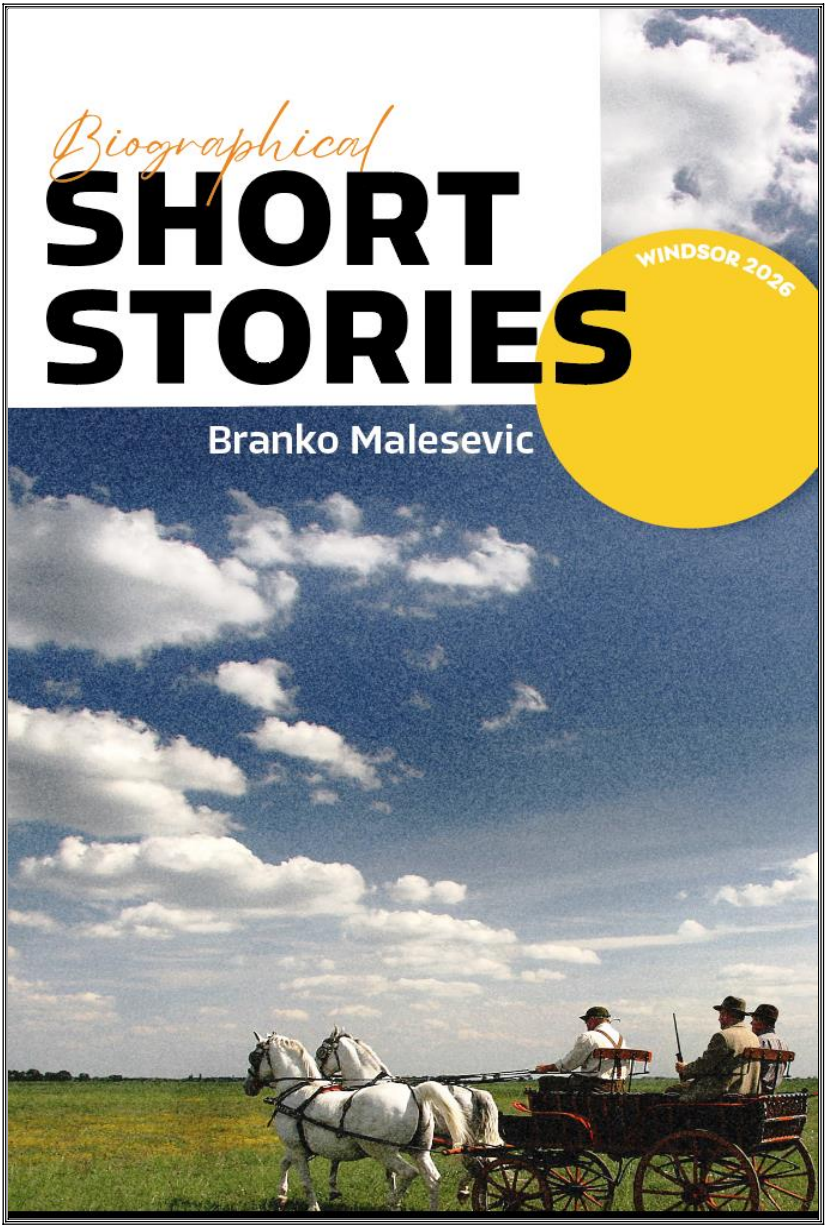
Biographical

SHORT STORIES

WINDSOR 2026

Branko Malesevic



Branko Malesevic

From Kukulje to Windsor

✯

The fate of a pear tree

✯

Café & other short stories

Windsor 2026

Foreword

The stories of Branko Malešević, collected within these covers, like a vow to the native mentality and language, in a readable and interesting way, talk about the "little man", precisely the one about whom the famous psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich wrote. With the help of various anecdotes, experienced firsthand, transmitted or woven by imagination, the author reminds readers of what is at the core of human nature, first of all in terms of relationships with others, and then with nature, plants and animals. The good and bad qualities of a human being are shown, but also the fact that both light and darkness are able to bring out the best in us, provided that we correctly interpret the messages of our Creator.

Branko's stories do not have to have a temporal or spatial dimension. They can happen anytime and anywhere. However, the author begins the narrative sequence, a string of colorful beads, factually and chronologically, writing about his fate and that of his loved ones, about the circumstances that, like a strong north wind whipping at his back, took him from his native Lijevče fields and the banks of the Vrbas River, and in a second gust even further – where another sun shines. Thus, he honorably first gives himself, in order to gain trust on the other side of the pen. Then he moves on to the interpretation of events, not necessarily only those of others, but understandable to the soul of all "little people".

Finally, Branko Malešević sings an ode to his homeland – Kukulje. Through his verses, generation after generation speaks, who have left their homes and fled to distant places.

The grief is great. But Branko has nothing to grieve for. God sent him when and where he thought he was most needed. And he showed that he carefully understood His message, because thanks to him the spiritual heritage of Serbs, whenever and wherever they live, is richer.

Ivan Kalauzović, journalist and publicist

Kukulje - a village by the Vrbas River

The village stretches along the course of the Vrbas River, 10 kilometers upstream from the town of Srbac where the seat of the municipality is located.
According to the 2011 census, there are 842 inhabitants of which 85% are Serbs. It is 26 km away from Banja Luka, the capital of Republika Srpska. The home of the Malesevic family was located on the very bank of the river. The family consisted of 11 members:
Father Đurađ, born 1900, mother Milka 1899, brothers Dušan 1928, Žarko 1931, Vasilije 1935, Branko 1937, Milovan 1941 and Radovan 1945, as well as sisters Zdravka 1926, Nada 1930 and Stojanka 1938.
Brother Dušan died in war 1944, together with uncle Dragutin, our father's only brother, not far from the family home.
The memories from Kukulje are mostly related to the wartime, in which the whole family spent many days and nights, often in snow-covered forests in shelters in front of the enemy, which is why I am reluctant to remember those events.
The family moved to Vojvodina, the province in northern Serbia at the end of 1945, to the village of Hetin.
The trip to Vojvodina was organized by train, most often in freight cars, and since it was the end of the year, i.e. winter time, it was extremely uncomfortable and cold, so they lit a fire to warm themselves. There were many small children in the wagons, like the brothers Radovan, who was less than a year old, and Milovan, who was 4 years old.
In addition, there were also domestic animals in the wagon, mostly goats and sheep, which provided the minimum of necessary food - milk for children and the sick, of which there were a large number.
In some places, the railways and the bridges were destroyed, so ferry was used to cross the rivers, which contributed to the journey taking so long. We set off on our journey in December of 1945 and arrived in Hetin in January 1946.

Great joy was brought to all of us by the dog Sharov, whom we left with a neighbor, and who appeared in front of the house in Hetin after a month. How he managed to find us remained unknown forever, which was talked about for a long time in the village and the surrounding area.

Hetin - a new life on a new and unknown land

The family settled in the village of Hetin, right on the Romanian border, near Srpska Crnja, which at that time was the seat of the municipality, and is by itself next to the border, opposite the Romanian town of Zombolj.
Between Crnja and Hetin is the village of Radojevo (formerly: Klarija), also on the very border.
Just as Crnja's closest neighbor on the Romanian side is Zombolj, Radojevo's is Keča and Hetin's Otelek. The distance between these interstate neighbors is only a few kilometers, much closer than any village on Yugoslavian side.
Being on the border means being far from one's own, abandoned and neglected. While Radojevo and Crnja were connected by road and railway, Hetin had no traffic connections with the interior of the country, only a summer country road to these two nearest villages, which in rainy weather and during winter travel was impossible or very difficult.
The village didn't even have electricity, except for two hours in the evening, before going to bed.
The village actually had a road, but facing Timisoara, and when determining the border with Romania after the First World War, no one took into account how it would affect the life of the villagers. That part of the road, only a few hundred meters long to the border, fell into disrepair over time and it was as if it had never existed.
Life in the village was very difficult and everyone who could was looking for a way to escape from there as far as possible.

The village once (1948) had 2268 inhabitants and now (2022) only 327 live in it, most of them elderly.
Before the war, this village had about 1,300 inhabitants, exclusively German and Hungarian.
Immediately after the end of World War II, the colonists moved into the houses that the members of the German nation had left.
There were many children in each settler family, so that the school, which was built for the needs of families with one or two children, as was usual for the natives, suddenly became too small, so that classes took place in two or three shifts, in special departments for Serbs and Hungarians.
The Hungarian neighbors accepted the newcomers with a certain amount of mistrust, but still helped guide them to a new way of life that was typical for Vojvodina, such as preparing food, baking bread, how to cook stew and the famous Vojvodina soup.
The Serbs quickly accepted and got used to the new life, and how could they not - they get used to the good quickly and easily.
Some immigrants from remote areas of Bosnia watched a football match for the first time. They didn't understand the game, so they commented each in their own way, including the remark of one observer, which will go down in anecdotes:
Just look at how, like children, they fight for a ball. Why don't they give everyone one ball so they don't chase each other in the field!
The village was founded by Hungarians, in the middle of the 18th century, who engaged in the production of tobacco, for which Hetin was widely known. Our family also engaged in that business because it brought good income. In addition, sunflower, sugar beet, castor and corn were the main agricultural products.
All members of the Malešević family worked together, everyone had their own job, according to their abilities and age. My duty was to look after two cows and several sheep, feeding the poultry and similar smaller and easier jobs. As I grew up, I got more work and new tasks like the rest of the housemates.

We progressed quickly, so we soon became one of the wealthier families in the village. But it doesn't last long. It started with the establishment of rural agricultural cooperatives, modeled after the Sovkolhozes and Kolkhozes in the USSR.
A large number of (more successful) householders did not want to join and become a member of the cooperative, because they did not see anything promising in it, which turned out to be true after just a few years when that collectivization was abandoned.
The coercion applied by the authorities to the peasants to join the cooperative was very rigorous. The prisons were full of "kulaks" and "enemies of the people", including our father.
However, in the end, he gave in, because after "obligations" to the state, families were often left without food - he saw that any resistance was futile.
After a few years, the cooperatives disbanded. Of the imported agricultural tools, machines and livestock, we got back only a small part and not what used to belong to the household.
By the way, life in Hetin, in addition to the above, also had many problems in the early 50s due to the conflict caused by the split with the USSR - better known as the time of the Informburo.
Incidents at the border have become almost daily, including kidnappings of our citizens by Romanian border guards and even the killings of our soldiers on guard.
The insecurity, in addition to all the other bad conditions for life in the village, made many residents decide to go inland.
Thus, for the first time in the village, a decrease in the number of inhabitants was recorded, which will never stop until these days.
The father decided to sell the house, which he was not happy to "inherit" from the expelled owners, often saying, based on the experience of losing his own house in the war, that someone else's house does not bring happiness to anyone.The family moved to Klek, a village near Zrenjanin, where descendants of Đurađ Malešević, fourth and fifth generation, still live there today.

Srpska Crnja

As for me, I lived in Hetin for the first four years, until finishing primary school. I continued my education in Srpska Crnja (junior high school) for another four years, staying in a school dormitory and helping my family in the countryside during the summer.
Back then, it was rare, at least as far as Hetin was concerned, for someone to continue their education after primary school, so only 5-6 students of my generation took advantage of that opportunity.
After Srpska Crnja, it was necessary to decide what to do next.
It was a turning point in determining what one wants to do with one`s life. There were various schools for professional and craft professions, and some continued their education in a high school.
Srpska Crnja is otherwise recognizable for the fact that the poet and visual artist Đura Jakšić was born there.
Despite the fact that it was the seat of the municipality, Srpska Crnja was actually one large Banat village.

Belgrade

My goal was to become independent as soon as possible and escape from the village, so I spent some time in Belgrade.
Before the trip, my father gave me the address of a friend in Belgrade, whom I should contact for accommodation and instructions about the big city.
I remember his advice, which, like any father, wants to draw his child's attention to the dangers in the unknown world:
Do not go into the ground alive, do not climb high and do not enter the deep. In translation, it would be something like: don't enter mines, don't climb tall buildings and don't enter deep waters.
My father's friend received me nicely, explained where the schools in the city that interested me are located, as well as the dangers of city traffic.

I first tried to enroll in the industrial school "Ivo Lola Ribar" in Železnik near Belgrade.
I didn't succeed, because I was marked as a "son of a kulak" in the characteristics that were then the criteria for eligibility at school or at work.The next attempt was the Hospitality school, in Jug-Bogdanova Street in Belgrade. I was rejected again for the same reason, and with the intention of enrolling as a tailor as well.

Zrenjanin

Disappointed, but not discouraged, on the way back I stayed in Zrenjanin, where I learned that a Hospitality school was opening in that town, so I tried to enroll there as well.
There were more applicants than the school intended to enroll, so they asked if anyone would like to go to Subotica, where the same school was also located, but with less interest due to the fact that the city was located far on the outskirts of the country, on the very border with Hungary.
Students tended to go to schools closer to where they lived, which in my case was much further from Zrenjanin, where I was accepted.
I was adamant about going to Subotica anyway, citing as a reason that I wanted more independence, rather than being closer to my parents which they accepted, and so at the end of October 1953, I found myself in our northernmost city.

Subotica

The majority of the population, at that time, was Hungarian, which did not bother me because I had already learned some of Hungarian in Hetin. In this school, there was a recommendation to learn Hungarian in addition to the mandatory German language, because communication with guests is inevitable in the hospitality industry, and most of the guests were Hungarians.

Daily socializing with Hungarian colleagues at work and at school made me very quickly able to speak and write without problems - a language that has no similarities to any other language in the world. In that language learning, there were also laughable situations, but always with the good intention to help.
I used every opportunity to address the Hungarians in Hungarian. So one day I entered the school`s restaurant `s kitchen, to ask the chef, aunt Margita something for lunch, and I said:
Margit néni, édes vagyok! (Aunt Margita, I'm hungry)
Aunt Margita laughed and said: Ó, nem tudtam!
Actually, I said: Aunt Margita, I'm cute!
And she answered me: Oh, I didn't know!
Instead of édes I should have said éhes.
I loved Subotica and still today it`s one of my fondest memories. Because it`s location is so close to the border it has preserved much of the Austrian-Hungarian culture and charm. That makes it a very special and interesting city in which to live or visit.
After the First World War, when this city became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Yugoslavia), Subotica had more inhabitants than both Belgrade and Zagreb.
Because it is on the border, on the outskirts of the country, it grew slowly.This helped to preserve much of its charm.
Kindness in dealing with others, behavior in a public place or in society, is present in all occasions.
Traveling by open tram from the city to Palić will remain in the memories of everyone who had the opportunity to experience it.
I rarely went from Subotica to Hetin during the school holidays, to visit my parents and family, because it was quite far.
I used that free time to work, replacing older colleagues on vacation, as much for practice, and even more for good earnings.
Several times in their letters they mentioned that I had not visited for two years and asked me when I would come.

I came to visit on the first days of the school holidays, at the end of June. My family and many others were happy to see me, but there was also envy among my former friends from elementary school, that I look "so gentlemanly", while some girls were competing to be closer to me, asking how it is in the city where I go to school.
I told them about the theaters, cinemas and tram ride to the lake Palić, the beautiful city hall, the zoo...
And the guys were jealous and looking for a way to "bring me down" in front of the girls. One day, they invited me to play football next to the playground, which was surrounded on all four sides by deep canals full of water, which serves as an obstacle so that the cows and sheep that grazed in the nearby meadow would not cross and damage the football field, which happened before on a few occasions.
Naive, I did not expect what my former friends prepared for me.
A neighbor had a little lamb, which was named Mishko, with whom I also played when I was visiting two years ago. However, now Mishko was a large and strong ram, trained by the boys to attack an unknown newcomer, suddenly and without reason, at the whistle of one of them.
Someone deliberately kicked the ball to the side where I was and of course I went after it to put it back in play.
I heard the whistle but I didn't know what was waiting for me.
The ram lunged at me, neck stiff, with horns ready to attack.
I quickly realized what was going on.
I had so much time to run away from the enraged ram, and had no choice but to head straight for the canal full of water.
At the last moment, I managed to jump over the channel, and the ram braked and stopped on the very shore.
The Mangups burst out laughing, but my success in jumping over the water filled canal was evidently not expected by them, and they were therefore disappointed because the trick did not work out quite as they wished.

Those canals around the playground were full of water that day, because it had been raining for several days, and otherwise they were never completely without water. Usually, the upper half of the canal bank was wet and soft, so the boys competed to see who could jump the canal from bank to bank, without fear of falling into the water if they failed. No one has ever managed to jump the channel from coast to coast, only I did, thanks to Mishko the ram, thereby confirming the old truth that a man can do much more when faced with danger than he would do under normal circumstances.
The boys claimed that Mishko "pushed" me a little.
After a few years, at brother Vasa`s wedding, we met again and reminisced about that event.
There was no need for an apology, because we all understood that that boyish mischief was not malicious, and they confirmed to me on that occasion that my record still stands.

Becej

I spent one whole summer on an internship in Bečej, a picturesque town on the banks of the Tisza River.
Before leaving, Tihomir Bata Ognjanov, famous national football team player, then "Spartak" player and the manager of the UNION store in the center of Subotica, whom I knew and he knew me, because I often bought chocolates and sweets from him.
When I told him that I was going to Bečej to spend a couple of months on an internship there, he told me that if I needed an apartment, I should contact his aunt, who had a house in Sinđelićeva Street, number 10 (if I remember correctly).
He informed his aunt that I was coming to her house, and told her to give me the room he used when he was visiting her. And so it was.
It so hapened that f.k. "Partizan" from Belgrade was on the camp in Bečej for two weeks, and my duty was to spend the whole time with them, serving breakfast, lunch and dinner.

And when they went to training, I spent time with them, by standing behind the goal and catching balls together with the young goalkeeper Milutin Šoškić, doing acrobatics behind the goal, catching balls that would pass the first goalkeeper Stojanović.
So I've been there for two weeks in the company of our then best club in Yugoslavia.
And here too I had a glitch with the Hungarian language:
Every day I wrote the Menu in Hungarian and Serbian, it was one of my duties during my internship at the "Belgrade" hotel.
Market day was for us "harvest day", as we waiters welcomed that day among ourselves.
The head cook, Katarina, again Hungarian, usually knew how many dishes needed to be prepared in advance, such as the Parisian and Vienna schnitzels, which were ready to be grilled when the guest ordered, without waiting for the piece of meat to be "beaten" with a wooden hammer and shaped it into a schnitzel.
I mistakenly wrote on the menu: Becsei instead of Bécsi szelet, i.e. Bečej instead of Vienna schnitzel.
Many guests wanted to try "Bečej" schnitzel as something new - the orders were many times higher than the number prepared.
Katarina said - let me see what you wrote in the menu, and immediately noticed the reason for so many orders.
Instead of reproaching me, what I expected, she praised me for a good job - such a number of Viennese schnitzels had never been sold.
When the schooling in Subotica came to an end, we all received diplomas of qualified workers: waiters, cooks, pastry chefs... and were given a schedule of where everyone is going to get their first job.

Travnik – Zenica

From various parts of Yugoslavia, hotels approached our school and offered employment to newly educated young staff, with the aim of improving catering services.

I was scheduled to report to the hotel "Kolodvor" in Travnik, Bosnia and Herzegovina, together with Dragica, a cook.
This meant a big change, because we wanted to stay in Subotica or possibly somewhere in Vojvodina, maybe in Belgrade, but in Travnik, which we hardly knew where it was - it was a journey into the unknown. And that's how it was.
We arrived late in the evening. In the morning, from the hotel window there is a view of the panorama of the city, studded with the minarets of countless mosques. It was Friday, market day, the town was full of peasants from nearby villages, who had come down from the hills and mountains and brought their goods to the market.
The call to prayer echoes from numerous minarets.
It seemed to me that I was dreaming. I looked at Dragica. I read on her face that she was disappointed and that she did not feel comfortable in this unknown environment.
Around noon, the director of the "Kolodvor" hotel received us, thanked us for "choosing" his hotel for our first employment, saying:
- I know that you come from Vojvodina, an environment that is completely different from this one, and the first impressions may disappoint you, but believe me, when you get to know the city and these people better, you will love being here.
Dragica was the first to react and said that she would still like to get back to Subotica, citing the distance from her parents' home as the reason. Director Meša (Mohamed) suspected such a justification, so he asked if we would like to go to nearby Novi Travnik, it is a modern and new city, a city of young people...
Dragica answered that she might consider Zenica, a modern industrial city, where our colleagues from school were assigned last year, Andraš and his Dragica, who are now a married couple.
The director did not insist anymore, but provided transportation and we arrived in Zenica late in the afternoon.
Dragica and Andraš received us nicely and spent the whole evening talking about work and the city of Zenica.

The next day we went to the Bosna River and visited some of the sights of the city. All the time we smelled the smoke and scraps coming from the iron foundry, which we did not like at all, and it was hard for us, being unaccustomed, to it.
Andraš and Dragica noticed that we didn't want to stay there, so without further discussion on the subject, we got on the train to our Subotica in the evening.

Backa Palanka

After a few days, Dragica got a job in Subotica, together with another namesake. I and the (then) boyfriend of the third Dragica, chef Ante, were assigned to a new destination - Bačka Palanka.
Two years prior, I stayed in Bačka Palanka on the way to Srem, where we visited wineries as part of the school's program to learn about wine production.
I liked the unusually beautiful nature and surroundings of Bačka Palanka – the Danube and the lakes next to it, forests, and the view of Fruška Gora montain.
I gladly accepted that schedule and Bačka Palanka, where I found my first job, later started a family and built a family house, gained a nice professional and social career.
Right from the beginning, Ante in the kitchen and I in the restaurant, we created order and introduced many innovations in the hotel business, which had a positive effect on the overall business of the company, and we were, of course, happy about that achievement and the employers and guests were satisfied.
After some time, Ante said that he was going to Subotica to visit his girl Dragica, with whom he intends to marry soon.
He asked me on that occasion what he should say to "my" Dragica.
I said without much thought: tell her that I drowned in the Danube!
I said that jokingly and I thought my friend would understand it that way, but Ante conveyed the message quite seriously, the way he

heard it, without comment. He delivered that message in front of the staff at our school`s hotel, many of whom burst into tears, at the exact moment when a girl, Maria, from Hetin, who worked as a housekeeper for the colonel's uncle in Subotica, and who came to see me before going to visit her parents, the neighbors of the Malešević family, which she always did and at the same time she carried letters and small gifts from me and vice versa.
Maria, saddened with what she heard and saw, went to Hetin and told her mother that she did not have the heart to convey this news to my parents and family. Sophia, Mary's mother, did it.
One can only guess how it affected the mother, father, brothers and sisters. Only my father received the news with reserve. Maybe that's not even true. Every day, he read the Novi Sad Daily, in which such news is regularly published. And he didn't find anything about it in the newspaper.
He went to the post office and sent return telegrams to all the Police stations who could know anything about me, because I hadn't contact them for several months and I had changed so many places of residence.
I was working in the restaurant of the "Belgrade" hotel as usual, when around noon, I see the official of the railway station coming across the parking lot, who often, when he saw off the trains, stopped by for coffee and a glass of plum brandy. However, this time he hands me some paper and says here you have a telegram from your father, tell me what to answer.
I was taken aback and surprised by such a turn of events.
I look at the telegram:
"Dear son, I believe you are alive and well, answer now".
I didn't know what it was about, but I did as the head of the station told me, to which he left and immediately sent a reply, and only then did he come and order coffee and brandy.
No words about the previous meeting.

Ante returned from Subotica, he told me that he had delivered the message and that everyone was crying even himself.
(Acting to make it more believable)
Only then did I understand the reason for the telegram my father had sent. I immediately went to visit my parents, explained how it happened, but almost everyone in the village already blamed the girl Maria for spreading false news about all this. Of course, I discovered the real culprit - myself and the unintentional helper Anto.
This experience had an effect on me and I learned that even the most ordinary harmless joke, if taken wrongly, can cause a lot of suffering and pain. That's the nature of this telling.
The very next year, I met my future wife.
And where would it be, if not at my workplace, where I spent the most time, due to being busy with work and business reorganization. Anka and her sister-in-law saw off her brother to return to the army after his paid leave.
They were sitting with the drinks I served, talking, waiting for the train that would arrive soon.
We exchanged a few looks that said more than countless words.
I asked when I would have the opportunity to serve them again...
I didn't wait long for that opportunity. We met in a pastry shop, on walks by the river and on the beaches of the blue Danube.
Her noticeable modesty promised me that she would be a good wife, mother and housewife. And so she was.
Our family grew fast - three children - and we needed a roof over our heads. And that came true in 1966-67.
With great sacrifices and a lot of work, we built our own house - small but full of children's laughter and the satisfaction of having our own roof over our heads. Anka's brothers and cousins and our friends helped us in this. No charge, of course.
The children (sons Branko and Dušan, daughter Branka) grew up, Anka took care of all of us, and I progressed in the service, performing all the most responsible duties in the company:

Restaurant manager, hotel manager, inspector - business controller, company secretary, chairman of the board of directors ...
I have performed all the tasks in my jurisdiction conscientiously,
I have never falsely accused or punished anyone, caused any offense or harm to anyone.
And I helped many people in various ways: with employment, instructions, advice...
And that's how Backa Palanka remembers and respects me.

Windsor

When the opportunity arose, legally, I came with my family to Windsor, at the invitation of Anka's father, Jano Kovac, who arrived in Canada via Italy and Norway, ten years earlier.
On May 15, 1969, we arrived late in the evening by plane from London to Toronto. And immediately, on the first day, we learned what a workers' strike means and its consequences in practice.
The flight to Windsor was canceled due to the strike, so we had to call Anka's brother Samuel, who came to Canada two years earlier, to come by car to pick us up.
It was very tiring to wait 4 hours, then four more to get to Windsor. Tiredness from the long journey and the 6-hour time difference required a long sleep and rest.

*

We started a new life in a new country on May 16, 1969.
After a few days, we set out to get to know the city.
Anka's father's house was only a block and a half, or about 200 meters away from the river that divides Canada and the USA - the Detroit River.
We walked and lingered for quite a while enjoying the view of the skyscrapers and contours of the city of Detroit and the beautifully

landscaped riverfront on the Windsor side.
We liked Windsor at first sight.
We asked around and found out that all schools from elementary to university are within a few blocks, which was very important to us because of the children.
At the suggestion of a friend, a captain of the Yugoslav royal army, we enrolled the children in summer school so that they could learn the language and be ready for classes in English by autumn.
The same friend suggested that I also enroll in an English language school, with a scholarship sufficient for the basic needs of the family. I accepted. Anka quickly got a job in a company where her sister-in-law worked, and the owner was a Serb from Romania. All employees spoke Serbian and that made it easier to communicate at work.
When I finished the English language course, I received a recommendation from the school to continue my education in college, according to the program then in force for new immigrants, at the expense of the state.
I successfully completed that and earned a diploma in bookkeeping and accounting (Business administration).
Canada really provided us with all the conditions for a good start to life in this country.The children mastered the language very quickly and went to school in the fall for regular lectures with other students. The house, which we bought from Anka's father, was well located, everything was close to us, a ten minute walk or less, to the very center of the city.
I got a job at Chrysler in 1971, and spent over 25 years in the paint repair department, retiring on December 1, 1995.
Employment at Chrysler and buying a house freed me from many worries and gave me the opportunity to continue my studies at ICS Montreal, Quebec, and the School for Degree Studies (Modern Management) Scranton, Pennsylvania, from 1976-1979.
I did that purely out of a desire to learn something more in the field of management where I had a lot of experience working in Yugoslavia.

I had no need to look for another job with my newly acquired qualifications, because at Chrysler I had a very good salary and benefits, as well as an easy and clean job.

*

On August 10, 1972, our third son, Zoran, was born.
A full house, a real family atmosphere.
Zoran enjoyed many privileges as the youngest member of the family, and he entertained us all with his childish play.
Until the time he started school, I changed my shift to work in the afternoon, until mom came home from work, so he was with one of his parents the whole time.
We spent weekends together, and during the summer we often went on nature trips, (Point Peele, Holiday Beach) or one of the many parks in Windsor. In the winter, we visited relatives and friends.

*

For the first few years, I must admit, I suffered from homesickness at times. I was brought up and raised in the belief that the motherland always comes first, and I often wondered if I had made a mistake by leaving my native land for the sake of a better life.
With the birth of my son Zoran and the acquisition of Canadian citizenship, I finally got rid of that nightmare.
The events that followed the breakup of Yugoslavia only confirmed the correctness of such a decision.
Grandchildren (4) also arrived and that's how we anchored in Canada.

*

For consolation, I tried to preserve my Serbian citizenship, but I ran into bureaucratic obstacles, which required me to first deregister

from the citizenship of Bosnia and Herzegovina, supposedly where I belong (by birth) after the breakup of Yugoslavia, and then submit an application to the Serbian authorities for citizenship .
The fact that I lived in Serbia for 24 years, that I finished all my schools in Serbia, served my military service, where my children were born and where I had a family home and worked for more than 10 years - is not respected.
In the Consulate of Bosnia and Herzegovina, they say that I do not exist anywhere in the records, and that therefore I do not have citizenship there from which to deregister!
Now, when someone asks me what I am (meaning citizenship) I can only say what I am - Canadian.

The schism among Serbs

Around 1965, years before coming to Windsor, I read in the papers and heard on the news that in America and Canada there was a big schism in the Serbian church and among the Serbs.
It didn't interest me much. I wasn't even sure what the word "schism" meant. I had no idea that in just a few years I would find myself in the very center of that schism, and later become a victim of that unfortunate division.
Immediately after arriving in Windsor, many with whom I came into contact tried to present themselves as being on the right side of the divide, that the others were to blame.
I heard that from both sides, as if they were trying to win me over to their side. I quickly realized that joining any of the parties would mean that I was also a participant in the division, which is why I remained neutral.
Being neutral does not mean being disinterested in your community. Precisely because of that neutrality, and not burdened by the obligations of affiliation and consistency of any party, I had the

opportunity to see things much more clearly, what are the needs of the community and how to discover and solve them.
The first opportunity to get involved was around the unification of two Serbian sports clubs, "Serbia" and "Maple Leaf" in 1973.
The aforementioned division and schism among the brothers left numerous consequences that needed to be resolved.
But in conditions where neither side would give in and renounce its dogma, it was impossible to implement any agreements, if there were any at all.
I have noticed that the solution lies in finding people on both sides that are independent in their opinions and willing to implement it.
My role was decisive in that.
I formed a group of representatives of the "Serbia" club, which consisted of:
Milan Prljević, Branko Malešević, Milan Drekić, Petar Jokić and Stevan Momčilović, and scheduled a meeting on the third of May 1973 with representatives of "Maple Leaf" which was held at Daffy`s Tavern in Amherstburg, a town around 30 kilometers from Windsor.
The host of the meeting was the owner of that restaurant, Žarko Vučinić, otherwise an influential leader of the Serbs from the "dissident side".
Since I worked for a short time at Žarko's as a bartender, he knew me and opened the meeting with the question:
-Is it good to unite with the Maple Leaf?
I replied: It is not good for those who say God forbid, the Serbs agree.
My answer brought an atmosphere of trust and relaxation - everyone agreed that the two clubs should unite.
Now it was necessary to choose the name of the newly founded club, and establish the basic guidelines and agreement on how the club should function.
Everything was smoothly agreed, and for the name of the club there were two or three proposals, but it was chosen to be called "Windsor Serbs".

In the first round, I was elected to the board, but I gave up and proposed Milan Prljevic, thanks to whom my idea of how to form a group of representatives of "Serbia" succeeded. It wouldn't have been possible without him. I then promised and kept my promise that I would keep records of all the club's activities, help with finding sponsors, and in general about everything that would contribute to the survival and progress of the club.
However, there were individuals from both sides who hindered the work of the club, so in 1976 it fell into a crisis.
I reacted by publishing all the achieved results, confirmed by photos and documents, in a book:
Serbian Sports Club Windsor Serbs 1973 - 1976.
At the same time, I turned to our businessmen - sponsors for printing costs, explaining that we lack material support for the survival and success of the club. It was met with a positive response.
The club came to life and the results were not lacking.

But after a few years, a group forcibly took over the club, bypassing the club's management or assembly. However, the club continued to operate without visible changes in the way of doing business, and the question arose as to why it was necessary.

As I recorded the club's results with a pen and camera,
I simultaneously collected photographs, documents, and recorded the stories of our older settlers about the sports and social life of previous years. I took the opportunity to publish my first book on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the first Serbian sports/social organization, "Soko" 1929-1979.

This was the first time that an ethnic community had done so in Canada, and it gave me the opportunity to continue researching the sports and life of Serbs in Windsor until the end of 2025.

During that time, the following books were published:

1. Serbian Sports Club Windsor Serbs 1973-1976
2. Sports News S.C. Windsor Serbs 1977
3. Sports Activities of Windsor Serbs in 1929 – 1979
4. John Maystorovich Worker & Warrior 1980
5. Anniversary of the Birth of Vuk Stefanović Karadžić 1787 – 1987
6. Windsor Chess Club Chess News 1997
7. Bulletins of the Serbian Chess Association 1998-2001
8. Serbs in Windsor 1910-2010 II Edition 2013
9. Balote Club Windsor Serbs 1923
10. The Maple Leaf Cyclist 2023
11. Serbs in Windsor and Chess 2023
12. My Chess Book 2023
13. Serbian Chess Association of Ontario 1998-2024
14. Milan Vukadinov Chess Olympian 2024
15. Sports Activities of Windsor Serbs 1929 – 2024
16. Serbs in Windsor 1910-2024
17. From Kukulje to Windsor 2024
18. The Fate of a Pear Tree 2025
19. Tavern Tales 2025
20. Serbs in Windsor 1910 – 2026 (Monograph)
21. Biography short stories 2026 (Monograph)

The Fate of a Pear tree

(09/15/2023)

When we moved into a house in a new neighborhood, Forest Glade, on a cold December evening in 1989, we found a small sapling, a tree of unknown name and origin. It was barely about a meter tall, and in the middle of the back yard, in a place where it was really bothering us. I am not an expert in fruit growing, I did not know what kind of fruit tree it was, which can be easily recognized based on the shape and color of the leaves and the bark of the tree (for those who understand).The tree grew, without flowers or fruit for several years. I was getting closer and closer to deciding to cut it down and remove it from its place, so that it would not be a nuisance.

In the summer of 1994, while mowing the grass, I saw a few white flowers. I turned off the lawn mower, picked up my two-year-old grandson Sasha to show him my discovery. I would be glad from now on I will have the opportunity to follow the development of the flower and the fruit, although I did not know which one.

Sasha was with us all summer, while his dad and mom worked as managers in Ottawa.

The fruit developed and took shape until it was recognizable as three small pears!

In September, Sasha's mom came to take him with her. We sat in the garden and talked, and it was the turn of the pear to look at it. One of the three pears was much larger and – ripe!

The solemn moment came for our first grandson to pick the first pear – I lifted it and brought it within reach and showed which of the three to pick. I did not remember to record that moment with a camera, but I washed the fruit, cut it into pieces and served it to everyone present!

The pear tree grew and every year brought more and more fruits, juicy and sweet, the branches bent to the ground under the weight of the rich harvest. Many neighbors and friends were invited to pick and take them home, because they ripened in a few days. And so on from year to year. But nothing good lasts long.

My wife Anka, during the winter days, had the habit of feeding the birds. Especially when snow fell and covered the places where the birds found their food.The birds got used to it and continued to visit the site during the summer days. The pear tree was simply in their way, unavoidable with its sweet and juicy fruits.

So one, two, three years ... We tried to drive them away by shouting, waving towels, spraying water from the garden hose, all in vain.

Just one visit from a flock of birds is enough to "pick" all the pears and leave behind a "mess" that we have to clean up later.

One day, my wife and I were expecting a "visit", and we prepared to chase them away at all costs.

They were so aggressive that they didn't pay attention to the jets of water from the hose, nor to shouting and waving with everything and anything available.We sat on a bench and helplessly watched this brazen "robbery in broad daylight".

I said, resignedly: "Come on, you damn birds, eat your fill today, you won't have a chance tomorrow".

The next day, from morning to afternoon, with an electric saw and an axe, I cut the pear into pieces, tied the branches into bundles and took everything out into the street for the collectors to take away.

Sometime towards evening, my wife and I rejoiced, watching the flock of birds that had spread out over the branches of the surrounding fir trees and pines, making an unbearable noise, marveling at the rapid disappearance of their favorite "fast food".

However, that's not the end of the story.

A few years later, I was in a shopping mall, and on the way back I took a taxi. When I told the taxi driver the address, he said he knew where it was, because it used to be his house, for short time.
He told me that soon after moving into that (new) house, he lost his job, and since he couldn't pay his debt, he had to move out.
He asked me on the way if the pear he had planted was still there.
I told him it wasn't, and that's when we arrived. He helped me bring in the grocery and then, to make sure, he looked into the garden where the pear used to be. I noticed a sudden change in his face expression, as if something had made him sad.
I assumed it was something about the pear tree, so I asked him if he had a moment to tell him what had happened to it.
He listened carefully and then said that he had brought the pear in a small pot from Lebanon, a year before he bought this house, while he was still in the apartment. He had kept it and looked after it, watered it, exposed it to the sun, added nutrients, moved it into larger pots ...
Finally he transplanted it in backyard and fenced it off so that it wouldn't get damaged.

When he had to leave the house, he was very sorry, he wanted to move the pear, but the ground was deeply frozen, so he decided to leave it to the new owner.
The Middle East is the homeland of this fruit tree, known far and wide for its quality and appreciated for its taste, sweetness and aroma.

After learning this, I was also very sorry: for the pear tree that had innocently been cut down, and especially the taxi driver, because he was the one affected the most.

Overtime

(15.05.2024)

Since he would finish his work sometimes more than an hour before the end of the shift, he would often retreat to a hidden corner behind the assembly line and take a nap for the remaining time.
Mike, as he was called, fell asleep very quickly and deeply on one occasion, because he had hardly slept a wink the night before - he had spent it in company playing cards.
The shift was over, and the last worker left the factory premises a little after midnight. Mike continued to sleep until he felt the need to turn around on his uncomfortable bed. The darkness and silence scared him at first - he did not understand where he was.
After regaining his composure, he took his Lunchbox and headed for the exit. More than two hours had passed since the end of the shift. The guard asked for a "Pass". Mike, of course, didn't have one, and it took some time before he finally admitted what had actually caused him to be late to leave the factory with the rest of his shift.
The guard just smiled and gestured towards the exit.
He arrived home almost three hours later than usual.
Greta greeted him with a question: - were you playing cards again?
- No, I was working overtime. He answered.

The woman said nothing, although she was suspicious.
She waited a few days, and when Mike, at her request, showed her last week's pay slip with the check, she yelled at him:
- Why are you lying to me, there's no overtime here, tell me where you were!
Since she had already checked with his friends, she knew that he hadn't been playing cards, and now he insists and swears that he had

been playing cards that night, apologizing at the same time for not admitting it right away, but lying about working overtime.
She had always trusted him and had never even considered the possibility of infidelity. But now, after the double lie, jealousy had appeared for the first time, and the more she thought about it, the more convinced she was that it was infidelity, because she had no other explanation, nor had Mike offered one.
Struggling to hide her inner anger and restlessness, she said quite calmly and composedly:
-I've had enough of your card games, gambling and lies. I'm leaving!

They got married in Germany and after the war, among the numerous DPs (displaced people), they found themselves in Windsor. As a prisoner of war, after the capitulation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, he ended in a camp in a remote province.
Most of the inmates were used to repair roads and clean up the aftermath of bombings in nearby industrial facilities, and Mike was lucky enough to be sent to the farm to help a farmer whose two sons were on the Eastern Front. The old farmer had to rely on the help of his wife and daughter to cultivate his large estate, and there was no problem in assigning him a prisoner who understood farm work, and a strong and healthy young man.

Greta taught him German and farm work, so that over time they became close, and as a result of this closeness, love developed. With his values and behavior, he also attracted the attention of her parents, who almost accepted him as a son.

After the war, he did not want to return to Yugoslavia, but chose to go to Canada with Greta.

They got jobs in the automotive industry, made good money, acquired two houses and a considerable amount of savings. They had no children, which can often be the decisive reason for reconciliation in times of crisis in a marriage.

Mike accepted his wife's proposal without much excitement, and already saw himself as a "free" man, who would no longer be greeted with questions about where he had been, what he had been doing ...

So he calmly replied:

-Okay, if that's what you want, then so be it.

He suggested that she take the house she wanted, the car and the furniture too. They would divide the cash in equal parts.
And she accepted.

That was, if not the only, then certainly the last time they agreed on something, although it could not be said that they had spent their lives in arguments.

When they presented their plan and agreement to the lawyer a few days later, the lawyer, seeing that it involved a huge amount of property and cash, and having "his plan" in mind, said:

- You are two parties to the dispute now, and it is necessary for each of you to have your own lawyer. Both accepted, without any doubt in the good intentions of the legal advisor.

Greta soon received a call from "her" lawyer, who immediately informed her that she was entitled to more than what had been agreed, because her salary was higher than her husband's.

Greta was hesitant to accept this advice at first, but at the lawyer's insistence she agreed to initiate a revision of the agreement in her favor. The amount involved was a huge sum.

The lawyer immediately forwarded the request to another lawyer, and this broke the news to his client.

Mike immediately refused any changes to the agreement and said that he would not agree to her request to change what had already been agreed.

The Serb, as God had made him, Mike now tightened the process with his counterclaims, which made the dispute insoluble.

After several years of legal wrangling, when the last dollars of cash and sold houses had disappeared, the dispute was over.

Greta ended up on the 6th floor of the City Hospital (psychiatry), and Mike died of a heart attack in a Mediterranean country, where he had sought refuge to spend the last days of his life - where no one ever learned of his torment and disgrace.

The Tooth

(04/17/2025)

The uncertainty that reigned among prisoners of war in one of the many camps in Germany towards the very end of the war was unbearable.The bombing of German cities, roads, factories, bridges was becoming increasingly intense, hence the concern that they themselves would become targets, either by mistake or on purpose - no one could be trusted.

And the question was how the German authorities would act towards them, in order to hide their crimes, especially against Serbian and Russian prisoners. In such a situation, a decision had to be made on how to get out of the camp (and Germany) before it was too late.
He dared not confide his thoughts to anyone, not even his closest friends, because everyone was someone's informant, ready to report, in order to perhaps save himself.
He decided to escape, without telling anyone anything.
Todor took the opportunity one night during a flight of a large number of bombers, when the guards' attention was slack, to slip through a previously prepared opening in a high barbed wire fence and get lost in the nearby forest. The proximity of the Danube was a lucky circumstance, and since he already had a plan to take advantage of this and follow the course of the river, mostly at night, he set out on his way to safety.
He deliberately chose to rest during the day near a farm, or a field where peasants do their work, to take advantage of their carelessness and preoccupation with work, to stock up on food and some civilian clothing.

But after about ten days, having arrived near the Yugoslav-Hungarian border, hungry and exhausted, just before dawn, he saw a light in a lonely house, isolated at the end of the town, not far from the river.
He decided to knock on the door, and see what would happen.
The door was opened by an older gentleman in pajamas, who asked something in Hungarian quietly, with a finger on his lips, warning the unknown stranger to be careful. Todor, not knowing how to explain that he was hungry, pointed his finger at his open mouth and tried to show what he wanted.

The host stared at his mouth, saying nothing, motioned for him to come in, again with a finger over his mouth - warning him to be quiet. He led him into the next room, in the semi-darkness, sat him down in a leather armchair and said something very quietly, at the same time taking some object from the shelf next to the armchair.
He approached, motioned for him to open his mouth, and while Todor wondered what he wanted to do - the tooth had already been pulled out, and Dr. Dentist showed him the door, again with a finger over his mouth.
Hoping for a piece of bread, only then did he realize that he was left without a tooth. The case was he met the dentist, who thought he had a toothache, and by pointing a warning finger, he wanted the family members not to hear that he was helping a fugitive, whom he would otherwise have to report.

Bobby the good policeman

(21.04.2025)

With his wife and two young children, Jovan lived on the edge of the village in a small house. They grew enough vegetables for the family's needs on a small field, and he found additional income by working for other villagers. He was content with what he had - the family was modest in its demands.
When his namesake uncle stopped performing his duties as the village barber in his old age, he took over the role and continued to shave and cut the hair of the peasants, by visiting the peasant customers on his bicycle in the evening, when they returned from the fields, and in a small wooden box, inherited from his uncle, he had all the necessary tools for his "mobile barbershop": a hair clipper, scissors, razor, soap, brush, razor sharpening belt, and more.

His rough peasant hands needed to adapt to the delicate work with a razor, and over time he became a "master of his craft."
But 1965 came with the famous economic and social reform, and the biggest change was free movement outside the borders of the state and going abroad, without any restrictions.
And Jovan inquired about a possible move to Canada, where he had a relative, also a barber, who was about to retire and the shop was available, if he wanted. After talking to his wife, Jovan decided to go with his family across the ocean, to a city on the border with America. They arrived late in the evening, but Jovan had no patience, so early in the morning he looked out the window to see what the street he would have his barbershop and the name he had already selected, "Joe's Barbershop," looked like. His attention was drawn to a large number of workers leaving the engine factory after the night shift, each carrying a small suitcase, looking exactly like his mobile barbershop, and he called out loudly to his wife:
-There is no bread here for us, just look at how many barbers there are! He did not know that these were workers carrying their Lunchboxes. He inherited the barbershop from his relatives, and quickly adapted to the new way of doing business, learning enough English to be able to communicate with customers who did not speak Serbian, the majority of whom were Yugoslavs who lived in the surrounding streets. However, the "Hippie wave" was just at its peak - there was little work for barbers! Costs were rising, incomes were decreasing, something had to be done and provide for the family.
He noticed that a large number of people drive trucks, the wages are good but the work is hard and requires being away from family for weeks at a time until the cargo is delivered to the other side of the continent.

Not having much choice, he enrolled in a course for large truck drivers, successfully passed all the exams and soon got a job.
His experience with driving a tractor in his native Banat was very different from driving these "road cruisers". He was careful, getting used to long drives and traffic that was incomparable to those narrow roads and short routes of Banat. As a new driver, he gradually got longer tours, and for the first time he set off in the direction of Texas.
A long night and an even longer journey through the Arizona desert. During the day, loneliness is somehow easier; the landscapes of previously unseen and unknown areas attract attention and make you forget about fatigue. There is so much that is different from his native country, it is worth seeing and enjoying the scene.
But the night drive, long and tiring, the constant roar of the engine and the music from the cassette player invite you to take a nap.
He does not remember exactly what happened, but suddenly he feels himself falling and rolling over in the truck cabin. Those few moments seemed like an eternity, just before he managed to get out of the vehicle that was on the side of the road.

He flew off the road at a slight curve, because the nap overcame him from fatigue. Not long after, he hears the siren of a police car, from which a policeman gets out and the first thing he asks him is:

- Is everything okay with you?

- Yes, thanks God, as you can see.

- What is the reason for you flying off the road?

The policeman asked, since it was obvious that the driver was not under the influence of alcohol, and the vehicle, apart from being on

the side of the road, did not suffer any significant damage.
- Suddenly, a deer appeared from somewhere, ran onto the road, and to avoid a collision I swerved sharply...
- Are you sure it was a deer?
- Absolutely sure, I know what it looks like ...
- Okay, I believe you saw a deer, or maybe you were dreaming?

The policeman was black, and because of the darkness he could not see the expression on his face, but he felt from the gentleness of his speech that he was well-intentioned and that he would not act harshly towards him, especially since he had not hurt anyone, nor caused any damage on the road, so with childish naivety he admitted that it was possible, but still claimed that he had really seen a deer. The policeman laughed and said to him almost in a friendly tone:

-There have never been deer here, in this area, this is a desert, there are only wild dogs, jackals and other desert animals, the deer would not survive there.

Then he helped him back onto the road, and when he was sure that the vehicle was ready for the journey, he advised him to take a good rest at the first motel, only a few miles away, before continuing his journey to his destination.

A mixed feeling of joy came over Jovan that he had passed without punishment, and above all without injury, and the behavior of the policeman from whom he expected a punishment or even arrest, and who in the end wished him a good journey, extended his hand and said his name: Bobby.

Canadian Judge

(15.05.2025)

Brian lived with his family, consisting of his wife Ana, daughter Georgina and sons Brian Jr., Denis and Boris, in a house that was built for war veterans, modest, on a small plot of land but in a good location, near the city center. In addition, it had several rooms, although smaller in size but sufficient to accommodate this large family.The children went to nearby schools, their mother took care of everything in the house, and Brian worked hard at the car factory, earning a good salary and the family did not lack for anything because they were modest in their demands, i.e. satisfied with what they had. However, over time they wanted to make their home more comfortable, in accordance with their capabilities, the host worked often overtime - there was no shortage of money.
Renovating the house required knowledge of both materials and tools, in which he did not have enough experience. He acquired a "Do it yourself" encyclopedia and the necessary tools, studied how to do things, and one day began a job that would last the entire summer. As much effort as it required from Brian, it probably required even more patience from the whole family: living in such conditions was unpleasant, but everyone in the house looked ahead and patiently awaited the day when it would end.

*

Neighbor Aldo, a builder by trade, supervised and sometimes helped when necessary, although Brian did not explicitly ask for it.
Aldo wanted to somehow repay his neighbor who had provided him with small services for years, free of charge, such as calculating state

and local taxes at the end of the year, which is the obligation of every citizen to report annual income for tax purposes, filling out various and frequent employment forms, and compensation for unpaid leave, which was common in the construction industry in those years.
Aldo, as well as his wife Rina, spoke little English while Brian had graduated from college with book keeping and accounting diploma.
The children of the good neighbors were good friends and over time they became close, almost like relatives.

*

The house renovation work was nearing completion, about ten days before Labor Day, which is an alternative to May Day in the rest of the world. All the rooms (eight in total) still needed to be painted, his wife and children had already chosen the colors they would use for their rooms, and Brian had thought deeply about how to do it:
He works in the factory for six twelve-hour days, by the time he gets home, he can paint maybe one room without a break.

That would take too much time, because they wanted to celebrate the completion of the work on the holiday, and there was also the need of installing new carpets in all the rooms.
A fellow painter by trade, whom he had met at work, asked for a thousand dollars to do the job over the weekend. It was beyond expectations, because he was willing to pay an amount equal to his entire weekly salary at the time, about five or six hundred dollars.
And so, while he was thinking about what to do, his neighbor Aldo came by, checked all the rooms to see if they were ready to be painted and asked when and who would do it, because he realized that it was a big job for one man to do in such a short time.

He offered to talk to his wife's brother, Salvatore, who had a company that did such work. Brian thought if his countryman was asking for a thousand dollars, how much would this cost, he said, that would be too much for me, I'd rather do it myself, and when I'm done.
- I've already talked to him, Aldo said, he'll come tomorrow to see the work and tell me when he'll do it, he said he wouldn't ask for much, because he'll do it over the weekend.
He had met Salvatore a few times, when he came to visit his sister and family, so they knew each other, but he hadn't expected such an offer. Anyway, the next evening Aldo and Salvatore arrived, after he had looked at what needed to be done, they sat in the garden behind the house, accepted the cold beer offered, and Salvatore said:
- Brother Bruno and I will come on Sunday, we will finish everything during the day, so you can celebrate Labor Day the next day!
When asked how much it would cost, he said not to worry, but at the insistence of the host he said: one hundred dollars!
At first Brian thought that was the amount for an hour of work, so he quickly calculated that if it was finished in seven or eight hours, it would be significantly less than what the countryman was asking.
Per hour? – Brian asked.
- No, for the entire job! - Salvatore answered.
On Sunday, as Salvatore had promised, Bruno and neighbor Aldo came with him and in the blink of an eye, all the furniture was moved, and the three of them got to work.

Brian took the opportunity to buy enough roast chicken at the nearby Kentucky Chicken restaurant, pizza at the neighboring pizzeria, and plum brandy, wine, and cold beer at the liquor store.

Just four hours were enough for this well-coordinated team to finish all the work, put the furniture back in place, wash their hands, and sit down at the set table.
It would be difficult to describe the mood that reigned at the table and in the whole house.
With chicken and pizza, cold beer, wine, and especially with plum brandy, the mood grew as the glasses emptied.
The host took the opportunity, while the drink still did not overcome the power of thought, to put six hundred dollars in front of Salvatore, saying: - You asked for one hundred, there are two hundreds for each of you, for a good and quick job!
Salvatore was the first to object: - Not by chance, not even the hundred dollars I asked for, I will accept!
We will not take anything, it is our gift!
Brian asked - Why?
Salvatore, slightly stammering, replied:
- You have been helping my sister and brother-in-law for so many years, with taxes and many administrative tasks, we know that, and as a sign of gratitude, we are at least partially repaying you with this!

All that was left was to install carpets in all the rooms.
Wanting to get that done as soon as possible, Brian asked around for the best place to buy and install these then very popular floor mats.
He came across an ad in the newspaper where a company offered quality carpets and affordable installation prices, with the words in strikingly large letters: All First Class!
He called the company, whose representative (owner) arrived at the appointed time, around nine in the morning, with samples of the carpet and the material to be placed under the carpet.

Brian showed him the page of the newspaper with the aforementioned ad, and pointing with his finger at the selection of carpets and underlays already circled in red pencil, above which was written in large letters: First Class! He said that he wanted exactly that carpet and the rubberized underlay. At the same time, while the businessman finishes writing the contract, Brian offered a drink, coffee or tea, which is common here in the morning.
He says he would rather have a beer, if possible.
Brian brings him a beer, and at the same time he hands him a contract to sign, asking for a hundred dollars as a deposit.
Brian signs it, without checking what is written.
Then he promises that the carpet will be installed the following Tuesday morning, and casually asks if he will be home.
Brian replies that he works in the morning and that his wife or one of the children will be home.
On Monday, a colleague from another shift asks Brian to change shifts the next day because he has some unforeseen work to do at the municipality in the afternoon. Brian accepts because it suits him to be home before noon. The next morning, as promised, two workers showed up to do the job.

Brian, out of habit of checking everything to make sure it was as written in the contract, looked at the carpets: the name of the material, the color matched at first glance, looked at the material for the underlay – he saw that it was not a gummed material but an ordinary felt. He looked at the carpet again, noticed the declaration of origin and quality: second class.Then he looked at the contract to check what was written there, and to his great surprise he saw: second class.

He immediately told the workers not to install it but to inform the owner about everything. One of the workers called and explained what it was about.
The owner asked to speak to Brian, surprised that he was at home even though he had said he worked in the morning.
Brian refused to have the delivered carpet installed, and the owner of the company threatened that it would be expensive because the carpet for six rooms had already been measured and cut according to the area of the rooms. Brian did not give in and the workers returned with unfinished work.
Once again, the owner called and threatened to sue, but Brian remained persistent, demanding the return of the deposit.
After about ten days, Brian was summoned to appear in court at the request of the company owner to settle the damage caused by the refusal to install the carpets according to the contract - with a court verdict. Brian appeared at the appointed time, for the first time in his life in court. He could only imagine what a court hearing and the course of the trial would be like based on what he had seen in movies or read in books. He entered the courtroom, where the owner of the company was already there with two of his employees as witnesses and a lawyer, as an advisor and observer, but not a participant in the hearing. The owner, dressed as if he were going to a wedding, behaved arrogantly and haughtily, as if he wanted to say, now I will teach him what it means to break a contract.
True, the signed contract was in practice a document strictly respected and applied in business as well as in court.
If someone was deceived or harmed due to ignorance of the law then the rule applied: Ignorance of the law does not exempt from the responsibility and obligations of the signed contract.

(More simply put – it is not a sin to deceive a fool)
The businessman was called first to introduce himself and state his position. Placing his hand, at the judge's request, on the Bible, he pledged to speak the truth (so help me God).

His first words were that he came from a respectable family, that he was a member of the church, and a whole range of various clubs and associations, as a deserving and respected citizen.Then he demanded compensation for damages in the amount of the contract value, plus the lost working day due to the court, which was indeed a large amount, twice the amount in the contract.
And as if exulting, he withdrew to give way to the defendant.
At the judge's request to place his hand on the Holy Book and present his defense, Brian said calmly:
Mr. Judge, I cannot place my hand and speak the truth, because it is no longer the Holy Book, which is now, after everything the plaintiff has said, stained with lies.
The judge, obviously surprised, shifted in his chair and said:
Okay, it's not necessary, continue with the statement.
Brian then recounted everything in detail, how he had chosen the company, to how he had served him beer, and how he had asked if he would be home when the carpet was installed, how he had accidentally changed shifts, discovered a fraud in the contract, and then handed the judge a copy of the contract with the second-class entry and a newspaper with an advertisement, marked with a red pencil with the first-class carpet he had chosen.
The judge looked at all this carefully and for a long time before him, then said: In the event that the verdict is in your favor, what do you expect from the plaintiff as compensation?

- Mr. Judge, I am only asking for a hundred dollars in my deposit back and nothing more, Brian replied.
- And what about the time lost in court, the missed shift at work?
- I did not miss anything, Mr. Judge, I changed shifts with a colleague, and this time in court is more important to me so that justice and truth prevail. No amount can compare to that.
The judge began to measure both sides, tapping his fingers on the table. Then, he stood up and said loudly:
Verdict in favor of the defendant!
And he hit the table with a wooden gavel - the dispute is over.
Brian felt like to be doused with cold and hot water at the same time. Delighted by the just verdict, he felt great relief because the truth had triumphed over lies.
Then the lawyer approached and asked the judge to explain on what basis he gave the defendant an advantage over the legally valid contract?
The judge said:
Here we had a contract with fraud versus the truth. It was up to me to judge who to believe more - and that is always the truth!

Friend with the Skank

(22.06.2025)

One of the unusual sights when a visitor from other areas walks through the streets, parks, river and lake shores in Windsor, he will notice a large number of wild geese, ducks, turkeys, rabbits, all kinds of birds, squirrels and even skanks, which walk freely and have priority over everything else that moves, because they are protected by law like nowhere else in the world.

How nice to see when vehicles patiently stand and wait while a mother duck leads her offspring across the street and a father duck at the back makes sure that none of them gets separated from the line, which is very reminiscent of first-graders, who cross the street under the watchful eye of teachers at the beginning and end of the column. Seeing a small rabbit running across the path to join the rest of its group is a sight that everyone experiences joyfully and with a full heart. While high above the parks, eagles cruise in search of prey to feed their young, construction of buildings in the area and all noise cease until the young grow stronger and fly away.

When builders on a busy street, demolishing an old house to build a new one, discovered a duck's nest, they stopped working for a whole day until the competent city service moved them to a safe place. Citizens tolerate everything with ease and understanding, but there are cases when some creatures really cause them a lot of inconvenience, and even problems in their lives.These are most often wild ducks and geese, of which there are countless in city parks and lakes, and when they land in flocks on paths around lakes or on football fields, they leave behind a mess and the terrain temporarily unusable. Then there are birds that can turn grapes or fruit trees in a few minutes in a mess. Squirrels, no matter how dear and beloved can cause harm and be dangerous to pets, especially cats or poodles. But, it is probably the most unpleasant if you have a frequent guest in your garden and yard, which in search of food overturns garbage containers, often causes damage in the garden, and it is impossible to approach them for well-known reasons: No one wants to be exposed to their defensive weapons, the consequences of which remain for hours after their departure. There are many of them in the city and few houses are spared from their visits, primarily by erecting

appropriate fences and taking care that the garbage does not attract their attention. But, in some cases, such as the following, a skank can also be a pet, if it sets its sights on the right host, a lover of all living creatures. Dejan, a neighbor on the other side of the park, was a good host, he took care of everything to make his home neat and comfortable, and his wife took care of the garden and flowers. Many neighbors followed their example, and they were always ready to help. He paid special attention to his workshop, full of tools that he used to help many people, and next to it he built a smokehouse from which the smell of cracklings, sausages, bacon and ham spread. A creature with a good sense of smell and hearing, from a nearby park, did not miss the opportunity to feel that something interesting was happening there for him. He visited several times and enjoyed the garbage next to the smokehouse or from the dumpster, and became a regular visitor. In addition, he would often do some damage in the garden, trampling vegetable seedlings and flowers. The wife complained, and what can he do, the neighbor set a trap in a cage prepared for this purpose, and one morning he noticed the trapped skank.

He intended to take it with the cage to a grove a few kilometers away and release it there, but changed his mind at the last moment when he noticed that the creature was looking at him quite calmly, as if begging to be released.
Dejan approached slowly and carefully, so as not to provoke a reaction from the captive, and constantly maintaining eye contact with the animal, watching it every movement. He slowly lifted the cage door, left it open and moved a little further away, expecting it to jump out and escape without using its "spray".

However, the skank slowly crawled out of the cage, constantly looking at its captor, and stood calmly, awaiting the next move of the one on whom its freedom depended.
The neighbor sat on the bench, still watching the prisoner who was no longer in a cage. Then he got up, took a piece of dried bacon from the smokehouse, and placed it in front of it. The creature began to nibble calmly, and the neighbor brought a plate of water, freely approached and left it. Only when it had eaten did the creature begin to move away step by step in the direction of the park, and after slipping under the fence, it stopped and looked back once more, as if to say thank you.
Early the next morning, it found its breakfast in the same place. After a few days, he began to take food from the hands of his benefactor, who petted him saying:
You can talk to animals and understand them - in a language that all living beings understand - with kindness.

Unlike many who could not even get along with themselves, our neighbor Dejan could be friends with skank.

The Wallet

(26.06.2025)

A wallet has been necessary in people's everyday use, since the appearance of money as a means of payment for goods, services or any exchange of value - it is an object in which money is kept.
It can be made of leather (most often), canvas, or plastic, in various colors and shapes. In addition to money, it also holds various documents, an ID card and health card, a driver's license, bills and receipts, photos of loved ones ...

If you accidentally lose it, it can be a big problem. In addition to losing money and documents that have to be checked out and replaced, it costs a lot of money and time, and the fear of falling into the hands of someone dishonest who will abuse your visa or driver's license is a really big concern and requires a quick reaction.

*

I once forgot my wallet in the waiting room of a clinic where I was having a check-up. When I got to the bus stop, I realized I didn't have a city bus card. I quickly remembered where I had my wallet in my hand the last time and went back, with very little hope of finding it, because the place was quite busy. I found a few people there, but somehow none of them noticed the wallet on the seat near the door. How happy I was when I saw it and found it intact, full of dollars I had just withdrawn from the bank. I wouldn't worry too much about money, but the possibility that someone could take a visa and misuse it was disturbing.

*

And I happened to find wallets three times, each of them "fat"- which means that they contained either a lot of money or documents, or a combination of both.
The first time I found a wallet was when I was taking my youngest son to school, in the parking lot of a store. I assumed that whoever lost the wallet would go to that store first, which is probably where he was, I thought. I handed the wallet to the storekeeper and told him where I found it, without opening it and checking the contents.

The second time I found a truly full wallet on a bus, when I headed to the nearby Tecumseh Mall for coffee at Tim Horton's, where a group of people were waiting for me. There was only one girl on the bus, right behind the seat where I found the wallet, I picked it up and showed it to her holding it high, walked up to the driver and handed it to him. It is common practice if something is found on a bus to do so, because the person who lost something will probably look there first.
I was with my wife in a pharmacy on a small town square, crossing the parking lot, my wife pointed to a wallet lying on the wet asphalt, because it was raining. I bent down and picked it up, and since the bus was coming, I put it in my pocket with the intention of checking when we got home, if there was any document in it that would indicate the owner, to find the phone number and call him.
This time I did it differently than in the previous two cases:
I often wondered if that merchant or driver had acted as expected or maybe one of them was taking money, or, God forbid, documents.
I did not suspect these people, but I was not entirely convinced that it might not have been misused.
When we got home, I found in the wallet the phone number, name and address and called to inform him about the wallet.
He was not at home, so I left a message.

The next morning he called and said he would come right away, saying that his mother had already started canceling and closing bank and visa accounts to prevent any possible manipulation.
I told him there was no need for that, because nothing had fallen into the hands of potential fraudsters, and that saved him and his mother a lot of effort and money. He came, thanked us, and offered the only $20 that was in the wallet as a reward.

Of course, we refused. He had just started working, his first job in a small factory. My wife and I were in a completely different mood than we had been in the two previous cases. We felt the gratitude and happiness of this young man, happy that the wallet had been delivered to the owner himself and not to some intermediary.

*

More than 70 years ago, when I was still a student at a lower high school in Srpska Crnja I read a Russian story about a wallet, which at that time was exactly that – a wallet in which only money was kept, because back then there were no cards and documents like today. And then, in those old days, people lost and found wallets, brought them and handed them over to the village headman, who handed them over to the owner, who would report the disappearance of the same. Previously, the headman would count in the presence of the finder all money, made a report and stated the name of the one who found the wallet, because of the reward that was 10 percent of the amount of money found. A peasant who lost his wallet came to the village headman to claim it. To check that he was the rightful owner of the found wallet, the village headman asked how much money was in it. The villager, in order to avoid the obligatory reward to the finder said that the amount was significantly higher, which means that the finder had already taken more than he was entitled to.
The headman asked him again if it was exactly as he had stated - the peasant said that it was.
The headman wisely ruled:
- You claim that there was more money in the wallet you lost than in the one that was found, which means that it was not the wallet that you lost but someone else's, and you wait until yours is found!

The Winter Coat

(06/28/2025)

A wife often suggested to her husband that he take his excess wardrobe, along with a winter coat he hadn't worn in years, and donate it to a charity. He refused, saying that he might need it someday. Years passed, until one day, when his wife was visiting her son and family in another city, he decided to take out the wardrobe, clean it, and air it out. When he was done, he looked at the winter coat, put his hand in one of the pockets and found a large envelope. He opened it and saw that it was full of $50 and $100 bills.
He sat down at the table, counted it, and wondered what to do:
Then he decided to listen to his wife's advice, to take the extra clothes and donate them to a charity, and leave the money in a hidden place in the garage. When the wife returned, he told her what he had done. The wife, after making sure that he had also taken the winter coat, panicked and started screaming uncontrollably:
- I kept more than $25,000 in that winter coat. Did you give that too?
The husband said: - I didn't know, why didn't you tell me and why did you keep the money in the coat?
- I saved that money and kept it in case we needed it, because we have no other savings! What we do now?
The husband then went to the garage, took the money, gave it to his wife and said: – Money is kept in a bank, not in the pocket of a winter coat. At first he thought his wife was hiding it from him, for who knows what reasons, but then he understood her concern for her family and repented of his unjustified suspicion, so he himself began to take more care of the money.
The next day they went together to open a bank saving account.

Stories from the Great Hall

(16-20.05.2025)

In a small town in Vojvodina there was only one hotel with twelve rooms, modestly furnished, without plumbing and sanitary installations. It served mainly travelers for a short stay.
But it had a buffet, a restaurant with two larger rooms and a Great Hall, which were difficult to find even in much larger cities.
The owner who built the hotel spared no expense to make it as he had imagined. He paid special attention to the Great Hall, which served as a cinema, a theater, for weddings and celebrations of the town's elite. It could accommodate about three hundred guests, or five hundred visitors to theater and film performances.
The lower part of the walls was covered with expensive wooden panels, large and tall windows with multi-colored decorative glass, a high ceiling like in a cathedral, stylishly decorated.

The large stage could accommodate orchestras, choirs or performers of theatrical performances. As mentioned at the beginning, the hotel did not have water and sewage installations because, at that time, there were no conditions for this, i.e. the town itself did not have them. That was between the two wars, and after the end of the latter, almost the entire German population left the town, and their homes were occupied by immigrants from various parts of Yugoslavia. The population structure was thus changed, and the newcomers did not care much about the maintenance of either the hotel or other valuable buildings. Because, after the war, the priority was to restore the country, and the maintenance of culturally significant buildings was left for other times.

Thus, the aforementioned hotel suffered a similar fate: unmaintained and neglected It became an ordinary inn, a village-type tavern. With the arrival of new staff, trained in catering schools, or from outside, the recovery began: first, all the rooms, floors and furniture were cleaned and painted, and the furniture was renewed. There was no money for major works, no matter how necessary they were. However, the situation had changed, and it was visible at every corner. Life also returned to the Great Hall, partially. It began to be used for weddings and large celebrations, such as New Year's and major holidays.

Janika

A few years before the start of World War II, there was a real epidemic of crime in the form of theft, in which pickpockets were particularly prominent, often organized into groups to be more successful in their dirty profession.

The favorite terrain where this "business" took place were trains, train stations, fairs and markets, because whoever went there, especially at fairs, where almost every visitor was a good opportunity, because they were buying or selling something,
so they had money on them.

At the entrance, thieves would often put up written warnings themselves: "beware of pickpockets" and watch carefully from the side. Anyone who read it would instinctively check with their hand whether their wallet was in place, and thus unconsciously show where it was.

A small group led by the most skilled among them, Janika, stood out in particular, who, with his magical skills, was able to steal a watch from a hand, a wallet from a pocket, or anything else that would attract the attention of a thief.

In doing so, he used his innate skills and talents: a piercing gaze that hypnotized, a sweet talk that would distract the victim while his skillful fingers would do the job in a matter of seconds.

That's why he was famous; at train stations, fairs, and everywhere where people gathered, the police would post warnings with his image: Beware of Janika the pickpocket!

But the photo was fake, as was the name Janika!

It was rumored that his real name was Jano, Janos, Johan, or Jovan.

He spoke several local languages, and everyone called him by his first name, which confused the police even more.

Before the war began, all traces of him were lost. It was said that he had been mobilized and ended up somewhere on the Eastern Front at the end of the war. And so the story of Janika the pickpocket fell into oblivion.

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About ten years later, Aleksandar, the manager of the aforementioned hotel in this town on the banks of the Danube, was in Belgrade on business and after work he entered a restaurant known as the place where the best ćevapčići in kajmak were served.

The restaurant near the monument to Vuk Karadžić was one of the elite catering establishments in the capital, known for its offerings as well as for its service that could be compared to hotels in Paris, London, Pest ...

A waiter approached him and with a bow handed him the menu and wine list, then walked away with the steps characteristic of a ballet artist, which briefly caught his attention. After a few minutes, he returned and asked again with a bow – What can I serve you, sir?

Aleksandar looked up from the menu and noticed that he knew this waiter from somewhere, so he asked him if they had met somewhere.

The waiter introduced himself – I am Jovan, a highly qualified waiter, and for a short time an instructor at the Catering School in a town in Vojvodina, but I did not stay there for long ...

Then Aleksandar recognized him and remembered him as Jánoš, a service instructor, the first generation of that school, which is why Aleksandar did not see him often but he remembered him.

Since he introduced himself to him as Jovan and he remembered him as Jánoš, he asked him what his real name was.

- At baptism, I was given the name Jovan, but officially entered in the registry of newborns as Jánoš, because at that time the town belonged to the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, and later, during the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, he changed his name to Jovan. Then, during the occupation of World War II, he became János again, and finally, after the war, Jovan once again...

After serving his guest, he finished his shift and asked Aleksandar to go to the neighboring pastry shop for coffee and a little chat about the past days in the city where they had once stayed and for which they both had the most beautiful memories, as they said during the conversation.

Jovan asked Aleksandar where he worked, and after receiving extensive information about the work he did as well as about the small town, he said that he had often stayed in those areas before the war and that he knew that part of the Danube well.

He said without further questioning that before the war he had gone to Pest, then to Vienna, where he worked in elite hotels, but in wartime conditions he did not stay long, but via Trieste, where he had been for a short time, he went by ship to Casablanca, on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean.

The end of the war found him in that city, and since he was outside his country, he had to decide whether he wanted to return to Yugoslavia or, like many "DPs" (displaced people), be resettled in one of the countries of immigration (England, Canada, USA, Australia ...).

He decided to return to Yugoslavia, which was a very rare case, because the vast majority of those who found themselves outside the borders did not want to return due to the change of regime, i.e. communism.

However, he soon regretted it, because he was greeted as a suspicious person; faced with many questions, where he stayed during the war, what he did, who he hung out with ...

Staying in the aforementioned countries and cities only increased suspicion, and the police had to investigate and interrogate all of this in detail.

It took a long time, but since they found nothing on which to convict him, he was released and continued to work as a waiter in many cities, because he liked to travel and see different places.

And he was ready to confess several times during the interrogation

He found out that he was actually the same Janika from the police wanted list from about twenty years ago. He wanted to free himself from any remorse for what he had done in his youth, not so much for material gain as to prove his abilities. The police probably didn't care much about what was happening in the previous "rotten Yugoslavia" and for which they had no mandate.

*

That's how he got to the capital and met Aleksander and where he saw an opportunity for a new experience, asking his interlocutor if there was a place in his hotel, at least for a while. Aleksander could hardly wait for it; any hotel would gladly hire a waiter like Jovan, and offer him the position of restaurant manager, and at the same time as a qualified instructor to teach the waiters a little about the job.

Director Aleksander saw this as a rare opportunity and asked Jovan to accept the offer.

*

Soon the whole town learned that an unusual waiter had arrived at the hotel, in appearance, behavior and everything else.

For the first time they had the opportunity to see a waiter in a black suit, white vest and shirt, bow tie, who serves guests from a special cart, with skillful hands, with a smile on his face. The elite of the hotel guests consisted of merchants, artisans, and educators, among whom the professor of zoology, a famous wine drinker and gourmet always stood out for his remarks and observations. He was the first to compare the waiter Jovan to a penguin, which would become his nickname from that evening.

Jovan accepted this cute nickname as recognition for his appearance.

In addition to the buffet, the restaurant, and a large hall, the hotel also served as a cinema or theater when necessary. Famous artists, orchestras and singers performed there, and as a special event, the world table tennis champions, Yugoslav William Harangozo and Zarko Dolinar, as well as the Japanese Ogimura, also visited.

The manager Aleksandar's stay in Belgrade, when he unexpectedly met Jovan, was for the purpose of signing a contract with the Cabaret group, to perform their program at his hotel one weekend.

The arrival of the waiter Jovan was still the topic of conversation in the town, when the announcement of the Cabaret's visit with a rich program reached the town, causing great interest but also many questions what the program was about.

The locals, with a few exceptions, had not even heard of Cabaret.

And that long-awaited evening came.

The two rooms of the restaurant and the large hall were filled to the last available seat.

A special podium was set up so that guests from all three rooms could follow the program, the long-announced Cabaret.

After the orchestra "showered" the beginning, a slender lady appeared with high heels in a black dress with a wide neckline, announcing the performance of two cute and modestly dressed girls, who would show off all the capabilities of their bodies, performing various acrobatics with and without hoops in their hands.

After that, the singer sang a few appropriate songs, the magician showed how to pull a rabbit out of a hat, and so on. The guests were truly in disbelief at what this man could do. The performers lined up and at the end, as the main point, a balding, as he introduced himself, magician performed.

He called two volunteers to the podium, shook hands with each and said a few words, then holding two "ducats" in his hand, he began to hide them by moving them around in his hands and finally asked one:

- Where are they?

The person in question pointed to one of his hands. This one opened his fist – nothing.

Then he asked the other, who pointed to the other hand.
Again – nothing.

The magician showed the audience both empty fists, then said: Ockus – pockus, preparandus and showed a ducat in each hand.

He repeated similar skills several more times and ended his performance with applause from the audience.

Jovan watched all this, from the sidelines, often smiling, somewhat ironically, as if it were a show for small children.

There was a pause. Jovan served his guests and the program performers, exchanging a few words and smiles with some of them.

Towards the end of the program, Jovan introduced himself on the podium and asked the guests he was serving to check their pockets and bags, and if they were missing anything to report to him.

An unprecedented commotion ensued, from one side one could hear – my wallet! My pocket watch is missing! From the other – pens, glasses, etc ...

Jovan comforted them all not to worry, let each of them come to him for their own. And they did. Each was greeted with applause, and when the magician, member of the Cabaret appeared to take his wallet, all three halls stood up and applauded the "Penguin". That was also the end of Jovan's employment at that hotel, he joined with the members of the Cabaret to engage in pickpocketing, this time publicly and freely, entertaining many with the skill of his fingers:
He could not resist his natural urge and restless spirit.

The Pocket Watch

There was a story going around about a magician waiter who stole watches and wallets, and one case happened in the same place that can be linked to the mistaken belief that all waiters were like that.
One of the few Germans who remained to live in the town on the banks of the Danube after almost all the other compatriots had left towards the end of the war was Rudi, the owner of a soda water shop, which he supplied to his customers, mainly restaurants and merchants, and having no competition, he lived quite well.
The business in the shop was run by his son Hans, and as the boss he supervised and took care of the finances.
He was, with good reason, proud of his silver pocket watch with the family coat of arms engraved on the cover. He had inherited it from his father, and used it only on ceremonial occasions.
And one of those was when, at the end of the month, he would set off on a tour of catering and retail stores to collect the money for goods delivered. On that occasion, he would always wear a vest with an expensive watch in his pocket and a long chain hanging over his large belly. He arrived at the hotel with a large hall one day early and brought a truckload of his goods on an extraordinary order from the restaurant manager, replacing his son Hans.
He finished his work and sat down to drink his usual coffee and brandy. When he wanted to check the time, he noticed to his great astonishment that his watch was not in his pocket. He immediately called the manager and complained that his watch had been stolen and suspected the waiter, probably subconsciously linking him to the waiter Jovan "The Penguin".
The waiter tried in vain to explain that he had not even seen the watch. Rudy returned to his workshop, furious and angry.
When he changed at the end of the working day, he noticed that he was wearing a work vest and not the "formal" one when he goes to collect money from customers at the end of the month.

He looked in the closet and saw a silver chain sticking out of the vest pocket - so the watch had not been stolen.
He was very happy but at the same time angry with himself for blaming the innocent waiter for the theft.

The next day, he left the workshop to his son to continue with his work, and he, dressed formally, with the watch in his vest pocket, set off on a tour of the all taverns in the town.
At each one, he offered the waiters a drink, apologizing for the insult to the one in the great hall, explaining that he had insulted the waiter but also the name and reputation of the craft.

The experience of German women

A few months later, for the first time since leaving for Germany, the family's relatives came to visit Rudi.
He brought his guests to the restaurant in the large hall, to treat them to grilled specialties, along with Srem wines, the famous Riesling and Fruškogorski Biser, and to introduce his visitors to the beauty of the music of the tamburica orchestra.
Among them were three middle-aged and two elderly couples.
The Swabians were delighted with the ćevapčići, ražnjići and especially the pljeskavica.
The good wine, the mood and the taste of the food invited them to "repete", but each time with the addition of more paprika, onion and pepper. When leaving, they promised to come again the next day.
However, they did not appear for several days, and the manager of the restaurant thought that they had probably changed their minds and would not come.
However, one evening here they are again, but somehow quieter, and calmer. Hans, Rudi's son, orders the barbecue again, but this time with limited amount of pepper and paprika, instead of wine natural spring water, they ask for crepes and cream cakes.

When asked why, thinking that they were not satisfied with the service last time, Hans said that everyone had problems after that feast, (guess which one) and especially the ladies, who unanimously declared that they had endured the first childbirth much easier ...

Andrei

A new orchestra with a famous prima came on a one-year contract. One of the members, Andrei, was a middle-aged man - a pianist, a blind musician. He talked to the manager and, without asking, began his own story about how he had lost his sight.
He came from a nearby town, which had a developed hemp processing industry and of course, the preparation of hemp for processing. Among other things, it was necessary to leave the hemp stalks submerged in water for a long time in canals.
When it was taken out for further processing, young men often played in these canals, not knowing that this posed a great danger due to the presence of ammonia. Andrei was careless and stayed in the canal long enough to damage his eyesight. He was 16 at the time. His father played the piano and when he went blind, playing the piano became his hobby. After he completed supplementary music education it became his main profession since then.
He boasted that he had also learned the alphabet for the blind, read stories from his books, feeling the tiny bumps on the paper with his fingers. And they became good friends.
One autumn day, the manager hired several women from the neighborhood to prepare a winter salad for the restaurant kitchen. They were preparing stewed tomatoes and pickles in the courtyard behind the stage, so one day they called the manager to tell them where to put the prepared jars of winter salad.

He told them: Put them on the piano, if there is no other place.
Hearing this, Andrei asked if he could look at the piano.
The manager wondered to himself how he could see him, but said: Come with me, I'll show you.
After helping him climb the high steps to the stage, he removed a few jars that had just been left there and some objects that were on the piano and said: - Here, that's the piano and if you can believe it, it's been here since before the war and wiped the piano with a cloth that had been on it. On the stage next to the piano were some chairs, dusty curtains, an old ottoman, and some objects that probably were used for the needs of the theater.
Rarely anyone went there, perhaps for years.
Andrei, as if he had three pairs of eyes, points out, touching the broken strings with his fingers, saying: -This is the string c3, g5, etc., and suddenly, after running his hand over the metal plate with the name of the company that made the piano, he exclaimed:
- Boss, this is a piano, not the rickety one I play on! It was made in Vienna in 1891 by the company Josef Steiner. He went around it and touched it from all sides, saying which strings, keys, and pedal should be purchased, and he also said in which city and at the address...
For a week, until the strings and other ordered items arrived, Andrei spent all his free time at the piano, cleaning it and lubricating it with the maintenance tools for the one he plays. And when the ordered parts arrived, he spent several days working on the installation, testing and adjusting until he finally finished everything, called his friend the manager, and, as a sign of the discovery of this valuable musical instrument, played a series of musical notes, some piano compositions by famous authors.
He rejoiced like a little child at the gift he had wished for.

The good voice was heard from afar about the discovery of a rare piano that had spent more than ten years in the dark, on a stage among various old things, separated by a heavy and dusty curtain that, like a screen, separated two worlds: just a few steps away, on the other side of the curtain, life was going on, playing and singing. Soon, experts from a larger city came, at the invitation of Andrei, to examine and secure the valuable musical artifact, in the place where it belonged, and not in the unsuitable premises of a tavern. They found a place for it in the ceremonial hall of the city museum, and Andrei was pleased to accept the offer to take care of it, to occasionally play for museum visitors or in piano lessons for music students.

Unusual wedding

The stage was finally restored to a condition that could be used for concerts, plays, weddings, New Year's celebrations and other occasions. One wedding in the Great Hall was remembered for its unusual ending.
Namely, the already engaged couple broke off their relationship and the bride's place was taken by her younger sister.
The groom, a captain pilot in an airline, won the heart of his sister-in-law, and the older sister did not object, so, although heartbroken, she left it to the fate to decide in this case.
Many guests at the wedding, from more distant places, only found out about the sudden change at the celebratory banquet.
For a long time, it was talked about in the town, as if it were something unusual, which it really was.

He spoke sixteen languages

In that same hall, a formal lunch was held one year for the ministers of education of the Non-Aligned Countries, who had visited a model children's farm in a neighboring village, as a form of education for rural youth. The restaurant manager had the opportunity to talk to some of those present, including the Minister of Education of Yugoslavia, and a professor from the faculty who was the interpreter at the ceremony. The conversation was initiated by the manager asking the professor how he managed to learn sixteen languages? He said that he needed mainly two books for this: the Bible and the Quran, printed in the languages he intended to learn.
Because the most reliable translations of the text from these books are the basis for learning foreign languages, at least for him, as he said. When he translated the host's welcoming speech into the last of the sixteen languages, he received several minutes of applause from everyone present. He said at the time that this was his favorite recognition for his efforts - applause from the ministers of education from more than one hundred and twenty countries!

Double tricks

Life in the countryside was much harder than in larger places, especially in cities. And there was always some envy among the peasants in relation to the others.

Workers and officials in the city work their eight-hour day, so they can devote the remaining time to themselves and their families.
The peasants work from morning until late at night, especially during field work, sowing, harvesting etc.

During the winter months, they have more time and can afford the luxury of going to city hotels for parties. They were never short of money, but they were short of time, so they used every opportunity to make up for what they had missed.
And so, often during the winter days, they would come to the Great hall, for parties or just for dinner with their colleagues from the village or the farm. They were always in a group, never alone.
As mentioned above, they had money, especially when they sold their products in larger quantities. It was easy to get a hold of them at a party; in nice suits, dressed, often with expensive watches on their wrists. And who they are, is revealed by their calloused and chapped hands, faces wrinkled by the sun and wind, as well as their specific, slow walk, as when they are following a plow... Their girls, nicely dressed and powdered tried to attract attention even beyond the table at which they were sitting. The calculation was simple:
To be noticed by some guy from the city, and escape from the village. That is why young waiters were often their target, or through them with messages imperceptible to their guys at the table, to get in touch with someone on the other side of the hall. The guys, on the other hand, always wanted to somehow outsmart waiters, and how else would they do it than not to pay for a bottle of wine, or a glass of some expensive drink. The waiters knew about it, and they were not as naive as the first ones thought.
The fraud and counter-fraud would often take place in the usual way: After each bottle of wine, and during the evening there were up to ten, which they would order from the waiter, after it was opened, one of the guys would put the cork in his pocket, and at the end of the evening, called the waiter to pay the bill for the whole company.
On this occasion, he would take the corks out of his pocket, and he

already knew how many there were, take them out and put them on the table so that everyone could see how much they had drunk, but he would leave one or two corks in his pocket.
The waiters are not naive, they would know about this fraud in advance, and on some convenient occasion they would drop a few corks unnoticed into the customer's pocket. Sometimes the girl next to him would do the same in an agreement with the waiter, who in return did her a favor by passing the message to the guy on the other side of the room. The waiter counted the corks, and also praised the guys for how many bottles of wine they had drunk without getting drunk. Thinking that he had outsmarted the waiter for two bottles of wine, he would say: - Bring two more for the road!

New Year's Eve party

There were many different celebrations in the town throughout the year: state, religious, and others, because they were always well attended and everyone was satisfied, the organizers and the participants. Sometimes unwanted incidents would occur and briefly spoil the mood of those present, but without any serious consequences. The hotel management organized a New Year's Eve party, with an unforgettable party with a new orchestra and a young and pretty singer, as announced by numerous posters in shop windows and advertisements in local newspapers.

Two months in advance, all reservations with tickets in the hotel's Great hall were in the hands of those who wanted to attend that cheerful, last night of the year.
The beginning of the fun was indeed as expected.
A good and rich meal, an abundance of drinks of all kinds, the mood

grew with every moment. As the glasses were emptied, the guests became louder and more impatient in anticipation of the moment when one year disappears and another begins, the New Year.
The young singer was the center of attention the guests competed to see who would be the first to order the desired song for their company, at the table. And then a quarrel began between the guests at the neighboring tables, who wanted to order a song at the same time. The quarrel turned into the fight. However, friends of both were sitting at the neighboring tables, and a general fight broke out throughout the hall. Chairs, glasses, and bottles flew, hitting the guests' heads and the walls and windows of the hall. The police arrived soon and, as a warning, stopped the fight with gunshots.
It took some time for the drunks, and some of the bloodied heads, to understand. The ambulance, called by the police, arrived and treated the injuries of many, while some were taken to the hospital. The police, after taking information from everyone they found, ordered the others to leave the place and go home, while the restaurant staff, musicians, and the frightened singer watched with sadness the aftermath of the brawl, the scene resembling a battlefield after a major battle.
Many guests had their clothes torn or suffered minor damage.
The hotel learned the extent of the damage by taking inventory of broken chairs, glasses, plates, and other equipment. And all of this would be compensated for and repaired over time, and eventually forgotten. The original decor on the walls, windows, and wood panels, the injuries suffered by the innocent Great hall, would be difficult for even the most skilled craftsmen to repair.

In the 1980s, discord among the politicians began to erode the stability and survival of the common state. Soon, this situation led to the collapse of the state union. There was also an economic collapse and privatization enabled rich foreigners to grab everything that was most important in the economy, funds quickly dried up in many municipal budgets. Companies went bankrupt overnight, and this fate could not escape the hotel with the Great hall.
Someone bought it cheaply, one could say got it for free, with the promise that they would invest their funds in the production of soft drinks. It did not work, but the room changed its appearance forever and the Great hall file was closed forever.

Crazy Mićo

(26.02.2026)

A long train with wagons full of colonists from the Bosnian Krajina region arrived in a small town in Vojvodina after more than a month of travel. Tired and freezing, after a long journey in freight wagons, most of which were open - topped, they could hardly wait to be assigned houses in a nearby village that the Volksdeutschers had abandoned, fearing revenge for the crimes committed by their compatriots during the war. Some of the less patient ones walked those ten kilometers, while the rest took horse-drawn carts that the authorities had mobilized from the peasants for that purpose.
The committee for assigning houses had the difficult and responsible task of accommodating the large families of the arrivals in houses that in most cases had two rooms. In addition, some families were without fathers and others without mothers, who had died or suffered as civilians in the war. In some cases, such families would, after mutual consent, be united by the allocation of the same house

and become one family, without a single case of subsequent separation being recorded.
A younger man, Milivoj, was alone. His entire family died in the war, and he was wounded in the leg during the battle of Kozara.
He was a participant in that battle and a witness to the suffering of his entire family. Because of this, he had difficulty accepting reality, was often lonely and avoided socializing.
He was allocated a small house with a large yard and garden.
In the old shed he found a small cart, a rake and a shelf of tools for cultivating the land, which indicated the possibility that a worker, a gardener, lived there. The first house next to his, was significantly larger than the others in the village, with a large landscaped garden in which the wealthy owner probably lived.
In the first days of spring, he went out to his small farm, with a cart full of garden tools; spades, shovels, picks, rakes, pitchforks ...
First, he collected all the waste that the wind had brought there during the winter, removed the weeds, and in the following days he dug up most of it and prepared it for growing vegetables.
He was a very skilled expert in this, a job he had been doing since early childhood. Within a few years, he became famous at the city market with his products, which he brought himself on a cart that he pulled behind him, which attracted attention on the road and in the city as well as at the market itself.
For many, he was an eccentric, a loner, and he confided in only to one guy in the village, who remained unmarried like himself and gained his trust. Since then, many understood and sympathized with him for his suffering over the loss of his parents, brothers and sisters.
And that is why he did not marry.
Marko, his only friend from that time, advised him to get married.

And Milivoj, whom many called "Crazy Mićo", would say:
- When you get married, I will too.
Mićo gained the respect of many in the village for his hard work, but also understanding for his loneliness and pain over the loss of his family. Both in the village and in the city, he was respected and known as a producer of vegetables and later fruit from his estate. Mićo achieved all this through his work, and his two-wheeled cart was always with him; with it he carried tools for digging, manure that he received from his neighbors free of charge, water in a barrel for watering on dry days, and carried his product to the market.
The village could hear less and less people calling him "Crazy Mićo". Marko took advantage of an opportunity when he felt that Mićo was in a good mood, to propose marriage to a girl he had already talked to and received her consent. Yoka was late in getting married even though she was an attractive and good-looking girl. The reason was that she was poor. She lived with her mother Mara and younger sister Soka, and the only way to support them was to work in the village if someone called them, more out of compassion than necessity.
Mićo accepted the proposal, because he now decided to get married and start a new life. He realized that eternal loneliness does not solve the problems his heart feels and that by starting a family he would compensate for the loss and to prolong the family roots line.
As it was customary, they came to propose; Marko, Mićo and two married younger people, at Marko's suggestion.
Yoka, sister Soka who was two years younger, and mother Mara, dressed in modest but neat and clean clothes, with a bottle of brandy and cups of coffee ready on the table covered with a white tablecloth, welcomed the guests. Mićo and Yoka looked at each other, but his gaze lingered more on Soka, who sat quietly next to her mother with

downcast eyes and crossed arms.
Mara served the guests with Plum brandy and freshly brewed coffee, when Marko took the floor to introduce the groom and asked Yoka to say in front of her mother and sister if she wanted to marry Mićo.
Before Yoka had a chance to say yes, Mićo suddenly and unexpectedly interrupted: I didn't mean to marry Yoka, but Soka!
Everyone looked at each other, as if wondering what now?
When Marko tried to explain to Mićo that he had talked to Yoka about marrying him, Mićo stood his ground: I want Soka!
The mother and younger daughter's gazes met at the same time as if they were seeking - one for approval and the other for consent.
When her mother asked her if she wanted to marry Mićo, Soka agreed, readily saying yes, as if she had expected such a question.
Then Mićo said, addressing Yoka:
Don't feel offended, I really had the intention of marrying Soka, whom I had been looking at and wanting even before Marko proposed to me to get married. From now on, you are my sister-in love and I promise to take care of you and love you like my own sister.
The village experienced this turn of events as a victory of love and not an arranged marriage based on some plan and calculation.
Since then, a saying has become: "Mićo is not crazy"!
Mićo and Soka were always together, in the garden as well as at the market, and over the course of two years the family grew:
they named their son Marko and their daughter Yoka.
Together they also expanded their property, from which they supplied many customers with their products, including that hotel with the large banquet hall. The first onions and potatoes, tomatoes and lettuce were available to that restaurant, where they were always greeted with gratitude for the good quality and timely delivery of

orders. After about ten years, they built a new house in the city, and enlarged their property even more by purchasing several neighboring fields. For years, a tractor trailer has replaced the old two-wheeled cart, which now serves in the shed only as a memory of the days when, thanks to it, "Crazy Mićo" became "Mićo the boss".
Mićo employed Yoka by assigning her a boutique at the city market and thus provided her and her mother with the conditions for an independent and decent life.
There she met a young man Rajko who had come from Krajina to visit his relatives and after a short time they got married.
And so, the circle of fate of the two families closed with a happy ending for everyone.

Now you ask me

(16.04.2026)

On a beautiful May Day in 1961, we set off for a walk through the city center in the direction of "Cinderella", a favorite and well- known Ice cream and pastry place for children.
In her mother's arms, a two-year-old daughter and between us, a four-year-old son, is happily jumping, as if he sensed something good is coming.
On the short way to "Cinderella", we came across "Buda" (boutique) with the famous ice cream which all the children knew, including our little ones.
The ice cream was excellent and unique in taste, but I didn't like that tiny 2x2 meter space where it was made and sold without proper sanitary conditions, so I avoided buying there for children, who are most sensitive to unhygienic food.
At one point, I felt my little son, holding my hand as if stopping me, wanting to draw my attention to the ice cream maker, who was standing in a smeared apron, waiting for customers.

I understood our little son's intentions, but I continued in the direction of "Cinderella". Unexpectedly, he stopped in front of me and asked:
- Dad, do you want some ice cream?
I said - no, but then he surprised me: - Now you ask me!
My wife and I laughed sweetly at the ingenuity of our four-year-old. We arrived where we had planned, and there was no need to ask him: do you want ice cream - he was already standing in front of a row of glass containers with different ice creams, and he found himself in a dilemma - which one to choose.

Batak (Chiken leg)

(04/16/2026)

Soon after arriving in Windsor (Canada) in 1969, we were visited by relatives from Detroit, a city on the other side of the river (border). We had already become accustomed to looking at the contours and skyscrapers of that city every day, because we lived only two hundred meters from the riverbank, in a house that would soon become our own family home. At the end of the visit, as could be expected, they invited us to visit them.
I have been attending English school for three months now and I was able to communicate in everyday conversations.
One day I took our passports with me and after school stopped by the US Consulate, which was on the main street in the city center, to get visa information for me and family, so that we could cross the border and visit our relatives.
The clerk at the counter explained that it would take a certain amount of time to get the visa, as a gentleman at a desk in the office was watching.
At one point, he got up, walked closer to the counter, and asked who I had in Detroit and why I was in such a hurry with the visa – in Serbian!

Surprised, I explained how our relatives had visited and invited us for visit, how we looked at Detroit every day and wondered when we would be able to make it. After a few more questions, he took the passports, stamped the visas, and returned them to me, saying that we could visit whenever we wanted without any restrictions.
I thanked him and left the Consulate, not understanding what had happened, out of excitement.
Many people wondered how I managed to get it, what connections I had and the privileges to get visas for an unlimited number of border crossings - I couldn't explain it to them because I didn't understand it either. For the first visa, you had to wait half a year with the mandatory Canadian documents to identify you as a citizen of that country. You could only get a visa for one visit, with a limited time of stay, and you had to apply again for each subsequent one.
And the big day came.
We announced our arrival for our first visit to America.
Before leaving, I explained to our younger son, Dušan, who was four years old, that he should behave nicely in someone else's house, and always ask me if he wanted something.
At the table there was everything; Sarma, sausages, chicken legs and all kinds of sweets, and drinks for everyone to choose from.
While everyone present was quietly busy eating and talking less, Duško suddenly and loudly asked: - Dad, can I have that "batak" - pointing with his hand in the direction of the oval with chicken legs in the middle of the table. Everyone laughed, and the hostess told him to take not one but as many as he wanted and brought him the oval.
And that first visit to relatives and America will be remembered for that one sentence, coined in a small child's head - with the intention of getting what he wants without offending anyone around him.

There are so many of us!

(26.04.2026)

I took my son Dušan, then an eight-year-old boy, with me on my first visit to Yugoslavia in 1973, four years after we moved Canada.
We visited relatives in Bačka Palanka and Zrenjanin, and we also went on a one-day trip to Topola, visited the famous church, the Karađorđe monument and the museum in Oplenac.
On the way back, we attended the football match in Belgrade, "Crvena Zvezda"-"Dinamo" at the famous and packed "Marakana" stadium in front of 90,000 spectators who created an atmosphere we never saw before. I noticed that Duško was watching the large number of fans with more attention than the game itself.
He was used to going to games and cheering for Serbian teams in Windsor, and sometimes even further, as far as Sarnia, in front of a small group of Serbian fans.
He understood that there weren't many of us. He had already noticed that we were few in number in a city where many languages were spoken. Now suddenly, he found himself in the middle of a huge number of people who speak Serbian, he hears comments, team lineups, music and songs in our language from the stadium's loudspeakers.
He looks around, gets up and like a camera from one end of the stadium to the other"filming" the surroundings.
Suddenly he exclaimed: - Dad, there are so many of us!?
I was surprised by this unexpected question, and at the same time glad that such a little one was already showing interest in how many of us there are, so I told him:
There are many more of us, much more than you can see now, this is Serbia, where Serbs and some other people live.
I noticed that he understood, and now, with more attention he started to follow the course of the match.
I explained that I had also helped build that big stadium, that I was a

member of the club and now a loyal fan from afar.
As if encouraged by that knowledge, he joined that huge crowd of people and with his little hands he started waving and shouting: "Zvezda", "Zvezda"!
I have the feeling that the experience and impressions gained during that visit "settled" in the little child's head for all time.

Garbage man

(26.04.2026)

The youngest son Zoran, the only one of our four children born in Windsor was unusually lively and curious.
When he started to walk, he would reach everywhere and we had to pay special attention to him.
One day, we were cooking something on the stove, and he was watching from a chair, and we see that his attention was focused on the red hotplate. We told him that he shouldn't touch it by telling him it was very hot and can burn his fingers.
As soon as we warned him, he suddenly stretched out his hand to see for himself what it means hot - and screamed in pain.
From that time on, he was more obedient when we told him not to do something. He had a habit of running outside as soon as he heard a large special truck taking away the garbage in front of the houses. And one of us followed him, so that he wouldn't accidentally get too close to that monster that was swallowing garbage bags with the noise of its engine, while the operator controlled everything with a hand lever. And so, once a week, the same scene would repeat itself, which the operator didn't miss to notice, and one day he approached him and asked:
-Do you want to be a garbage collector when you grow up?
Zoran happily said yes, nodding his head.
The man said with a smile on his face that he would leave him his truck when he retired.

Falling off a bicycle

(27.04.2026)

In a large shopping center, in a café "Tim Horton`s", our pensioners gathered for their daily coffee and a "cup of conversation".
They talked about everything and anything that could come to mind, these mostly elderly people. Politics was always the main topic and there were also stories that should mainly be dealt with by women, not men – various gossip and intrigues.
One summer day, before leaving for a meeting, I went on my daily bike ride - twenty kilometers through parks by rivers and lakes.
On my way back, I stopped by the school fence to observe a wonderful sight: Boys and girls from the first grades of elementary school, during recess, run around the schoolyard and the neighboring park with the screams and noise typical of children of that age.
Some are playing basketball others are kicking a soccer ball.
At one point, the ball flies over the high wire fence, right where I was standing next to my bicycle. To save the children time going around the fifty-meter long fence, I bend down, holding the bicycle with one hand, take the ball, and in an attempt to throw it over the fence, I lose my balance and both my two-wheeler and I fall. The ball ended up on the other side of the fence, but the group of children didn't run after it to continue playing - before I could get up, they run up to me, asking if I was okay and if I needed help. Only when I said I was okay and started riding my bike did the children return to the game, and I continued on to the café, to meet my friends.
I was a little late, which everyone noticed and asked me why I was late. I ordered coffee, settled into a chair and told them the story, emphasizing some details to get their attention and reaction.
Of all things, they were more interested in the fact that I had fallen, asking "so what happened next", all bursting with laughter and pleasure. I said briefly and reproachfully:

-Not a single child laughed when I fell, but they ran to offer me help. For all of you, that was a reason to laugh and to rejoice in someone else's misfortune – "that's what happened next".
Everyone fell silent, ashamed.

Bus incident

(28.04.2026)

The bus stopped in front of a school, a group of teenagers got on with noise and laughter and immediately charged at an elderly man, sitting right behind the driver.
They started teasing him, calling him insults, like, "You old man", "Look at yourself, you're nothing anymore".
The old man said to them something in Spanish or Portuguese, because he clearly didn't speak English.
Only then did they start scolding him even more for not knowing the language, and the man got scared and looked at the passengers around him, seeking understanding and protection.
Everyone watched silently, and I could not tolerate this violence against an innocent and helpless elderly man, so knowing that in such a situation one should not be rude and impudent, I calmly said:
- Guys, do you have a grandfather or someone older in your family?
Without waiting for an answer, I continued: - What would you say if someone like you treated your grandfather?
They looked at each other and, as if by agreement, calmed down and stopped insulting the old man. After a short ride, they calmly got off the bus, quietly and like a little bit ashamed.
Only then did some passengers say: you told them right!
After a month or two, I was passing by the school and a few boys approached, and one asked if I remembered them. I looked at them and said no, although I noticed that they were somehow familiar to me. Then the one who asked me said: - We were bullying that old man when you told us to stop, which I later discussed with my father.

He asked me, as he usually does when I come back from school,
- How did your day go? I told him about the incident on the bus, and how you said and advised us. Then my father told me: if you ever meet that gentleman, apologize to him and thank him for the advice, tell your friends the same, which several of them confirmed by nodding their heads. All of them thanked me in unison for the life lesson, as the father advised his son.
Then I remembered the incident when I fell off my bike and the actions of the children, worried about whether I was injured and whether I needed help, as well as the reaction of my friends in the cafe, in the Shopping Center.
The conclusion is clear and unmistakable: All children are born innocent, like little angels, and the treatment and attitude towards them throughout life, transforms them into what they become as adults.

Ilija dileja and Luka the judge

(29.04.2026)

When the train with the immigrants from the previous story arrived in the town, and when they finally assigned everyone a house in a neighboring village, the war veteran Ostoja and his three sons, aged 10 to 15, were given the last remaining house, a shack, at the end of the village, across from the gypsy settlement.
They told him that it was temporary, because as a war veteran and a father and guardian with three minor children, he certainly deserved more comfortable accommodation.
But that was forgotten and they would spend many years there.
They got used to the neighborhood, especially the children who quickly made friends among the gypsy boys.
The older son, Luka, was fond of the boy Misha, who was one of the few who attended school, mostly thanks to Luka's father who took a liking to his son's friend, the cuddly, mousy, curly-haired, black-eyed

little Roma. Luka completely fit into the Roma way of life in their settlement, called Shanghai. He mastered the Romani language and spoke like the other Roma children in the neighborhood. He also had a dark complexion, not as pronounced as his friend Misha, so it was impossible to tell that he was not one of them.
They finished elementary school and continued on: Luka enrolled in a lower gymnasium and Misha chose the tinsmith trade. He already saw himself as an employee at Limarska, a factory that employed a large number of workers. And so it was. Luka, however, continued his education in a larger city and became a judge. He did not break off his relationship with Misha, they would see each other when he found some time to spend with his friend while visiting his father.
The difference in education and profession did not affect, let alone end, their friendship. Misha got married, started a family, and expected his son Ilija to surpass his father in education and a better life. But Ilija did not care, he preferred to steal an egg or a chicken in the neighborhood, for which he was repeatedly warned and sometimes criticized by the misdemeanor judge.
Because of all this, they called him Ilija Dileja (Ilija the fool).
Father Misha once complained to his friend Luka, during a visit to the town, and told him about his troubles regarding his son's behavior, which made him ashamed in front of his colleagues at work and in the neighborhood.
Judge Luka promised to try to help both him and his son.
The next time Ilija was caught again in a much more serious offense - stealing an elderly woman's purse at the market, they called Judge Luka for help, which he had promised earlier.
Ilija did not care about his father's good relations with Judge Luka, so he did not even know him, except for what he had heard and learned from his father's stories.
When he appeared in the courtroom, he felt in a familiar environment, due to his frequent encounters with the misdemeanor judge. He sat down on the chair and, as if uninterested, awaited the

beginning and what would follow.
Judge Luka, banging a wooden gavel on the table to draw attention to the beginning of the trial, invited Ilija to stand up. The trial began, beyond all expectations for the accused, as well as to the great surprise of the typist, who was ready with paper in her typewriter, and who suddenly was left without with doing nothing:
In pure Romani, the judge began his speech:
-Shame on you, you are embarrassing yourself, your father and all of us gypsies. We all are ashamed of your behavior, follow your father and me... you steal eggs and chickens, you steal grandmothers' handbags, do beat those weaker than you...
Why should everyone call you Dileja, when you have such a beautiful, our, Romani name?
Surprised, confused, Ilija felt a bit dizzy and, as if through a fog, he began to remember his father's story, about how much Luka's father had helped him and guided him on the right path, about the importance of school and an honest life, and how he had once, as a child, called his father's friend Uncle Luka.
He cried, and as tears streamed down his face, he promised, for the first time in court, in his own Romani language:
-Uncle Luka, I promise that I will not steal anymore, I will continue my education, if he accepts me back, trust me!
The town school board took care of his re-enrollment in school, provided him with the necessary supplies and clothes, and Ilija completely changed - he became an exemplary student, an active athlete, especially fond of football, where he played in the youth team.
He also graduated from an economic school, and eventually got a job in the company where his father worked, as a bookkeeper.
He got married, got an apartment from the company, and started a family. His children will certainly not steal eggs and chickens.

Kazan, Kolos and Kupus

(28.04.2026)
To Aleksandar Mijalković – Šaca

Peasant life is hard, tiring and demanding, a lot of work and Sacrifices and low expectations, which they cannot influence: Early frosts, drought, ice, storms and fires, and finally the high taxes. Winter for them is like a summer vacation and trips to the sea and spas for the happier world that lives in the city.
That is why they rejoice like little children when the first snow falls, a sign that now they only have to work so much to feed their movable assets on four or two legs, and themselves.
Evenings are often reserved for gatherings at neighbor's place. While some men play cards, women knit and embroider girls and boys have their own way of play. So they spend the winter season.
Not infrequently, the elderly will also remember the distant past days and years, wartime, slavery and the return of those few lucky ones who would survive the war.
The veterans of the First World War, mostly illiterate peasants who reached a distant unknown world, which many did not even know existed, would often talk and convey their experiences to the younger ones who were present, who often did not understand them.
Due to age and forgetfulness, some would tell completely different stories than what actually happened and how it happened. Exaggeration was frequent, in order to make the previous story seem less and their own stand out, and most often due to ignorance of the geography and history, it was incomprehensible.
One evening, several veterans of the First World War began to share their memories of those days.
The first to speak was Jevto, an Austrian soldier, a prisoner of war on the Russian front:
-My dear friends, when the Russians captured me, they put me in a wagon of a train and took me to some area called Galicia.

There I saw some people, whom they call Poles, who work in the fields and grow cabbage – whose heads are so big that it could shelter from the rain a platoon of soldiers!
Then Trivo spoke, settling down on a chair and stroking his beard to emphasize the importance of what he was going to say:
-Well, people, I heard that there, somewhere even further away, live some big people, whom they call Colosses, I guess that cabbage is for them.
Vojkan, who spent his time in captivity in the Russian city called Kazan, continued:
-They kept me in a kazan (cauldron) which is so big that it takes an hour to get from one *side to the other.*
Todor, with a mustache a la Vuk Karadžić's, an Austro-Hungarian soldier from the front on the French Maginot Line, said:
-One thing is strange to me, people, who needs such a big cauldron?
Jevto readily replied: -Well, to cook that cabbage from Galicia, I guess!
Then a younger man intervened:
-It's nothing, I walked through the clouds as a Yugoslav army soldier!
Everyone looked at each other in amazement.
-I watched the lightning and heard the thunder from the top of the mountain: the sun above, and down below it was thundering!
The old men shook their heads in disbelief.
That was the truth, experienced by the soldier from Banat, in the high mountains of Serbia, during army maneuvers.
This natural phenomenon is unknown to the inhabitants of the plains.

Advice from a policeman in Flint

(29.04.2026)

Winter, snow everywhere, and the roads suddenly became icy.
When I set off on a hundred-kilometer journey to the city of Flint, Michigan, the roads were clear and safe for driving.

The icy, cold rain fell somewhere when I was halfway there, and decided to continue, with about forty kilometers left to go.
I entered the middle lane, driving slower and carefully.
Americans, as in everything else, including traffic, like to compete, they drove without slowing down or adapting to the traffic conditions, they bypassed me on both sides.
When it was time to prepare to exit the road, I tried to move to the right lane in time, before the ramp, because if I missed it, the next exit was twenty kilometers past the town.
I was not allowed to do so by the drivers who were driving risky and too fast on that side.
Finally, at the last moment before the exit ramp, I saw a free space in the rearview mirror and signaled to turn.
At that moment, two drivers, from the right and left lanes, having both overtaken me, decided to enter the middle lane in front of me at the same time. Because of the slippery road, the cars touched, one with its rear bumper hooking the other to the first, and thus connected, they began to turn in a circle in the middle of the road in front of my car. At the moment when I was so close to hit the two vehicles, they separated, the bumper of one of the cars remained on the road and both vehicles went off the road, one to the left and one to the right side of the highway. When I crossed over the torn bumper, I heard a dull thud and at the same time I left the road in the last few meters that I had left to get out.
I saw a building with the word Police written on it. I stopped in the parking lot, looked at the vehicle and saw that there was no damage, but I still decided to report the case because of the two drivers who went off the road. I entered in and noticed a black policeman at the desk, told him why I had come and explained what had happened. The policeman was short, very fat, what you would say - wider than longer. Probably, because of these body characteristics he was not suitable for the job of a street policeman, so he got this one at the desk. He listened to me carefully and finally asked:

-Are you okay, is there any damage to your car?
I said that I was okay, unharmed, and that my car had not suffered any damage.
Then he said to me:
- I suggest you continue your journey, because if I enter your report in the daily register, and it goes to court, you could be accused of causing the collision, because these two guys, when they see that you are a Canadian, can join in the lawsuit against you, and there is no chance for you to defend yourself.
I see that you are an honest man since you reported the case without being a participant in it and that you care about the well-being of other people.
I offered my hand and thanked him for that useful advice, as a new valuable life experience.

Author's word

In most cases, the theme of the story is a person and his environment. It can be true, fictional or a combination, depending on how the author wants to portray the event.
Events can be similar, regardless of latitude and longitude, as well as the actions and names of the heroes of the story.
Therefore, despite the fact that the author changes the names and names of places, many will still recognize themselves in a story. Therefore, it is important to note that any similarity is coincidental, and this is what we want to emphasize.

16.03.2026

Kukulje

Forgive me, my native village
For leaving all your beauties;
Lijevče Polje, the Vrbas River,
Our beautiful Srbac city,
And the ancient home threshold.

I have passed countries and cities,
Fast rivers and high mountains
Stormy seas and oceans -
To Canada, our hope.

Life flows, I am fine and fit,
I have everything, nothing is missing
But my heart grieves something -
I don't know what is wrong with it.

Just is silent, suffers, longs,
To see, touch and kiss
The old threshold once more.

Branko Malešević
Windsor, November 7, 2025

Branko Malešević

He is the author of more than forty bulletins, books and monographs on history, sports, chess and the life of Serbs in Windsor, as well as the monograph Biographical short stories, about his life journey and experience from his native village of Kukulje to Windsor, Canada, where he has lived with his family since 1969. He is a member of the literary club "Miroslav Mika Antić" in Inđija, Serbia.

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