested we seek information through the Red Cross. He called on my behalf and told me to wait for the

reply. I hoped Éva would not emigrate to South America. It would be hard for me to visit her that far away.

News from Hungary

Several weeks passed by without any news. Then, just as I was giving up hope, a message came via the Red Cross: "Eva and her husband have arrived in Montreal. They must stay in a refugee center outside the city until someone offers them work."

Good news and bad news! She had landed in Canada instead of Brazil, but she was 2,300 miles from me. It sounded like there was no way for them to come to the West Coast. Then I remembered the old proverb, "If the mountain doesn't go to Mohammed, Mohammed must go to the mountain."

With the haste of a 20-year-old, I decided to move to Montreal!

After work, I shared the news about my sister with Boriska and Gábor. They were as surprised as I was to hear that Éva was married and had left Hungary. In addition, of all the places in the world, we had ended up in the same country.

When I shared my plan to go to Montreal, they expressed concern about being separated after all the experiences that had bonded us so closely. Finally, Boriska said, "You check it out and let us know. If you like it there, the three of us will find a way to follow you later."

"The three of you?"

"Yes, Gábor and I are expecting a baby in July," she announced, to my surprise.

I quickly did the math in my head. Apparently, during those frequent times last November when they had encouraged me to play chess in the Austrian *Gasthof's* lobby, they must have been doing something other than "resting" in our room.

I asked my teammates' opinions about Montreal at basketball practice that evening. Their responses varied. Some had heard good things about it, while others would not want to live there. None of them, however, had actually been there.

"It's cold in the winter, hot and humid during summer," said one.

"Most people there want to speak French only," added another.

"I've heard that the French-Canadian girls are gorgeous," was the most interesting comment. I had already seen beautiful young women in Nanaimo. If the ones in Montreal looked even better, it sounded like an excellent place to live.

I had one more compelling reason for wanting to live in a large city—to join a track club. Playing basketball had been fun, but I was eager to find a track coach to train me properly. I ran early mornings at a nearby park for several weeks to maintain my conditioning. I wanted to start competing during the summer, and Nanaimo was not the right place.

The next day, another letter came from my mother. She had received a postcard from my sister with the news that they had obtained immigration visas to Canada and transportation to Montreal. By a strange coincidence, one of my teammates from the Budapest track club, John Fischer, had already been in Montreal for several weeks and had secured a job. He was staying with relatives who had lived in Canada for some time.

Mother gave me his address and asked me to write to him. Perhaps he could visit Éva at the refugee camp.

Now I had another reason to go to Montreal! John and I had been close friends for the past four years. He was the top Hungarian junior sprinter; we had been part of the national junior championship 4 x 100-meter relay team and were both on the national Track Squad. If I were in Montreal, we could join a track club and continue running together. I immediately wrote to him about my plan.

The next evening, one of the Hungarian-Canadian couples who lived in Nanaimo, Mr. and Mrs. Nagy, stopped by the motel to see how we were doing. I told them about my sister and my desire to go to Montreal. Neither of them liked the idea. "You should be happy that you have a good job in your profession. There are too many unemployed people in Montreal, and you may not be lucky enough to find such a job again," Mr. Nagy said.

"You'll find Montreal very unpleasant in the winter," added his wife. "Stay here until the summer."

I knew they meant well, but my mind was made up. Seeing that they could not convince me to stay, Mrs. Nagy offered to take me to a travel agency to find out the cost of transportation. She recommended I take the bus because that was much less expensive than the train or an airplane. After hearing that ground transportation would take several days to reach Montreal, however, I was eager to fly.

The following day, I met Mrs. Nagy at lunchtime. She took me to a travel agency, where I learned that a one-way airplane ticket was out of my reach. Although I had saved about half of my earnings, I could not save enough to buy a ticket for several weeks. Mrs. Nagy also informed me that giving at least two weeks' notice at work was customary. I would have to wait for a while before going to Montreal.

We ran into a woman Mrs. Nagy knew as we left the agency. She introduced me casually in English to her acquaintance, "This is Leslie, my friend."

I was embarrassed and did not know how to react. In my native Hungarian language, "friend" had a double meaning. Between two men, it means the same as in English. A male "friend" to a woman, on the other hand, represents a "lover."

A few days later, when I was alone with my boss in the shop, I told him I wanted to quit and go to Montreal. I must not have expressed myself clearly because he asked, "How long do you want to visit there?"

"I'll stay with my sister and won't come back."

He seemed confused and telephoned Mrs. Nagy to help translate. They talked for a while, and she must have told him my reason for the move. Finally, he turned the phone over to me.

"He is very disappointed but understands that you want to be with your sister," Mrs. Nagy related to me. She told me Mr. Leahy planned to teach me television repair very soon. "He hoped that by the end of the year, you'd be able to run the shop for a few weeks while he took his family to Ireland for Christmas."

After his many kindnesses, I felt awful about letting him down, but I did not change my mind. We agreed to stay until I had enough money for the airfare and a few weeks' living

expenses in Montreal. Although I did not know my friend's relatives, I naively hoped to stay with them.

Near the end of February, my friend John replied to my letter. He was glad to hear my plan and promised to help me initially. "My relatives have had enough of me, and I need to find another place to live anyway. I'll have a room for us by the time you arrive here," he assured me. "Please send me your flight information. I'll meet you at the airport."

I told Mr. Leahy that my friend would have a place for us to stay in Montreal. He then took me to the travel agency and helped me reserve a flight departing two weeks later. The agency even sent a note to John in Montreal with my arrival information. Preparation for the trip was complete, except I still did not have enough money to cover the ticket and living expenses.

Knowing about my tight financial situation, my boss offered me a loan of \$150. "You can repay me by sending me ten dollars monthly," he said. "I'll also give you a letter of recommendation. Perhaps it'll help you to find work more quickly."

For a moment, I considered changing my mind and staying. However, thoughts of reuniting with my sister, plus the chance to continue with my hurdling, helped me stick to my plan.

Spring weather arrived at the beginning of March 1957 as I prepared to leave Vancouver Island. The night before I left, Mr. Nagy invited some Hungarians over for a formal dinner so we could say goodbye to one another. The following day, Mr. Nagy took me to the Vancouver airport, where I boarded a large four-engine plane for my transcontinental trip. The aircraft landed in several cities to pick up and drop off passengers. By this time, however, I felt like a seasoned traveler, and nothing about the flight worried me.

Life in French Canada

The short walk from the airplane to the Montreal passenger terminal quickly made me aware of the big difference between spring weather in British Columbia and Quebec. Vancouver's temperature was in the low 50s when I boarded the plane. In Montreal, it was well below zero. Even though I wore the light coat Father Bullock had given me, I shivered in the freezing weather. I did not have gloves but soon realized they would be a necessity.

My friend John Fischer was waiting for me in the arrivals area. Heavy snow covered the landscape as we made the hour-long bus trip to the city terminal. During the trip, he informed me that he had already rented a room for us from a German bachelor. We boarded a local bus in the city that dropped us off a few blocks from John's residence. After a short walk in the crisp white snow, we arrived at the building where he lived.

John introduced me to our landlord, Herr Weiner. "You may call me Klaus," he said. "Leave your wet shoes and coat in the hallway. I don't want you to track water through the apartment."

John knew the rules and had already taken his shoes off. After I removed mine, he led me to our room. Passing through the living room, I noticed a large picture of German troops marching in Berlin on the wall.

In our bedroom, John whispered to me, "I think Klaus is a former Nazi. Be sure not to say anything bad about them."

"Does he know that you're Jewish?" I asked. "Why did you rent the room from him?"

"No, he mustn't know, or he'll boot us out. This place is within a ten-minute walk of my newspaper office. It was also the cheapest room I could find for us."

My friend's wavy chestnut hair and blue eyes made him look like a young Paul Newman. If our landlord judged ethnicity by appearance, we did not have to worry about him learning the truth.

John gave me the address of the Employment Bureau of Montreal and recommended I go there right away. When I was ready to leave the following day, our landlord noticed I did not have gloves. He lent me a pair as well as some galoshes. "Wear these over your shoes. It'll prevent them from becoming soggy," he advised. His thoughtful generosity touched me.

Carrying Mr. Leahy's letter, I took the bus downtown and proceeded to the employment office. A long line of people stood outside the building, and I took a place at the end. It was bitterly cold and snowing. The sidewalk was slushy due to the heavy salting. I was thankful to have the warm gloves and the galoshes.

The line progressed slowly. By the time I stepped inside the office, my feet felt frozen. People around me spoke French, and I remembered my basketball teammates' predictions about the cold weather and possible language problems.

Finally, I reached the inner office and entered a vast hall containing 50 to 60 desks. The people seated at each desk were busily talking. Next to the door sat a clerk holding a tablet in his lap. Without asking any questions, he pulled a number from the tablet and sent me to the desk corresponding to that number. The man behind the desk spoke to me in French and pointed to a chair to indicate I should sit down.

"I'm sorry, but I don't speak French."

He switched to English and asked me several questions. I had trouble following his rapid talk and asked him to speak more slowly. He complied but was noticeably annoyed. Taking my Canadian immigration document, he typed my personal information onto a form.

"What kind of work can you do?" he asked next.

"I'm an electronic technician. I worked in a radio repair shop in Nanaimo for two months. I want to do something similar," I replied while showing him my letter of recommendation.

"Were you laid off?"

I did not know what "laid off" meant and asked him to explain. He did, but his raised voice indicated increasing annoyance.

"No," I replied once I understood his question.

"Then why did you leave?"

"I want to live in Montreal so I can continue running."

The man lost all control and exploded in rage. "Look around! All these people are without work, and you quit a good job so you can run?" He pulled the form out of the typewriter and ripped it in half. "Go find work yourself!" With that, he dismissed me.

Mr. Nagy's warnings echoed through my ears. *He was right. Why didn't I listen to those who advised me to stay in Nanaimo? I should have appreciated what I had.* However, it

was too late. I went outside the building and retook a place at the end of the line. *Hopefully, I will be sent to a different agent next time, and I will know what to say.*

After a long wait, I reached the inner office again. Before stepping inside, I removed my coat so the clerk wouldn't recognize me. It worked. This time, he directed me to another agent on the other side of the room.

The first couple of minutes with the second agent, a tall, thin woman, followed a pattern similar to the first interview. She was also a French Canadian, but I could understand her much better. She also asked if I had been laid off.

"Yes, and I could not find other work there," was my prepared answer. "I hoped that there would be more jobs for technicians in a big city."

"Well, let me see what we have." She flipped through a folder and pulled out a sheet. "This company needs someone to wire, assemble, and test large electrical boards. Do you think you can do that?"

"Yes, I have a lot of experience in that kind of work," I replied, my heart pounding rapidly. "I am particularly familiar with testing."

She made a phone call and wrote an address on a piece of paper. "Go to see Mr. Ward at the Standard Electric Time Company. He'll interview you."

Standard Electric Time Company was founded in 1884, only six years after Edison invented the electric light bulb. The company grew and, in the 1930s, developed the first hospital communication system. Two decades later, the firm pioneered automatic nurse-calling stations. This product became very popular in hospitals, and the company needed more people to build and test the systems.

Mr. Ward, a gray-haired gentleman, was the production foreman of the company. After reading Mr. Leahy's letter, he walked me through a clean production area that seemed to be brand new. I saw people working on large panels measuring about three-by-three feet. The panels had electrical components mounted and wired on their backs. On the front, they had colored monitor lights and switches. Mr. Ward explained that the boards would be installed at the nursing stations of hospitals. The boards were wired to switches in the patients' rooms, allowing the patients to have instant communication with the nurses.

Mr. Ward had me sit at a workbench at the end of our tour. He handed me a couple of electrical components plus two diagrams—one showed the placement of the components and the other one the wiring schematics. He asked me to mount the components on the board and complete the wiring.

The task was elementary, and I completed it in a short time. Satisfied with my performance, he told me I could start there the following Monday. My pay would be \$45 per week.

I was happy to find a job so quickly. The work seemed repetitive, but I hoped to advance to a better position later. The wages he offered, however, bothered me.

"I earned \$60 per week in Nanaimo," I told him, pointing to the part of Mr. Leahy's letter. "Would you pay me the same?"

He did not like my question. "That was in British Columbia. In Montreal, we don't pay that much to assemblers," he snapped. "Particularly when you don't know much English! If you want more, you can find a job elsewhere."

I wished I had kept my mouth shut. "I'm sorry. Forty-five dollars will be fine."

When I left the building, it was still snowing. Except for the major boulevards, all the streets were covered with ice. It certainly did not look like spring. That evening, when I asked our landlord how long the cold weather would last, he said the snow might stay on the streets through April. His answer dashed my hopes of being able to start running hurdles on a track right away.

After sharing the news of my job with John, my next task was to find a way to visit my sister. John suggested we ask the owner of the nearby Hungarian delicatessen. "The owner has lived in Montreal for a long time and probably knows where the refugee center is." We needed to buy some food anyway, so we walked over to the deli.

We soon learned that Hungarian refugees without sponsors stayed in a former Army camp in Joliette, located about 35 miles away from Montreal. Regular bus service was available from Montreal's central station to Joliette. The next day, I boarded the bus and headed to the camp.

Stepping off the bus in Joliette was like arriving in another country. I heard only French spoken on the streets. When I asked people for directions to the camp in English, they answered in French. Still, I managed to find my way to the place and asked for Éva at the entrance. A helpful guard directed me to a large waiting room. About 30 minutes later, my sister appeared, holding hands with a middle-aged man.

Seeing me, she dropped his hand and rushed to me. We hugged each other joyfully. Then, pointing to the man beside her, she said, "This is Tibor, my husband."

I had trouble hiding my surprise. Éva had always dated good-looking men of her age. Although I had heard Tibor's name mentioned at home, this was my first time meeting him. He looked more like her father than her husband. There was nothing to do but greet him. "Szervusz and congratulations," I said to him, not too enthusiastically.

Once we began talking, I found Tibor to be pleasant and friendly. He and Éva told me briefly about their escape from Hungary nearly a month after mine. Their journey had proven far more difficult. The border patrol caught them on the first try. After they bribed the guard escorting them back to Budapest, he let them go. Their second attempt to cross into Austria was successful, and they stayed briefly at the same Eisenstadt refugee center where I had been. Tibor spoke German and French fluently and acted as an interpreter in Austria.

They had no idea where I was. By the end of 1956, Brazil was the only country still accepting refugees. Fortunately, just as they were applying for immigration to Brazil, Canada opened its doors to another wave of Hungarian refugees. They flew on a troop carrier to Montreal amid one of the coldest North American winters on record. Tibor, a mechanical engineer, hoped his knowledge of French would enable him to find a job soon.

I reported to work the following Monday. To my relief, everyone in the assembly area, including the few French Canadians, spoke English. My job was interesting at first. I spent three days completing the first large control panel assigned to me. However, to my disappointment, I had to turn the panel over to a technician for the electrical tests. When I told Mr. Ward that I could also perform these tests, he told me it would be long before I

could transfer to the testing department. I worked on the same products during the next several weeks.

It was a new experience for me to punch a time clock in the morning, at the beginning and end of the lunch break, and the end of the workday. When I asked why we had to punch in and out during lunch, I learned that the half-hour we had for lunch was unpaid. I was surprised because we had paid for lunchtime in Hungary. In addition, I also found out the company did not provide paid medical insurance. That benefit had been given automatically to all workers in Hungary. I began to realize that not many things in Canada were free.

Lunchtime, although not paid, was the best part of my day. The factory was located only a block from a busy commercial street called Rue St. Catherine. After punching the time clock, I would gulp down the sandwich I had prepared the previous night and rush over to Saint Catherine Street to look around. People in Montreal were much better dressed than were those on Vancouver Island. My Nanaimo basketball teammates were right about beautiful young women parading on the streets. I wished that I had longer lunchtimes to observe them.

A few weeks after we moved into our rented room, Klaus knocked on our door one evening. He was highly agitated, holding an airmail letter in his hand. "Who do you know in Israel?" he demanded, handing John the letter.

I remembered John telling me about a cousin who lived in Israel. If Klaus found out, he would naturally suspect that John was Jewish. He would immediately kick us out of the apartment, ending our cheap rental. I looked at John anxiously, waiting for his answer.

"I don't have any idea," said John calmly while taking the letter from our landlord. After reading the sender's name, he exclaimed, "It's from our Jewish neighbor's son. How could he be in Israel?"

He opened the envelope and began to read the letter. After finishing the first page, he turned to Klaus, who was still waiting. "He is asking me to find his lost uncle who immigrated to Canada after World War II," he continued.

Klaus did not look convinced. "How does he know where you live? Why would he contact you?"

"His mother in Budapest probably heard that I am in Canada. She could have asked my mother for my address."

"I certainly hope you won't help him. Jews have lots of money. Let him hire an investigator."

"Of course. I won't even reply to him," said John after crumpling up the letter. "He was never my friend."

Klaus mumbled something approvingly and left us. After unfolding the letter inside our room, John whispered, "That was close. It was dumb of me not to warn my cousin about our landlord. Do you think Klaus believed me?"

"I'm not sure. Let's buy food and discuss what to do next."

We asked the deli owner if he could recommend a nearby place to live. He promised to look around for us. On our way home, we decided to play it safe in case Klaus suspected

something. Beginning that night, we barricaded our bedroom door to protect ourselves while we slept.

A few days later, I received good news from my sister. Tibor had found employment with an air-conditioning company at a monthly salary of \$250. Éva had been hired to work in a small import-export shop through the local Hungarian-Canadian community. She received 50 cents an hour for packing and addressing orders. The three of us planned to find an apartment as soon as we had enough money for the rent. John had arranged to rent an apartment with three other young men. In the meantime, he and I stayed with Klaus, trying to convince him that we had nothing to do with Israel.

Eva and Tibor moved from the Joliette camp to Montreal, where they stayed in jail for a few days. As in Vienna, where Hungarian refugees were allowed to sleep in unused jail cells, Montreal's mayor had opened jails for people who left the refugee center for new jobs.

As I waited until Eva, Tibor, and I could afford to find a new home together, I continued to be haunted by recurring dreams. In my dreams, I would sneak back into Hungary using a variety of challenging routes, only to find another revolution underway. During the fighting, I kept asking myself how I could have been so foolish as to return after successfully escaping. Awakening from these nightmares, I was always soaked with sweat. These dreams stayed with me for a long time.

Another chronic problem I had was the steady pain inside my upper lip, resulting from my tripping over the cobblestone barricade back in Budapest. When I told the deli owner about it, he recommended a Hungarian dentist whose office was not far from where I worked. I was concerned about the cost, but the owner assured me the dentist's fee would be very reasonable. He telephoned and made an appointment for me.

Perhaps my family's dental genes were weak. My mother lost all her teeth when I was only seven or eight years old. She had upper and lower dentures, and I remember how difficult it was for her to chew hard food. Although she kept a clean home and ensured I had a bath in a washtub weekly, dental hygiene was not high on her priorities. I don't remember using a toothbrush until my late teens. As a result, my teeth were in bad shape, and I visited the dentist in Hungary frequently.

During lunchtime, I walked from work to my dental appointment. Hearing the soft music in the dentist's spacious, nicely furnished waiting room helped to calm my nerves. I was the only patient, and the receptionist took me to the dentist a few minutes after my arrival. I was impressed with the short wait. Back in Hungary, the government-owned medical offices did not offer appointments. Patients would show up and wait for their turn. If the doctor were very busy, the wait could take hours.

The doctor greeted me in a friendly manner. His Hungarian parents had immigrated to Canada when he was a young boy. After completing college in Montreal, he decided to become a dentist. During the past few months, he had seen several newly arrived refugees. "I'll take good care of you," he assured me. "Now, let's see what your problem is."

After a short examination, he informed me that my teeth looked dreadful. Seeing the condition of my gum inside the upper lip, he suspected some of my upper front teeth were

damaged. “The X-ray will tell us what I need to do. Come back tomorrow, and we’ll review your condition.”

The next day, I went back to see him. “Your mouth needs lots of work. Three of your front teeth are cracked, and they must be removed. I am surprised that an infection hasn’t set in. The lower teeth we can save, but some need fillings.”

“How will I look without my front teeth?”

“I’ll make a good denture for you that will last for a long time.”

I was confused and concerned. “How long will it take before I’ll have teeth again? How much will it cost?”

“I’ll have a denture prepared to replace your natural teeth before I pull them out,” he replied. “As for the cost, I’ll only charge for the material, and you can pay it off monthly.”

I had not heard about the immediate replacement of teeth. “I thought my mouth would have to heal before I could be fitted for a denture.”

“Not anymore! This way, your gum forms around the denture during the healing period. It will work almost as well as your natural teeth.”

That was almost too much for me to absorb. However, he convinced me that, considering my financial status, it was the best alternative for me. I agreed, and he made an impression on the upper portion of my mouth. He set another appointment for the next step.

I shared the information with John and our landlord that evening. John doubted it would work, but Klaus said he knew someone who had had the same procedure done. According to him, it worked well. I decided to go along with the plan.



Photos taken in Montreal mid-1957. Left: Éva and I with her husband, Tibor. Center: Éva in a relaxed moment. Right: I was wearing the same jacket used during the escape from Hungary.

Now that I was more experienced at work, my job became boring. The company had a large order for the panels I worked on, and I completed a panel every two days. Mr. Ward would not let me switch to a different product. He told me I would be doing the same work for several months. One afternoon, being utterly bored with the repetitive work, I dozed off with some tools in my hands. Although the boss did not notice, some of the assemblers

saw me nod off. One woke me up, but another must have reported me to Mr. Ward because he appeared on the scene.

He lectured me booming, saying that the company did not pay me for sleeping. "If that happens again," he warned me, "I'll write you up." With that, he stormed out of the production area.

Some other workers snickered after witnessing the scolding, making me realize I was unpopular among them. I carelessly bragged about my technical education during my first few weeks of employment. Naturally, they resented the fresh-off-the-boat smart-aleck who wanted to be at the head of the line. I promised myself never to be so insensitive again.

On the day of my tooth extraction, I asked Mr. Ward to let me take the afternoon off to have my teeth pulled. He did not want my work to fall behind schedule but allowed me to be away for two hours—without pay. Fearful of what I faced, I headed to the dental office.

After the dentist shot my mouth full of Novocain, he removed all my upper teeth. He placed the new denture, took a picture of my head, and let me go. He instructed me to keep my mouth shut tight to minimize bleeding.

When I returned to work, my swollen face created quite a bit of interest. I hoped that Mr. Ward would allow me to go home. He gave me a disapproving look when I pointed out that I was not supposed to talk and sent me back to my workbench. For the rest of the afternoon, I continued working while swallowing blood. Being only twenty years old, I did not make a big thing out of the matter. However, later in my life, I frequently considered how heartless it was of my boss not to let me take the rest of the day off.

For the next several days, I lived mainly on yogurt. Gradually, my new teeth became functional, and I could eat soft food. Even chewing hard food did not cause problems in a month or so. The dentist had been correct about the excellent fit of the denture.

One of the import shop owners where Éva worked told her about a vacant two-bedroom apartment where he lived. My sister, her husband, and I looked at the place and decided to rent it. If we signed a one-year lease, the landlord offered a free month's rent. Not knowing that was a standard rental practice, we gladly accepted the offer, thinking we had received a special deal.

The apartment had major appliances, but otherwise, it was empty. One of the local newspapers advertised a special sale: furniture for two bedrooms, living room, and kitchen for \$99. The ad also mentioned easy payment plans, something we were not accustomed to in the cash-only Hungarian system. We visited the store the following Saturday to buy the complete package.

A smiling salesman greeted us at the door. We showed him the ad and stated our intention to purchase the furniture. He led us to the advertised furniture, offered seats around the coffee table, and said, "Allow me to get to know you better first. That way, I can serve you better," he suggested.

The man asked many questions about us and showed a remarkable interest in our background. He told us that Western nations should not have let the Red Army put down the Hungarian Revolution. We liked him for being so sympathetic to our country.

After a while, he said, "I want to be your friend and give you honest advice. This advertised \$99 special is not good enough for sophisticated people like you. Let me show

you something much better.” He directed us to a different section of the store. “The furniture here is well made and will last you long. This will serve your needs much better.”

We agreed with him and selected the set we liked the most. The price came to \$499. Seeing a number much higher than we had expected, we did not want to buy. “Let me bring the owner over to see what he can do,” he offered. “I want you to have the high quality you deserve.” He went into the office at the rear of the store.

In a short time, he reappeared with another smiling man. The slick salesman said, “He is my boss, and I explained your background to him. He understands you don’t have much money, so he will work out a payment plan you can afford. In addition, he’ll add a gift for you.”

The boss led us into his office and offered us coffee. After doing some calculations, he pointed out that we could have all that high-quality furniture by paying only \$25 monthly for the next two years. Since he liked us so much, he would even give us three free pillows! Everything would be delivered to our apartment the following day without extra charge.

How could we refuse such generosity? We signed the contract and took the streetcar to our new home. In the building, Éva introduced us to her boss, Sanyi. We told him about the nice salesman and the special deal he had arranged for us.

After looking at the contract we had signed, Sanyi was not impressed. “What happened to the \$99 price? You’ll pay \$600, including \$100 for interest.”

Tibor replied, “The advertised special was not very good quality. He told us this was much better and even gave us three free pillows.”

Sanyi became angry. “He took advantage of your inexperience. Let’s return to the store, and I’ll straighten him out.”

He drove us to the furniture store. When we pointed out the salesman to him, Sanyi yelled at the man. “How could you trick these people into paying such a high price? I want you to give them the deal you advertised!” Sanyi was not a big man, but his voice boomed through the store.

Customers stared at us. The salesman became alarmed. “Let me take you to the office to discuss this,” he whispered.

Sanyi did not budge. He was waving the contract in his hand. “No, I want everyone to hear how you tricked these people. They came to spend \$99, not \$600. Give them what they asked for!”

The store owner appeared in a hurry. “OK, OK! We’ll change the order to please you,” he said reassuringly while smiling at everyone. “I’ll take care of everything.”

He ripped up our contract in his office and wrote a new one. “Since there has been a misunderstanding, I’ll give you a higher-priced set for \$99. Of course, the free pillows will still be included.”

Sanyi proudly took us back to the apartment. “Before you sign a contract, let me know about it. You must be very careful with those fast-talking salespeople.”

Another lesson we learned in Canada!

The next day, we moved into the apartment. After the furniture arrived, Sanyi and some other Hungarian-Canadians donated many essential household items to us—the rest we purchased at the Salvation Army store. In a few weeks, we had accumulated almost

everything we needed. Éva cooked for us. Tibor and I took care of the shopping and cleaning. Our little family lived together quite happily.