From Hungary With Love–
The Story of Elizabeth Mihalyi–Part One

by Marion Coffman

Before getting into the story of Elizabeth Mihalyi's flight from Hungary in 1945, it is beneficial to understand her background. Elizabeth was born in London to an English and Hungarian mother and a Hungarian father. Her father owned an import and export business and spoke seven languages. Her mother, however, was a very unhappy woman. At the age of 16, she was offered a contract with the Vienna Opera Company. She had a lovely voice and wanted desperately to become an opera singer. But her parents would not allow her to accept the contract offer.

Elizabeth parents had been married for 17 years when Elizabeth was born. She was an only child after her mother suffered several miscarriages. Five years after Elizabeth's birth, her parents divorced, and her father took her back to his parent's estate in Hungary. Two years later, Elizabeth's father remarried and Elizabeth was raised by an English nanny and a wonderful–but very young–stepmother. They moved from the family home in Dorfstein, in West Hungary, to a friend's horse breeding farm.

This friend was a gentleman farmer and thoroughbred horse breeder who was also a Tsar officer. When he was called for duty, he asked Elizabeth's father to take charge of the farm and stables and continue with the breedings.

Elizabeth grew up on that horse farm. It was customary for girls her age to learn how to cook, clean house and not to sew–but to embroider–so they would know if the servants were doing their jobs. Besides helping to run the home at age 13, Elizabeth was already keeping stud books and grain lists for her father. She knew the pedigrees of over 125 horses.

Horse breeding was controlled by cavalry officers and the Agricultural Interior in Hungary. They were the ones who kept stations for the stallions. Those stallions were given out for stud at no charge to any farmers who needed to improve their horse breeding. Elizabeth's uncle was the head of all the horse stations in Hungary, and Elizabeth learned at a very young age the value of good horse breeding.

Meanwhile, her mother had remarried and lived in a small nearby village, so Elizabeth had the benefit of enjoying three different homes, each of her parents and her grandparents. Throughout her childhood, she was surrounded by dogs and horses and, even though self-described as somewhat of a "tom boy", she learned to enjoy the really valuable things in life.

Elizabeth met her husband when she was 18 years old. He was sixteen years her senior but a very good man who she knew loved her more than anyone. She also believed he deserved a very sweet, charming, peaceful girl–not someone so adventurous and wild. He had two doctorate degrees, one in law and one in political science and was also a judge. He retired before he married Elizabeth, and the newlyweds moved to an estate owned by his family in Kormarom on the right banks of the Danube River in Northern Hungary–an area hard hit by the Treaty of Trianon after World War I.

As a result of the treaty, Hungary lost more than two thirds of its territory as part of the peace settlements. Portions of the country were given to Austria, Rumania, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. For many years prior, Hungary was made up of small villages where people of different ethnic backgrounds coexisted. Some of these villages were made up of Hungarians, but others were settled by people of Slavic, German and Rumanian origins. Old Hungarian laws allowed immigrants to retain their religions, customs and languages. However, thousands of deprived people, such as Moravians and Bohemians, were classified by the Hungarian government as one ethnic group. These were the people who dwelled in Northern Hungary. When Hungary was stripped of its Northern territory, the population was reduced from 20,000,000 people to 8,000,000.

When Elizabeth married and moved onto her new husband's estate, she continued her interest in horses for many years. Her father-in-law was also a horse breeder. Horse breeding was done very carefully in Hungary. Every breeding was registered and every horse branded.

Eventually, the estate was sold, and Elizabeth and her husband moved to her parents home in Yarta which was then a part of Czechoslovakia. It was in this big, 17 room, 250 year old house that her three sons were born. She lived there for 14 years as her grandparents wanted their only grandchild and her family close by.

Elizabeth inherited the estate when her grandfather died, but by 1934, the high taxes forced her to sell it and buy her own home in West Hungary. The move brought sad times for Elizabeth's family. The boys, happily home-schooled by a governess, were sent off to boarding school. Elizabeth and her husband purchased 449 acres and rented the adjacent 2,000 acres so they could continue breeding horses. They started with 46 Belgian horses–heavy horses with good movement–and purchased two imported Belgian stallions for their breeding program. They also raised wheat, barley, potatoes and grass seed and bought and bred water buffalo–about 50 of them–that they sold to farmers to draw carts.

On the political front, Nazi Germany, under Adolf Hitler's dictatorship, rose to power during the 1930s. Hitler returned some of the territory Hungary had given up under the Treaty of Trianon, and also used threats of force to get Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria to join the Axis. In April of 1941, infuriated by a rebellion against Germany in Yugoslavia, Hitler attacked Yugoslavia with Hungary's aide. Thus Hungary entered World War II on the Axis side.

Prior to Hungary's entering World War II, Elizabeth, her husband, and sons had always enjoyed hunting on the estates where they lived. Her husband had German shorthaired pointers, but Panni XV was their first vizsla. Born on May 19, 1940, she was a gift to Elizabeth's son, Andrew. As the German shorthaired pointers became old or ill, Panni took over more and more of the hunting. Panni was a member of the family. She never slept on the beds, but there was a place for her in every room in the house. She was bred for the first time at two years old and whelped her litter of six puppies in the kitchen in a comfortable box. A year later, when she had her second litter, Hungary had already entered World War II.

Hitler had abandoned Hungary as an ally in 1943 and invaded the country in March 1944–sending 500,000 Hungarian Jews to concentration camps in Germany and setting up

a Nazi government. By the end of that year, the Soviet Union invaded Hungary as a member of the Allied Forces that included the United States, Great Britain, France and China.

By that time, all of the working people, including the veterinarian had fled. With her husband away from home and her sons away in military school, Elizabeth docked the tails on all 11 of Panni's herself. Tail-docking was common as everyone hunted with their vizslas. Tall cornfields throughout August and September made it impossible to hunt dogs without docked tails. They either came out of the fields with bloody tails or had flushed the pheasants and partridges with all the noise wagging tails make. But the realities of war were never far from view.

Soviet forces battled the German army in Hungary near Lake Balaton, and according to Elizabeth's accounts, the United States, as part of the allied forces, bombed Budapest. She had been preparing for months in case a hasty flight became necessary. She had hoped the war would have ended before she had to leave home.

With her husband trapped at an estate their sons had inherited from an uncle, the couple had been separated for quite some time. Fighting had broken out between the two estates, and it was impossible to cross any of the bridges between the farms. Sensing a critical situation, Elizabeth's husband warned her not to wait until the Soviet military arrived, and not to leave one minute too early or too late. He cautioned her to take Panni, and any family members who wanted to go and to leave Hungary. That was the way they lived–always waiting– always ready.

Elizabeth spent several nights packing 46 damask tablecloths, oriental rugs, silver, china and crystal in wooden crates filled with sawdust. Then, she lifted bricks from the floor in the carriage house, dug holes in the ground, and hid all of her treasured belongings. Constantly on the lookout for German guards walking the streets, she replaced the bricks and left Hungary as a refugee.

Winston Churchill's admission that the Soviet takeover of Hungary had been a political mistake, clarified just how much benefit the Soviet Union had gained. The military invasion Elizabeth and her fellow Hungarians waited for from Yugoslavia to her South never came. As part of a peace agreement with the Allies in 1945, Hungary agreed to relinquish all of the territory it had gained since 1938, and even though elections were held and a republic established, Communism eventually won out due to the heavy Soviet influence.

Soviet soldiers came through Elizabeth's farm with mine sweepers and found everything including first edition books by German poets and writers and other famous books in her home. Everything Soviet soldiers found not written in Hungarian were taken to the yard and torched.

Elizabeth's son, Louis, was in the Hungarian army, fighting against the Soviet forces. But when the Allied forces finally took over, Louis, along with other Hungarian fighters, were loaded onto wagons and transported through Rumania to a Russian prison.

Her son, Andrew, was in military school. At the end of the war, he requested protection from the Allied forces. He was sent to a prison near Bordeaux in France, along with his classmates, where nearly 30,000 Hungarians died of hunger. Andrew, suffering from

hepatitis, could only stand with the aid of crutches. He survived and was eventually sent back to Hungary. He was only 20 years old.

Elizabeth's youngest son, Thomas, was taken from his school and sent to Germany as part of that county's program to prevent these young boys from being sent to Russia to work in the mines.

Editor's Note: This article is the first in a series that Marion offered to write for the Vizsla Club of America. Marion met Elizabeth in 1977 at the Vizsla Nationals in California, where she contracted her to paint Bear's picture. While she was painting, Marion taped hours of conversations they had about her life and escape from Hungary. The material, presented here and in upcoming issues of the Vizsla News, comes directly from those taped conversations with Elizabeth Mihalyi. Thank you, Marion, for sharing this extraordinary history with us!

Historical information was added to give readers an even more detailed description of the events and perils Elizabeth faced on her journey.

From Hungary with Love-part 2

The story of Elizabeth Mihalyi continues in her own words taken from taped conversations with the author.

I stood still, gazing out over the fields where the horses peacefully grazed. I knew I shouldn't be standing there but I also was sure that my life as I knew it would be changed from that day on. The heavy artillery from the Russian bombardments had gotten closer each day and I had been sent a message from friendly Germans near the front to leave my home immediately and go to safety in Austria.

Our preparations had started last October and it now was almost the end of March and I couldn't delay any more. We had lived every day waiting to travel even though all of us had always hoped to the last minute that the war would be over before we had to leave home. Relatives and several farm workers had already started to pack the carts and get the horses ready. It was a beautiful Spring evening, blue skies with feather clouds, and apple trees in bloom. We would leave at dusk and travel only by night.

We already had clothes in wheat sacks. Warm pullovers in one sack, slacks in the other and everything had been thrown into the wagons. A short time ago we prepared food; baked bread, roasted 20 or 30 chickens, collected 58 eggs, plus butchered several pigs so we had ham, sausages, things like that that would not spoil. We had loaded 11 heavy farms carts, and 2 riding carts a few months ago, with the clothes, linens, oriental rugs, horse-hair mattresses, 9 guns, and of course, bags of poppy seeds to use as barter along the way. We grew the seeds on our farms, at least 50-60 acres because in Europe we were not forbidden to grow them since you can sell the shells to the medical factories. The seeds are used for cooking cakes and rolls, and a soup plate of the seeds, or sugar would get us hay for our horses from farmers along the way.

I left behind more than 100 horses in our pastures, but took 44 with us, including two pair of white Lippizans pulling the riding carts. The extended "family" of 22 included my uncle, his wife, 2 daughters, his daughter in law and child, plus the orchard gardener, his wife and daughter, and several farm workers and their wives, all fleeing in the hope of safety from the advancing Russian army. And of course my Vizsla, a very pregnant PanniXV, and my niece's Fox Terrier.

By 6 o'clock in the evening, we drove out of the gate. I had promised my sons and my husband that I would leave, and I thought, "what a horrible thing, this is my land. Why am I leaving here?" But I gathered the reins up and I took the whip, and I never whip my horses, but I did then, and I went out the gate. In that minute the whole past of my life fell off of me, and I was finally doing what I had wanted to do as a kid. We had prepared to be refugees and the wagons had all been fitted with covers so that they looked exactly like the covered wagons of the American pioneers. And it was going to be a wonderful adventure.

We could not go on the regular highway because of the military retreating on it and the soft muddy back rural pathways in spring were absolutely impassable with farm carts. So we went on the medium roads that the farmers used to carry their manure or whatever, and they were also muddy and hard to move on. We only went from dusk to before dawn and in the daytime we spent the time picking branches from trees and covering the wagons so they wouldn't be visible to the Russian flyers. Those flyers were machine- gunning every carriage they'd see. I didn't sleep under a roof from the 28"' of March to the 6th of May in spite of snow and rain. Only near the cart in a foot sack. But I didn't like that because I didn't know what was going on with the horses. The only possibility of guarding your things is to stay with them and I worried about getting anything stolen in spite of Panni with her watchful eyes and ears. I was lucky in that all the time on the road I never lost anything. Everybody and anybody were stealing. People, refugees, even military, didn't have anything. Nobody had food, so they would steal anything and exchange it for food. This was war and there were no laws. It didn't bother me to sleep under the open sky and to wake in the morning with snow all over my face and having to blow the snow away. I kept warm in my little bobcat fur coat, my riding boots, 2 pullovers and cap my mother had knit for me, and my warm riding gloves. There was no possibility of undressing because we had to guard the horses and carts. Sometimes I never had my boots off for 4 days at a time.

We crossed Transylvania which was between Hungary and Austria and kept pushing westward. The roads were still clogged with refugees and hay for the horses was in short supply but our own food was still in good supply. I remember we had to stop to feed and water the horses, and my cousins were cutting big, thick slices of ham and bread for everyone., and of course, we gave some to the fox terrier and Panni. We noticed the dogs were going off. They had gone into some nearby stables and dug a hole to put their ham in, putting it away for a rainy day. Poor darlings, we won't ever be back here. At that point a military man approached and told us to get out as fast as possible-the Russians are very close. They had put explosives in the railroad stations to blow them up so no one would find anything useful, and we were camped too close to the station. We finished eating in a hurry and spent the rest of the night in the woods under some trees.

As we neared the border to Austria, we came to a small village where we found some people who had a double occupation. In the daytime, they would help refugees, in the night they would shoot; heavens know if they were shooting the Russians, the Communists, the Germans, we don't know. They were called Partisans at that time. We still had the 11 farm carts and the 2 carriages so we offered one farm cart including the 2 horses and harness if they would guide us through the swamp and over the border. And the leader said "yes." You can see how honest that man was. He could have shot all of us and kept all the farm horses, but he accepted that one was his payment. He led us through the swamps which we never could have done alone. I remember I had my gun and Panni near me and my cigarettes. I was a big smoker then. I also had my Schnapps bottle with Hungarian Schnapps in it. Going over that dangerous road I said "the hell with it" and I pulled out the bottle to celebrate the crossing of the border. At that time there was no border closing, you just came over and you were in Austria. It was at that time, just one country. Once we got near the border, we could also travel during daylight hours.

And so we crossed the border on the first of April 1945 and went into the village of Lutendorf on Easter Sunday. We hurried through the town, hoping to avoid any interest in our carts and especially, the lovely Lippizans. Panni sat like a queen on top of the mattresses near me and surveyed it all with her regal eye and I was worried that they would remember us, but we had to stop as it was getting dark and we couldn't go any further. We stopped near a forest and hid our carts under the trees after covering them with branches. We fed the animals, and by then we were very short of hay. We were near a river and in order to get some water for them we had to carry the water at least 200 yards back to the horses and then go to fill the buckets again. My uncle's wife and his two young daughters along with the orchard gardener's wife and their daughter, went into a near-by peasant's home and asked if they could cook a soup there. We had our own potatoes, carrots, onions, and the pots to cook in. The women would peel the potatoes and clean the carrots and when my uncle, and my niece, who was doing man's work just like me, and a few of the other workers came into the house, we had soup to eat.

I had always painted as a child, and a painter always notices things. I can still see the thatched roof on the house I was walking into, little windows, low ceilings, plain floor, and on the wall an elaborate framed picture of Emperor Franz Joseph, the Austrian king. And when I looked towards the kitchen it was like an early painting of coal miners, dark and misty with smoke from the potato soup. I was hungry and cold and the steam, and the dark, and the faces moving over the stove and table under Franz Joseph's picture are still vivid in my mind.

Our horses were exhausted and the next day we arrived at a lovely 150-acre farm and asked the owner, a Swiss gentleman farmer, if we could stay for a day or two. He suggested we stay a couple of weeks as long as there was no danger, and he offered hay and hospitality. We looked around and nothing was plowed, and nothing was sown in the fields. All his horses and help had been taken. There was a huge old rock behind his house and big trees. Those trees made a beautiful circle for our farm carts that we put together in a star shape, and that is where Panni had her puppies.

As each puppy was born, the gardener took it down to the river to drown and bury it. It was war time and there was no way we could care for small puppies. Later in the night, Panni disappeared and when she came back she had a dead, wet puppy in her mouth. I will never forget her little face with sad eyes as she mourned for her puppies and did not understand what had happened. We stayed at the gentleman's farm for over 2 weeks, letting out horses rest from their quick getaway. We plowed his fields to get them ready for crops as a way of thanking him. Gradually, each day, we would take a pair of horses and work them 2 hours, give them a rest and take another pair. So he had his fields put in order and we repaid his hospitality.

Not only did Panni have her puppies during that rest, but my mare had a foal which we named Emigrant. Our orchard gardener found an old cart and the gentleman of the estate gave us permission to take it and so the gardener made a big cage with some boards on the little two-wheeled cart. That little cart was bound to my big heavy farm cart and whenever we started I said, "Emigrant, up" and the little foal would jump into the farm cart. We'd close the boards behind him and off we'd go. Whenever we stopped to feed the horses I just opened the back of the cart, and Emigrant jumped off, ran to his mother for a good suck of milk. That little horse knew exactly, of all the horses, which was his mother and we never had any trouble telling him to get back up into the cart.

After we had done all the work on the gentleman's farm and were preparing to push on, the gentleman came to my uncle and me because we were the ones leading the group; the others just did what we told them, and said" I will help you and tell you where to stop where there are friends of mine, a Baron so-and-so, and he will send you on to another safe spot." His friends were German military who he would contact to say we were on the way. And that is how we went from the 15' of April to the 6"' of May. Each contact would have hot water for our baths waiting, but I never slept in their homes. I never left the carts, horses, or the dogs. But I did enjoy a hot bath after not being out of my boots for several days. We had a lot of help on the road from people who knew we were coming, and it gave us a little comfort of being able to clean up. The Germans were very hospitable. They gave us tea and coffee and medicine for my niece's little boy. Don't make the mistake and think this was Hitler's SS because it wasn't. It was the classic old German military. There was a big difference. These were all people of good background, education, all that. And they helped us in as much as was possible.

One of my other mares had a foal born while we were on the move. The foal dropped out of the mother and we had to shoot it. The mother had to go on with everything hanging out of her because there was no stopping. As it was, it took us two days to get over the Radl Pass in Austria. It wasn't that high, but it was muddy and we still could not go on main roads. The only way to get the carts up a hill was with 6 horses. So we would put the horses on one cart, pull it up the hill, and bring the horses back down to bring up another cart. It took us, heaven knows how long, and was one of the largest problems we'd encountered.

We arrived on May 6"' in Carinthia. There were 2 governments, the Austrian government and the British government, but since I had been born in London and having my birth certificate with me, I asked to be under the protection of the British. I asked also that my relatives and workers be given the same protection so that they would not have to be sent to the refugee camp at Karintine. All we had to do is prove that we were working. Some people, frankly, were lazy and they did not want to work so they moved into a camp and they went every day with their soup plate and had something given to them and not have to do anything for it. I was a single woman with relatives, since my husband was back in Hungary. The rules said that any woman who is alone had to go into a camp, except if she worked so I went to a man who had an artist's shop, and I said, Please give me work." He said, "Do you draw?" When I said yes, he gave me pictures of people who had lost wives, husbands, children, and every week I went in with the pictures I had drawn and he gave me a stamp on

EISENSTADT

a paper proving that I was working for him. I didn't get anything for the drawings, but that stamp was enough to keep me out of a camp and give me a ration card for 850 calories a day. I had wanted to be a painter when I was a child and my father had first given an anatomy book of horses so I would learn to draw from the inside out. He had let me attend art classes at Notre Dame, near Budapest, and study under some of the leading Hungarian art tutors. I was lucky I had that experience to fall back on.

I also was working for an Austrian peasant, hoeing his fields after walking there for 2 miles. I was doing all the work and one day a week I would get a sack of apples, or beets, or potatoes or something for payment. They were honest, nice people. A man, his wife, and their 3 daughters, and an old uncle, and a crazy girl who was a servant there. Every day they had lunch at the family table and I had to eat with them. There was one big dish of corn meal and salad with bacon in it in another bowl. Everybody had a fork and they ate from those dishes. They had no iodine in the water and all the people, the father, mother, 3 daughters, the uncle and the crazy girl each had a big goiter and when anyone was talking it would wobble and I had to eat while looking at them. But I was hungry and I couldn't offend them. The servant girl would stare at me and the uncle would be pinching me on my bottom. I will never forget those meals, but I needed the extra food in any way I could get it.

Most refugees went into a camp so that they would get food and be taken care of, but, besides my family members, I also had the responsibility of my horses to think of and I wanted to keep them. I had all the stud books and each horse's, papers with me with us, and the horses were valuable. I had the possibility of speaking with the British since we lived in the British zone, so I showed him the letters and books. But the trouble was, there was no food for even the Austrian horses, so there seemed no possibility of keep any of them. Twenty eight horses, including the 4 carriage horses and several riding horses were sent to an island that the British had taken over. But eventually I had to sell them for potatoes and milk. The remainder of the horses were too weak and thin and so were sold to be butchered. I still had the loaded farm wagons stored in a stable nearby, but the riding carriages had been traded for food and medicine for my niece's little boy.

My uncle and myself had found a man, a brick layer, who needed help to build a large, 2 floor house, and he promised that if we helped him, for no money naturally, that he would rent us the top apartment. I knew how to mix mortar, to put bricks in cement like a brick layer, so I worked at it for a full summer, every weekend. And when we finished it he had a good stiff price which he rented it to us for, but we had a roof over our head. So, Panni and I had our own room. It was as big as one bed length, and a little more than that wide. I didn't have a bed in it. I used 4 boxes with a horse hair mattress on them, and I also had a table where I could do my drawing. I didn't have a cupboard to put clothes in, only a curtain to put things behind and that is where we lived for 3 years until we found another place in the small town of Lendorf.

In the meantime, Panni was eating like a countess. Our old gardener would go over every day to the agricultural farm where farm boys had been taught the basic knowledge of agriculture. The British had taken over this school and it was being used as a recovery place for soldiers before going home. So there was good British food for those soldiers. We couldn't get any for ourselves but the gardener would take a big 3 pound empty coffee can

every day and get it filled with sardines, ham, butter, white bread, and that is what Panni lived on. We looked at her food and drooled, but didn't dare eat it. There was very little food available for the refugees, and if you wanted potatoes you traded for it. I gave my black Persian fur coat to a peasant girl for 15 kilos of potatoes.

I had no more supplies to continue my drawings for the man I had first started with, so I went to a woman who worked at the British supply center to explain my problem. I told her that I hoped to earn my living as a painter if she could help me get the materials. She said, we can get you work, everyone here wants someone drawn or someone painted, and she was able to get me some colored pens from Italy, and then some Windsor Newton colored crayons from England. I had never worked with them before in my whole life, but I made up my mind to do something good. So in doing the colored crayon work I taught myself to do portraits by drawing over 200 of them in the 6 years I was there. I did different people and I could tell you stories of each family I did them for. It was very educational just to meet the people and they were all very nice to me. Of course, I would get 4 pieces of soap for a portrait, or a half a pound of butter, and I was fortunate to get it.

In order to pay the rent, I did Christmas cards, or post cards, and my uncle would take them and sell them and we would all put any money together, like a commune. My uncle, his wife and 2 daughters, his daughter- in -law, my niece and her baby, and myself and Panni, all lived in 2 rooms and a kitchen. That was it. They were very small as I told you, and I was the lucky one with only Panni to share my room with. But I felt protected with family, and we all worked at whatever we could. And when my sons came out of Hungary they would be able to stay in my little room with me.

For 2 years I didn't know if my sons were even alive. I had written the British Red Cross but it took 2 years to get the answer. Even then, everything had already changed. Louis had been fighting in the Hungarian army against the Russians. Actually, the Communists, and at the time that I had arrived in Austria, he should have been sent home from where the troops were. He had been wounded 3 times and still had a fever when I left Hungary. But the Americans had taken over and they put the soldiers in trains like you would transport animals. Louis knew right away that he was not going home, but instead, was shipped through Hungary to Rumania as a prisoner. He had the opportunity in the middle of Hungary to throw a piece of paper out with my name and address on it and saying he was on his way to the east. So I now knew that Louis was on his way to a Russian prison. If he ever arrived alive, I didn't know at that time.

Andrew was in military school in Hungary and when the war was over, he went to the American forces and asked for protection. However, the Americans sent the whole group of boys to France, near Bordeaux , as prisoners. More than 30,000 Hungarians died of hunger in French camps. The French themselves did not have enough to eat so why should they feed the Hungarians? Andrew lost 3 of his very good friends from hunger and he was so weak he couldn't stand without the aid of crutches. When the Americans finally gained control, they put everyone still alive in wagons and sent them back to Hungary. There, some were sent on to Russia, and the very ill, like Andrew, was left in Hungary to recover from hepatitis. He was only a kid of 21 and that was his fate. Tom was only 15 years old when the Germans took all the young boys to Germany so that they wouldn't fall into Russian hands and God bless them for it. Because at least they took them out so they wouldn't work in some mine

in Russia. But in 1947 the American forces in Germany sent the young men back to Hungary and he was put into prison there.

I had finally heard from Louis and he was released from Russian captivity in 1948 and on the 13th of July he arrived back in Budapest and on the 20th of August he crossed the border into Austria without even telling his father, just giving him an extra hug because you couldn't say what you were going to do. If somebody would drop a word you would get into trouble. He arrived in Austria and I received a letter from the Karintine refugee camp EISENSTADT telling me he had arrived and they were keeping him in quarantine for 3 weeks. I wrote back telling him to write to me when you are coming. His answer was "If you promise me not to make a scene I will be arriving with the train the afternoon of 9th of September." Panni had last seen him in February 1945, 3 years and 5 months ago. I'm waiting for the train and it comes and people are getting off. Suddenly I hear a whistle and Panni shot out running between all the people to Louis and jumps into his arms. She recognized his voice and whistle after 3 and a half years.

I had written letters home to my mother and my husband, but they both instructed me not to come back. Finally, in 1948, Christmas, Tom wrote me that he was out of the Communist prison, and he and Andrew knew where I was and they would try to come out. Tom's head had been shaved in prison and he had to wear a fur hat so no one would see his head, but he and Andrew tried to come over to Austria under the pretext that they were smugglers of paprika and cigarettes. They didn't say goodbye to Charles, their father, because they couldn't let anyone know they were leaving. Somehow, in winter and snow, they started out, but ended up lost Andrew told Tom to stay in place and he would find out where they were. But Tom got frantic after hearing dogs and voices, and going westward toward the border, slowly crawled past the Russian's guard tower and escaped to Austria. But when Andrew returned, he had no way of knowing what happened to Tom. He waited there near the border for almost a week trying to find out if his brother had been caught. He couldn't go home because someone would be suspicious and he would be reported and locked up. He finally went back through Hungary to the East and stayed and worked at a friend's doing butchering and chopping wood. Tom arrived in Carinthia on the 23" of December without knowing if Andrew had been caught and was still alive. Finally at the end of February I had a post card saying he was in the east and I knew where he was staying. Louis then sent Andrew some money to get out, but by then the borders were mined and Andrew eventually went to stay with his father instead. He was to also meet and marry the love of his life and never did leave Hungary.

My husband had to move out of his home when the Communist government took it over. So he went back to Kermler where his brother was. He lived there but was very unhappy because they took even his room away and put him to live with a stranger. Now everything was taken. He wanted very badly that I should come home as he really didn't want to live. He didn't want to eat and he just gave up. Andrew was with him when he died and his last words to Andrew were "Tell your mother I loved her very much."

I was doing everything I could do to keep Panni safe and well and that was how I met Dr. Caravenna and his wife Herta. Dr. Caravenna was a veterinarian who was from an old Italian family and was really a count. He and his wife were first cousins and loved dogs. We became very good friends and it was Dr. Caravenna who recommended that since Panni was now

almost 8 years old, that if I ever had hopes of breeding her again, it would have to be soon. Life was easing a little now that the worries over my sons was over temporarily, so Dr. Caravenna put me in touch with the Kennel Club of Vienna so I could get information on other Vizslas in the area. They told me of one male that was not registered with the International Kennel Club of Austria, but was owned by the Hofbauers. When I contacted Mr. Hofbauer, he explained that he had a Vizsla named Betyar from the estate of Count Festivich in Hungary. Mr. Hofbauer told me how he had been an Austrian officer and had stopped at the Festivich's kennel during the war where he saw a litter of Vizsla puppies. The forester on the grounds told him what a pity it was that they never knew when the Russians would come and the owners would order the dogs to be shot rather than have them fall into the hands of the Communist invaders. So Officer Hofbauer picked up a puppy that was so affectionate that he just had to have him. The forester told him to take the puppy as he would be lost anyway, so Hofbauer put the puppy under his coat and left. Returning the next day in the hopes of retrieving the pup's papers he found no one there, and no dogs or puppies. With the Austrian army in retreat, Officer Hofbauer returned home to Vienna.

After hearing the story from the Hofbauers, I told them that I had once been a neighbor of Count Festivich's and I knew their dogs. They had quite a bit of white on them, but were exquisite hunters. They did not have very pretty heads; too broad for my liking, and when they brought Betyar for me to meet, I knew he was a Festivich Vizsla. Mrs. Hofbauer took Panni, along with her pedigree and Hungarian registration back to Vienna with her and managed to get both Betyar and Panni registered in the Austrian International Book. It was thought better to register Betyar with no papers rather than false ones. The kennel club was very understanding since so many owners had fled without paper identification on Dogs of many breeds. Betyar was registered as #1 Vizsla and Panni XV as #2, and when their litter was born on January 19,1949 in my funny little house in Lendorf it was a time for celebration. There were 7 puppies and I gave them all a name starting with C, since it was Panni's third litter. Four of the puppies eventually went to people in Germany, one to Italy, and the Hofbauers kept a little girl and so did 1. 1 named my little girl Csitri and I had hopes of taking her to America when and if I ever got there.

Immigration, however, had other ideas when I finally heard I would be leaving Austria in 1951. 1 was told I could bring the rifles I had brought from Hungary, but no dogs. Immigration officials were famous for being hard to deal with and separated families indiscriminatingly. I would be able to go to America, first to Detroit, and then Omaha. Louis was being sent to Canada, and Tom to Montana. No one had a choice then but we were all eventually, just 2 years later, to live near each other in California.

And so both Panni Xv and Csitri were to stay in Austria. Csitri went to live with Count Pietri at Schloss Loosdorf in Austria, with the request that when I got settled and could afford to have a dog shipped to me in America, he would have her bred to the best dog available and send me the best daughter of hers. Panni Xv was 14 years old when I left Austria and I asked Dr. Caravenna to put her to sleep when she got too ill and could not enjoy life. He gave her shots of serum from snake poisons to keep her young and she lived past 17 years of age. She turned very gray on her head but was a very happy dog. Past 17 she did get a stroke and carried her head sideways and couldn't swallow very well so she was put to sleep.

And so my tale ends. Sometimes sad, sometimes exciting but always with memories of everything left behind, lost, and forever gone because of the war. But a new life, a new country, safety for my 2 sons who also have a new life. I am still in pain from the hard life in Carinthia. I had injured a knee very badly while hoeing potatoes for the Austrian farmer, and that continues to ache. But I face the pain and know it was all worth it.

Marie D. Coffman
1978