

Hungarian Escapee, Refugee Parents To Meet For Christmas In New Jersey

Four years ago, 18-year-old Janos Horvath whispered goodbye to his family and with his older brother Jozsef, crawled through mine fields and booby-trapped barbed wire entanglements across the Hungarian border to freedom. Now an American paratrooper at Fort Bragg, Pfc. Horvath plans to give his parents their best Christmas in years. With his bride of five months he hopes to meet them at Camp Kilmer, N. J. this month to welcome them to their new home in America, and the freedom they've been long awaiting.

Several weeks ago Horvath was surprised with news that his parents had also escaped through the Iron Curtain to seek asylum in the West. Their reunion will end long years of prayers by all of them, for such an event.

But back in 1952 this family reunion seemed impossible. In fact, crossing the closely guarded Iron Curtain with its ragged rows of barbed wire, vicious dogs and armed guards appeared hopeless.

For two days and two nights the brothers lay concealed, waiting their chance. Luck smiled the third evening.

"It seems so long ago now," the 23-year-old soldier says. "I wonder how my parents managed to escape?"

If their escape was anything like the harrowing experience he and his brother suffered through in 1952 it's sure to reveal the triumph of courage and iron will over Communist oppression.

For endless hours the two shivering men had lain concealed, watching sentries and blood-hounds patrol the minefield and barbed wire tangles that barred the path to freedom.

After surveying a likely route, the two young men started crawling. Using their handkerchiefs they erased their prints on a plowed and raked strip to avoid detection.

With his 19-year-old brother leading, Horvath inched foot by foot across 50 yards of minefield.

Carefully cutting their way through the booby trap rigged wire, the two Hungarians hugged the earth as powerful searchlights from towers 700 yards apart periodically swung across the border.

"Luckily the guards didn't pass our way with their dogs until we had cut through the barbed wire," Horvath recalls.

But once across the border they had not really reached freedom. In 1952, Austria was under Russian control. Safety lay 80 miles

away in Vienna where American, British and French shared control with the Russians.

During the hectic night flight through the Austrian countryside, the Horvaths learned survival methods first hand.

They lived off the land, eating raw potatoes, picking apples and whatever else they could find. And during the three days and nights they avoided all contact with people for fear of exposure and capture. Without compass they guided on the stars to reach Vienna, 80 miles in three nights.

There they found refuge with American authorities and rested. Several months later they were on their own and free in Salzburg, Germany.

A farmer at heart, Jozsef took advantage of his opportunity to settle in Australia. Now 24, he has his own farm there.

Janos chose to enlist in the United States Army and seek citizenship here. He joined in March, 1954.

Returning to Camp Kilmer for a reunion with his parents will take Horvath to his first home in this country.

Long saddened years separated him from his family. But Christmas, 1956, in New Jersey will be much different, and much happier. Their Christmas present will be a new life of freedom in America.

North Carolina's cotton production is estimated at 360,000 bales of 500 pounds gross weight, according to specialists with the North Carolina Crop Reporting Service. This 1956 crop is 9,000 bales or 2.6 per cent above the 1955 production, but it is 97,000 bales or 21.2 per cent below 1945-54 averages. The estimated 440,000 acres of cotton harvested this year is the lowest since 1869. The 1956 harvested acreage is 8.3 per cent under last year and 35.4 per cent below the 1945-54 average.

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