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Epilogue: Expatriate's Odyssey Isn't Over

With the war just 200 yards away from their refuge in Bazik, and with their house in Bosanski Samac occupied by Serbs, Bosnia was no place for Kemal Mehinovic and his family.

By mid-1995, Kemal, his wife, Fazila, and their two children had obtained refugee status in the U.S. and were on a plane bound for Salt Lake City, Utah, a city and state they had never heard of.

They arrived in Salt Lake City on July 12 with nothing more than what they carried on the plane. Like the tens of thousands of Bosnians now in this country, the Mehinovic story is a modern reprisal of early U.S. history: Europeans fleeing across the Atlantic Ocean in search of political and religious freedom.

Today, Kemal works as a maintenance man for a Salt Lake City property owner. He owns a home and a four-plex. Fazila works for USANA, manufacturer and distributor of personal-care products.

Language remains their biggest barrier, but their children have adapted into American culture almost seamlessly.

Elvira, or "Elly," as she likes to be called, turns 18 this year. She will graduate from Highland High School then go into the hair-styling business. Damir, 21, works for a window manufacturer and plans to study computer programming someday soon.

Neither Elly nor Damir have designs on returning to Bosnia, a plan that separates them sharply from their parents.

Kemal, whose house and business, a bakery, were taken away by Serb intruders in 1992, is set on returning to reclaim what belongs to him.

It is an ambitious and faraway goal, given that his town is within the unsettled Serb-controlled part of Bosnia, where peace is kept largely by a 28,000-troop international military force.

Kemal's repatriation to Bosnia is further complicated by his pursuit of a federal lawsuit alleging war crimes against a Bosnian Serb now living in Atlanta. Also, he is expected to

testify in the trials of some of the men indicted for war crimes before the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia at The Hague, Netherlands.

His testimony, in Atlanta and The Hague, likely will make him a pariah to his Serb neighbors in his hometown, but Kemal says justice is the only way to make things right again in Bosnia.

-- Brent Israelsen and Karl Cates