

T a t a ' s  
T a t t e r e d  
T a l e s

Part 2A

George Berzsenyi

My Forebears and Kin

# TATA'S TATTERED TALES

## THE FAMILY FOREST OF MY FOREBEARS AND KIN

**PART 1:**

**THEM AND US**

**PARTS 2A, 2B, 2C:**

**MORE ABOUT THEM**

**PART 3:**

**MORE ABOUT US**

**PART 4:**

**MORE ABOUT ME**



**EGYHÁZASKESZÉNYI**

**BERZSENYI**

**COATS  
OF  
ARMS**



**SZENTLÁSZLÓI & BALATONFÜREDI**

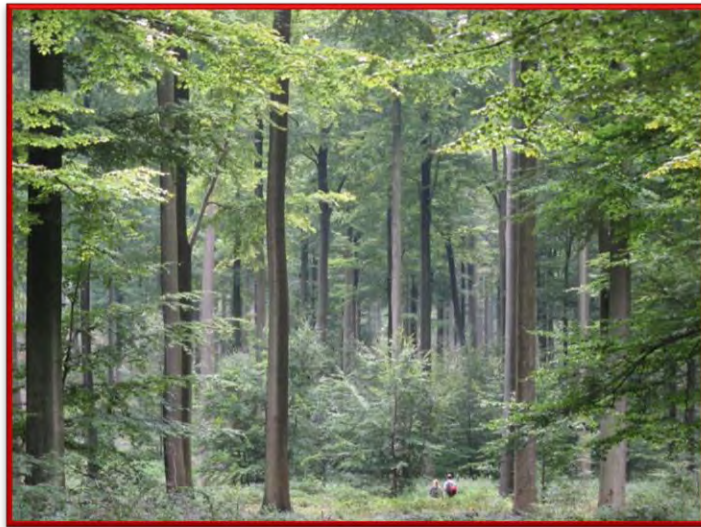
**VARGHA**



**PART 2A**

**MORE ABOUT THEM**

**THE FAMILY FOREST OF  
MY FOREBEARS AND KIN**



**BY  
DR. GEORGE BERZSENYI**

**2022**



**Part 2A**  
**More About Them**

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## Preface

**Part 2A** will be a continuation of **My Genealogy in Part 1**. In it I have written **More about them**, meaning both **My Forebears** and **Kin**, in agreement with the subtitle of the book.

Having barely introduced my closest relatives in **Part 1**, I will start **Part 2A** with a much more detailed introduction of my parents, my aunts and uncles, and will have a longer piece about my brother too. I will also write about his son, Zoli, who is your only 1<sup>st</sup> cousin on my side of the family, and I will write about your 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> cousins too. Originally, I meant to let you find your own cousins, figuring that the exercise will serve as a good introduction to the labors of genealogy. But then I recognized that it was easier for me to do so, since the information was already there in my findings, calling only for a bit of organizing thereof. After all, your cousins are my kin too, and I knew many of them already. Nevertheless, I can't forget how difficult it was for me to find **all** of my 3<sup>rd</sup> cousins, and hence I am impressed by the fact that I found all of your 4<sup>th</sup> cousins too, even if **only on my side of the family**.

In **Part 2A**, I will also introduce some other Vargha, Svastits, Gyarmathy and other non-Berzsenyi relatives, leaving the Berzsenyis to **Part 2B**. I will also write about some of my other ancestral families and pay 'Tribute' to various members of the family, including my parents, Great-aunt Mariska néni, paternal Uncle Laci bácsi, Cousin Hugi (Lenke) and others. Moreover, I will write a bit more about Great-great-grandfathers Dániel Berzsenyi, Lajos Vargha and János Svastits too.

While I have extensive family trees on my other ancestral families too, only the egyházasberzsenyi Berzsenyi family received the necessary amount of scrutiny to assure that its family trees are free of huge mistakes. Therefore, I felt confident to put into the **Family Forest** on our **BerzsenyiFamily.net** 13 Berzsenyi trees, representing various branches and sub-branches of the **egyházasberzsenyi Berzsenyi family**. In **Book 2B**, I will announce their presence and explain how they can be downloaded. Hopefully, in **Book 2C**, I will also be able to announce that the Vargha, Svastits, Juhász, Gyarmathy, Bárány, Barcza and other ancestral families also have such well-researched trees that can be downloaded for further studies. But a fair amount of work needs to be done on them prior to their display.

Which brings me to the motto of the present volume,

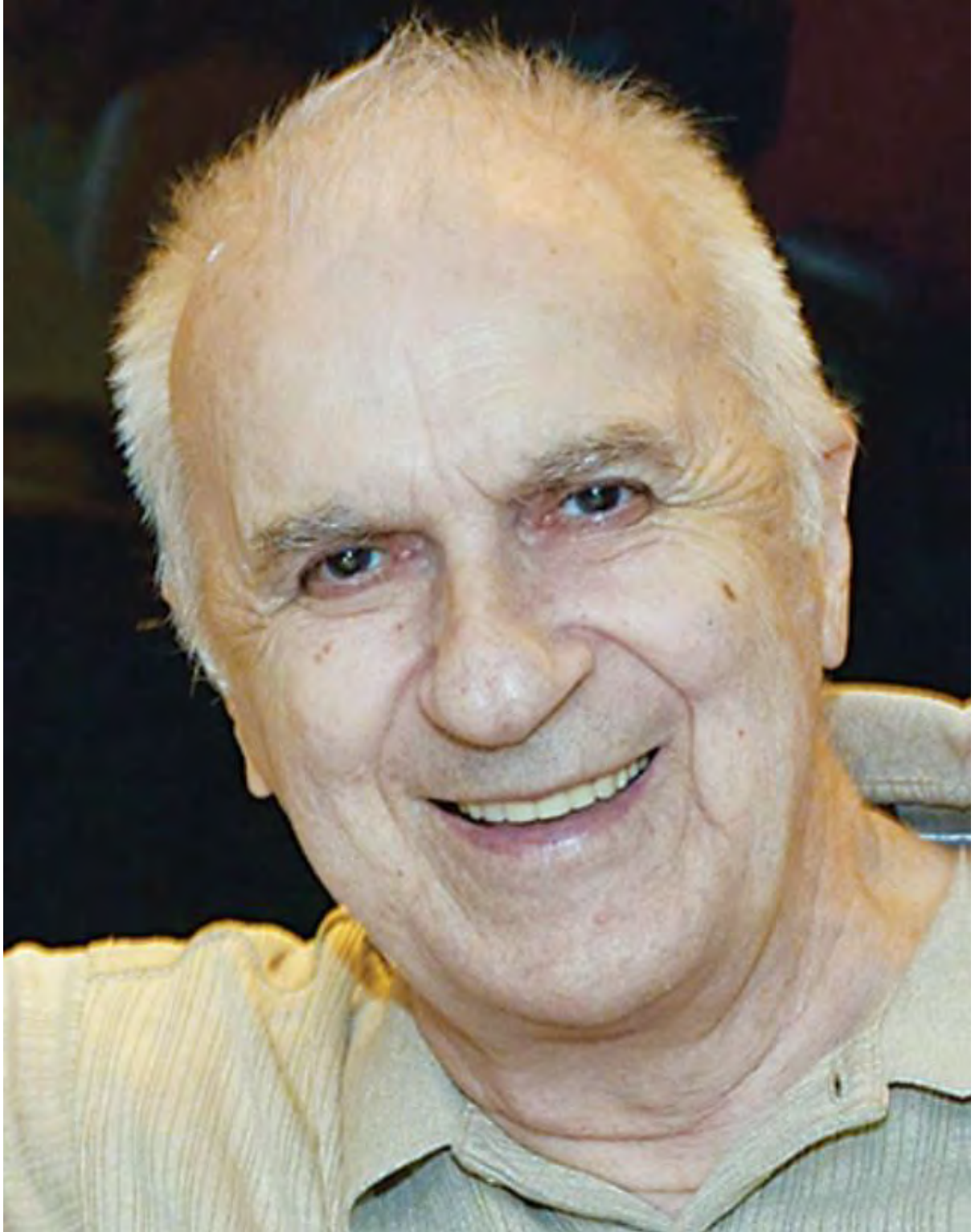
### **Jézus nevében!**

The literal translation of the above ejaculation is "In the name of Jesus". My mother used to say it before any new venture, like a trip, and I am happy to 'report' that my children, and even some of my grandchildren are in the habit of saying it. I wish I could take credit for it, but the credit belongs much more to the four of you, Adam, Lydia, Eric and Daniel. Your Nagymama would be very pleased.

Enjoy what's here and continue my toils if the inspiration hits you!

Tata





**TATA**

## My father, Miklós de Vargha

My father was born on the 18<sup>th</sup> of December 1895 at 5 pm in Rákospalota, which is part of Budapest nowadays, located next to Újpest to the east. His birth was reported by the midwife, who delivered him at Vasut utca 57, where the family lived at the time. His father was a civil servant at the railroads; his parents were both Roman Catholics. His father was 29, while his mother was 21 years old. He was named Miklós and was their fourth child. Though I have a copy of his birth certificate, I have yet to locate his baptismal certificate; hopefully, that will give me more information about the family too, like his godparents.

Since my grandfather, Jenő Vargha died at age 42, when the youngest of his 8 children was barely 5 months old, his widow must have been extremely devastated not only emotionally, but financially as well. The oldest of the children was only 16 at the time, with my father barely 12 years of age. Hence it was a godsend that my grandfather's 5<sup>th</sup> cousin, Dr. Gábor Vargha came to the rescue. He got my father and probably his older brother, Emil László into military school, and served as my father's guardian from then on. I have no idea how my grandmother managed to make ends meet with 6 more children at the house, since my father never talked about it and my cousins have no information either. By that time, the family lived in Solymár, another small place near Budapest (west of Buda), and I imagine that her stipend as a widow was very small. The two older girls (of ages 15 and 13 in 1908, when my grandfather died) had to settle for less education, and I am sure that they helped with the finances as soon as they found jobs – Margit as a kindergarten teacher and Marianne as a secretary. Nevertheless, it must have been difficult for them all.

Prior to military school in Marosvásárhely (presently called Targu Mures in Rumania; we stopped there briefly in 1978), he finished 6 grades in Budapest (4 years of elementary school followed by 2 years of gimnázium / high school). After completing his "alreál" studies in Marosvásárhely, he went on to Kismarton (presently called Eisenstadt in Austria) to complete his "főreál" studies, which was the equivalent of graduation from high school. From there he went to the military academy of Trischkirchen (south of Vienna), where he specialized in artillery. He was commissioned a lieutenant on August 17, 1918. Following that, he spent some time on the Italian front until the end of WWI.

However, the end of the war was not the end of fighting in Hungary, since the Rumanians and the Czechs tried to take advantage of the fact that Hungary capitulated and forced their way towards the capital with hopes of occupying the country. Hence my father joined the then Red Army of Hungary and fought against the invaders first in the north, and then by the river Tisza, where he became a prisoner of war of the Romanians in Arad (now also in Romania) in August 1919. He was released in December, and returned to his unit, which was in Miskolc at that time. He also served in Budapest (1923-24), Kecskemét (1925-27), Jutas (1928-32, as an instructor of non-commissioned officers), Budapest (1933-37), Székesfehérvár (1937-39), and finally Szombathely (1939-1945). He was also stationed in Hajmáskér from time to time, where he taught horseback riding, and spent some time in Vienna, where the Lipizzaner horses of Hungarian origin were trained in the famous Spanish Riding School. Though his promotions were rather slow at first, he became a first lieutenant in 1922, a captain in 1928, a major in 1940, and a lieutenant colonel in 1942. Following that, he also passed all the "hurdles" to be promoted to colonel, but the appointment never became a reality. I suspect his unwillingness to cooperate with

the newly emerging pro-Nazi regime was largely responsible for that. In fact, I remember two of his clashes with Hungarian Arrow Party members (our variety of the Nazis), and my mother's concerns about the possible consequences; fortunately, he didn't get into trouble over them. But that's not to say that he never got into trouble for his convictions and spirited behavior!

Once he told me about the hoisting of the Hungarian flag over the main building of the military academy where he studied. I think it happened in Mödling – close to Trischkirchen, and I suppose some of his classes were there. My father was an excellent gymnast, and hence he was elected by his 3 or 4 Hungarian friends to climb to the top of the tower with the flag. It caused a huge turmoil among the Austrian authorities, and his guardian, Gábor bácsi, had to go to lots of trouble to keep him from being expelled. Fortunately, by then Gábor bácsi was already in the Upper Chamber of the Parliament, and hence had a lot of political clout.

Later he also had some other run-ins with his superiors, at one time resulting even in military prison for 6 weeks. He also tried to get out of the military a couple of times: once to become an engineer (after completing 2 or 3 semesters) and once to go to law school (again, after enrolling for a semester or two while in Budapest). And he even had some conflict with the authorities over the spelling of his name. He was forced to document his family's tradition to spell the name with an "h", his inherited right to the double forename "szentlászlói és (and) balatonfüredi", and the "lófő" rank of his forebears, which was granted to them in Erdély (Transylvania, presently part of Romania) and was equivalent to the rank "baron" in the rest of Hungary. At times, he also used the letter L (with a period) to abbreviate 'Literatus', another title earned by our forebear. Much of that documentation is still around (at Zolti's), and I made good use of it in my genealogical studies.

Though I don't have documentation of that, he told me that while in military school he once won the gymnastics competition of Austro-Hungary's military schools. He was particularly good on the rings, and in addition to the over-all competition, he was the winner on the rings too. At that time, there were probably as many as 4 to 6 military academies in the Empire, hence his accomplishment was truly remarkable. Sadly, after WWI when he thought about returning to gymnastics and possibly training for the upcoming Olympics, he came across one of Hungary's future Olympic champions as he was training and recognized that he had lost too many years to be competitive once again.

In addition to gymnastics and horseback riding, my father was also an excellent swimmer, being among the first to swim across the Balaton at its narrowest point. He was also a superb diver, who could still perform some complicated dives at age 70, to be witnessed by your mother too. As a young officer, he also managed to scrimp enough to buy a racing horse, but since he had no money to hire a jockey, he had to lose enough weight to ride the horse himself. I don't think that his military superiors were happy with that either, since between the two wars nothing was tolerated that would hurt the excellent image of Hungary's military officers. In fact, they were not allowed to marry anyone who could not assist in financing a lifestyle appropriate for an officer, and hence my mother's family had to pledge a fairly large sum of money to the government for that purpose before he was allowed to marry her. Fortunately, the Berzsenyi family was fairly well off at that time (1935), so the marriage could take place without delay. That is, after 3 years of engagement, which was unbelievably long. I think it was my mother, who kept postponing the wedding, but I don't know for sure. I do know that he became a loving husband and a wonderful father, but he may have married a bit too late to shed all his habits picked up as a confirmed bachelor.

### My father – a photo addendum

Most unfortunately, I have no picture of my father from his youth, and there are no photos of him with his seven brothers and sisters either. In fact, the only pictures I have with any of his siblings are the ones I took, when Daniel and I were in Hungary and visited with his sister, Kató néni there. Though I don't know when the following pictures were taken, I suspect that they were taken at about the same time. Hopefully, his rank will give us some clues.



In the first picture, as well as in the one on the right, he was wearing a monocle, which was popular in those days. While most of these pictures show him in uniform, he always preferred to be in civilian outfit, and I remember well how he changed out of his uniform the minute he got home during my childhood in Szombathely. He dressed most elegantly, a trait he kept throughout his life. His taste in everything was truly immaculate.



## Parents

## Pictures of father

The last picture I have from my father's youth shows him in tennis outfit, but I have no idea where was it taken, who his friend was and who was the little girl in the photo. In spite of the fact that he was a truly outstanding sportsman in a variety of fields, this is the only such photo of him until many years later, when he was teaching horseback riding in Texas. In addition to gymnastics, in which he excelled in military school, he was among the first to swim across Lake Balaton at Tihany, he was a superb hunter, and when he couldn't afford to pay for a jockey to ride his horse at the races, he went on a diet and became light enough to qualify as a jockey. He was an excellent diver too, and even when he was 70, he could execute many difficult dives. He also skied, and probably excelled in a number of other sports too. Unfortunately, neither my brother nor myself inherited his talents, but, fortunately, my kids and grandkids follow in his and my mother's footsteps in many such endeavors. And there is hope for the next generations too!



In the next photo, he is shown in our apartment with me in his lap in Szombathely, where he even had a darkroom for his photography, and hence it is an even sadder fact that hardly any of his hundreds of pictures survived the devastation of the Russian occupation. Most of them were ground into the floor by the muddy boots of the soldiers, and none of his several albums survived.

I also remember that when my father was on sick leave, recovering from a stomach operation, one of his young officers came to pay his respect. As he was leaving, he used a Nazi-style salute. I remember my father yelling at him, telling him never to use such a salute in his presence. My mother worried for hours that the officer will report my father's anti-fascist behavior, and he will be court martialed.



A much more pleasant memory from those days is that my father used to have soft-boiled eggs for breakfast, and time and again, he would be dipping a piece of toast into the egg and offering me a bite. At other times, I would get a small sugar cube dipped into his coffee. I greatly enjoyed both treats!

The next two pictures were taken in Nikla sometime during the war. My mother took us there time and again, and my father joined us whenever he could.

In the first picture, I am in my father's lap, Zolti is held by our grandmother, while on the right of Mariska néni is József Baráth, the Catholic priest of Nikla, who later gave me First Communion.



## Parents

## Pictures of father

Still some years later I also served as an altar boy under him, but only for a short time. Once I forgot to bring out the missal at the end of the mass, and that ended my short-lived service in that capacity!

The second photo shows me with my father.

The next picture I have of my father is from the sad days of communism, when he was deported to the village of Füzesgyarmat in 1951. He is on the right, working in the field. I was supposed to accompany him there, but my mother's petition was successful, and I was allowed to join her in Nikla. Hence, after a year in Budapest, I went back for the 7th and 8th grades to Nikla and graduated from grade school there.



Some time ago, I have been corresponding with János Fekete of Füzesgyarmat, who was in charge of the historical society there, and I received some information from him concerning those days. In particular, he sent me the list of the deportees, as well as an account written by one of them about the conditions there.

Next, I have a picture from 1958, when we were already here in America. He is sitting on the porch at Pipet bácsi's place, where we were living for a period of time, renting the third floor in his house. Two years later my father also bought Pipet bácsi's Buick Limited; he is shown with his prized possession in the next photo. Finally, from our days in Saint Louis, I have a photo showing him with some of our Hungarian friends, Gyöngyi and Jóska Kiss and Laci Varju in a restaurant. Gyöngyi and Jóska died, but I am still in touch with Laci.



## Parents

## Pictures of father

I will feature next a number of photos from his horseback riding and teaching days in Ft. Worth, with some commentary to follow. The second photo clearly is the result of double exposure, but a favorite of mine. His stance in the middle picture below was typical when he was teaching.



He was a superb rider and a fearless jumper, who was loved and respected by all of his students, as well as their parents.

With Adam's help I managed to get in contact with one of his favorite students, Laurie McDonald, who is shown here as a little girl. Adam saw her in Houston, and years later she visited us in Pine Junction and in Shorewood too. I am still in touch with Laurie, and we look forward to her next visit.



## Parents

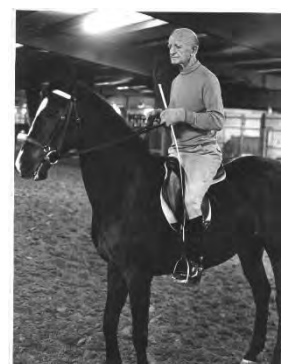
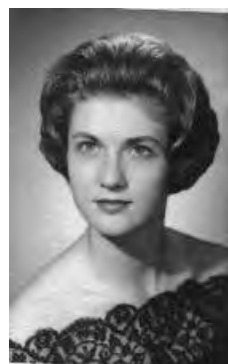
## Pictures of father

My father was a born teacher when it came to 'English-style' horseback riding, and would have had many more students if the sport was a less expensive one. But, in general, his pupils had to have a horse, whose price and upkeep were costly. Thus, only the very rich could afford it, and it was not the 'in-thing' among them either. Western-style riding was a lot more popular in Texas. In addition to Laurie, Madelyn Leonard was an outstanding student of his, so much so that he had hopes for her to become an Olympian. She is shown walking with him below, as well as in a separate photo lower on this page.



He even had ideas of teaching me how to ride, but I was not at all educable in that field. My dear wife got some lessons too, but both of us were too busy to think about it seriously. Moreover, we knew that we could never afford such a hobby.

On the sides my father is shown on his beloved Lamsidal, which was his first horse while teaching in Fort Worth, mostly at the old Cross Stables there, where he worked closely with George Irvin, who rented the stables.





To continue this picturesque report on my father's teaching of dressage and jumping, I display here two more pictures showing him with two ponies, which he used when teaching younger students the art of riding. As evidenced here too, most of his students were girls.



Next I want to share with you Laurie's reminiscences of my father, which I reprinted below, along with a photo of her as she is sailing a fence:

**Laurie's account:** *Here are some memories for you from the perspective of a Forth Worth teenager. At age nine when I first met your father, I remember quite frightened by him because he was so different from anyone else I knew. At the same time, however, I sensed how absolutely gentle he was. Everything about horseback riding and horsemanship pleased him immensely. As a teacher, he was slow and methodical. To learn to ride a horse, first you had to learn how to take care of the horse and your riding equipment, from brush, curry comb, and hoof pick, to saddle-soaping the saddle and bridle after each ride. Shame on you if you came to your lesson with dirty boots! You'd think all this trouble and responsibility would discourage any young person from wanting to ride, much less own a horse, but it was your father's presentation of the gestalt of riding that made it so appealing.*



*As far as actual instruction, with regard to the physics of dressage and jumping, he preferred demonstration over verbalization. He did have two favorite expressions, "ride like a tiger", and "sit soft", which came out sounding like "seat soft" and confused me at first, because in English riding, the position of posture you take in the saddle is referred to as your "seat". Physically I was a slow learner, so it wasn't until I was a freshman in college (and after almost ten years of riding lessons!) that I really understood what he meant by those locutions. I won't attempt to explain them here, for they are among those elusive curiosities that cannot exactly be described in words.*

*Your father made his students reach a certain level of riding expertise on what's called a lunging rein, which is like a ten foot long leash that the instructor holds and the horse and rider travel in*

*a circle around him. (The horse is coaxed with a coach whip). For what seemed like years, I rode on the lunge rein on a saddle with no stirrups and was made to perform all kinds of scary maneuvers to train my muscles for real riding. My most favorite exercise was rotating in the saddle while the horse was walking. Moving counterclockwise (my preferred direction of rotation) required throwing the right leg right to left over the horse's neck, sitting side-saddle for a few seconds to stabilize, then throwing the left leg over the horse's hindquarters while sliding a little in the saddle to cover that vast distance. This was the most treacherous component of the exercise. Once having accomplished this, getting back to the start was relatively easy. Trotting lent a whole new set of obstacles to this endeavor, and I never did master this one comfortably. Your father also made me lie back onto the horse's hindquarters, my head bouncing to the beat of the horse's walk, and this always made me feel like I had lost complete control of any riding ability I might have gained.*

*One of my favorite things your father did during this training period was to put a quarter in between my leg and the saddle, then challenge me to hold the quarter in place while the horse was trotting. It was always disappointing to see the shiny quarter slip off the saddle into the dirt, but this I did eventually master; and I must say, I had the best "seat" in the trot of any other rider at the stable.*

*Your father owned two outstanding horses, one named Lamsidal and the other named Rouge Montagne. Lamsidal, I believe, was a reject thoroughbred racehorse and a bit too spirited for my tastes (and abilities), but wonderful to watch when your father rode him. Your father had perfect form and his horses were impeccably trained. If you have ever seen the Lipizzaner stallions perform at the Spanish Riding School in Vienna (in my case, through the miracle of satellite broadcast), and if you have observed that the signals given to the horses (or "aids", as they are called) to perform certain maneuvers are practically invisible, that is the quality of horsemanship your father possessed. I know he was involved at the School at some period of his life, and I would love to know more about that. I wonder if he is included in an archive there; if there are riders who remember him. It would definitely be worth the time and price of a correspondence!*

*I remember watching him jump Lamsidal one day and thinking that the saddle and the bridle were superfluous; he was so poised, his position was so perfect. His feet came out of the stirrups while the horse sailed over the jump, but instead of struggling to regain the stirrups, which for many riders are like their moorings to the horse, he maintained his position and let the stirrups slide back onto his feet of their own accord. At age 66 he was fearless. He told me about being thrown from a horse and breaking his collar bone (during the War?), and how a rider must mount his horse again immediately or be overtaken by a permanent fear of a horse.*

*After a riding lesson, he would always buy a coke for himself and one for me. He disliked carbonation, so with his thumb over the opened bottle, he would shake it sufficiently and then slice his thumb off the lip. Of course, at least half of the coke would end up in the dirt, but he preferred this to drinking it "with gas". Was this a personal preference, a Hungarian preference? When I visited in 1992, the cokes served in Budapest were always warm and fizz-less... He would conclude a lesson with a (filterless) cigarette that he always smoked overhanded, i.e. the cigarette between his thumb and forefinger, rather than between the forefinger and the middle finger. Very urbane. And he always wore his watch with the face on the inside of his wrist. Very practical. He walked with a certain economy of movement that no one else I knew possessed. Very elegant.*

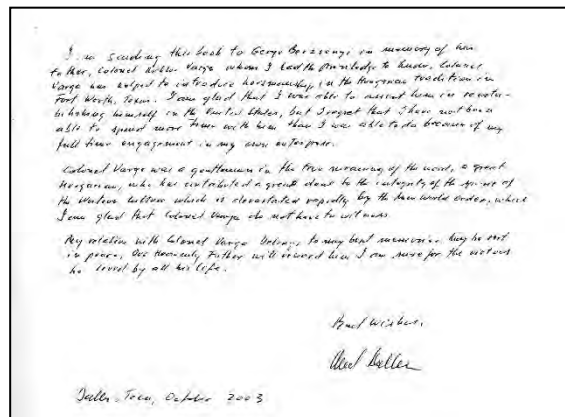
To complete the present account, I will have yet another couple of pictures featuring Laurie on her 2006 visit with us in Colorado and on her 2015 visit with us in Wisconsin:



In Pine Junction, CO Adam was with us, while in Shorewood, WI Daniel joined us. And we had Laurie's childhood friend, Susan, who is shown in the photo with Laurie and me on the right. Susan lives in Chicago, and drove from there to bring Laurie here. Dani had to go back to work after having lunch with us, and hence didn't get into the horsepictures. Nevertheless, he became the recipient of a wonderful gift by Laurie, a pristine copy of the *Berzsenyi Emlékkönyv*, a massive book on the life and works of our famous ancestor published in 1976 on the 200th anniversary of his birth. Laurie bought it in Nikla, when she visited there some years ago. She also wrote a screenplay, entitled *Piros Madonna* about a horse with that name (piros means red in English), featuring my father as the horse's trainer, Colonel Berzsenyi. Laurie gave a copy of it to Adam, and I treasure it among my other memorabilia.



Partially prompted by the resurfacing of Laurie and in an attempt to recapture my father's magic, some years ago I contacted Paul Decleva, the man who invited my father to Ft. Worth to teach horseback riding. By then, Paul was an old man too, but he remembered my father well, and he sent me a copy of his own memoirs with the following dedication: "Colonel Vargha was a gentleman in the true meaning of the word, who has contributed a great deal to the integrity of the spirit of the Western culture. My relation to Colonel Vargha belongs to my best memories. May he rest in peace. Our Heavenly Father will reward him, I am sure, for the virtues he lived by all his life." Paul too was a former Hungarian army officer, who learned about my father through Kató, my father's niece. I reproduced on the right his very sweet lines of dedication. His book is mostly about his own exploits in the oil business, written for his family.



Kay and I also visited with Evelyn S. Vogel, whose father, Bennett L. Smith, was a close associate of my father, and whose lovely daughters took

years of riding lessons from him. Unbeknownst to me, Bennett Smith, along with Charles Osborne (another outstanding trainer of horses and riders) and my father were preparing a set of instructions for young riders. Though it never appeared in publication, the material was well-preserved on tape and was transferred to 7 CDs by Evelyn, who was kind enough to give me a copy thereof. Though not a rider myself, I listened to them with fascination, admiring the expertise that went into their work. They addressed all aspects of horsemanship in the style of Socrates via well thought-out questions and precise, well-developed answers. I listened to all 7 CDs, which contain many hours of expert discussions by the three elderly gentlemen, and I was most impressed by their presentation. It was indeed the right kind of material for an excellent book. I was also happy to hear my father's voice again, and to recognize how good his English was when it came to his field of expertise. Unfortunately, we were too busy with our studies to take advantage of his expertise and learn horse-back riding from him. Your Mom would have liked it and would have been good at it.

Of all the superb students, Madelon Leonard Bradshaw was one of my father's favorites. She was a bit older than most of the others and was incredibly talented and hard-working. In spite of my father's demanding style of teaching, she stayed with him for years. Not long ago, I came across a letter written by my mother in 1970 relating the fact that Madelon was back, after giving birth to a daughter, and that my father was most excited about that. A couple of years ago, Kay and I visited Madelon, and were happy to learn that she was about to become a grandmother. Her memories of my father were very sweet.

In addition to the ones named above, many other former students of his come to mind, like Kate Johnson and Dr. Beasley's little daughter, but I have yet to contact them. Hopefully, I will still have a chance to contact them, and they will forgive me for not writing more about them too.



I close this section with some personal memories of my father's teaching by featuring a photo of Kay on horseback. She was a natural and would have been a great student, but with graduate studies and associated teaching duties she didn't have time for such pleasures. On the other hand, I was a total misfit on horseback, and hence, it would have been a waste of his time for my father to teach me.

I felt a lot more secure on my rocking horse!

Hence, I continued to admire my father's teaching from afar.



## **A salute to my father**

I have been planning such a write-up about my father for a long time. And a similar one about my mother too, in case you are wondering, Dani Boy. But the latter has to wait till my thoughts crystallize a bit more, so as to assure that the two testimonials about my parents nicely complement one another on our website. At this point, only the one about my father is getting close to being finalized.

In this message, I want to share with you the experience which helped me finalize the piece about my father and led me to some other thoughts relevant to us all. It happened on a Friday, when we joined the widow of my friend, Coney Toole at a memorial for her husband. Coney died last month, and since he was in the Air Force many years ago, he was being given a military funeral at Fort Logan National Cemetery. It was a beautiful and dignified service, and I was most impressed by the attention of our military establishment to a fallen comrade. Though I don't know, I suspect that Coney served during peacetime and because he was drafted, and only for the usual 2 or 3 years, just as a common soldier with no distinguishing military rank. And yet, he was honored with proper "taps", three shots fired by the guards, and the flag ceremoniously folded and presented to his widow.

During the ceremony I couldn't help but think about my father and the fact that instead of honors, his country showed total neglect towards him. After years of military school, he served on the Italian front during the bloodiest battles in World War I and followed that up by fighting against the invading Rumanian hordes along the Tisza River. Following that, he was a prisoner of war in Arad, which is in Rumania now. He continued to serve his country for 25 years through yet another world war, ending up as a prisoner of war of the Americans this time. After his escape from there, he was thoroughly investigated by the newly established pre-communist pro-Russian officials of post-war Hungary, who couldn't fault him for anything, but forced him into retirement as a lieutenant colonel, rather than accepting him into the newly established army. After a couple of years, his meager pension was taken away, and he could earn his living only by hard physical labor and the make-shift new occupation of patching shoes. Subsequently, he was deported, forced into hard agricultural work at age 55, and was constantly harassed for his past crimes against the "Republic of the People". He was called a fascist, a henchman of the evil Horthy Regime, and an enemy of the people, when, in reality, he never supported any political movement (in accordance to the long established tradition of the Hungarian military establishment). Horthy's government of Hungary was far from evil, and he served his people throughout his military life. Eventually, in 1956 he left Hungary since there was nothing there for him. Some 15 years later they allowed him to return and later die there – a forgotten and unappreciated man without honor in his own land.

When communism supposedly ended in 1990 or so, and new regimes came and went one after the other, nobody had the decency to rehabilitate him and many others who served their countries alongside him. Hungary continues to ignore his service and sacrifices, and nobody even apologized for such rudeness. He had to come to this country to be properly addressed again as "Colonel Vargha", and to be respected and treated as a gentleman. Thus, I can't help wondering what do I owe to a country like that? How much more did my father give to his country than Coney Toole and how much less was he given?

I can't change my deep feelings for the music, poetry and arts of my former homeland, and I can't get rid of my own patriotic attitudes towards Hungary. The land and its history still grab me, and I am spellbound by them. My memories – both good and bad – tie me there, and I still have many wonderful friends and relatives who live there. But I am glad that I never passed on to any of you my clinging to my Hungarian roots, and that in no sense did I sacrifice any of you on the altar of that land. And I am glad that I cut our ties to Hungary to whatever extent possible. There were times when I regretted turning over whatever I received as “compensation” to my brother, but I am happy now that I have done so. I don't think that the people and the country deserve any more serious attachment by any of you. We brought you all up to be loyal Americans; that is the best we could give you. Continue to cherish it.

That is not to say that you should ever disregard your Hungarian roots. Your Hungarian ancestors were all honorable and wonderful people, of whom you should always be proud. Some of them were even great, and I am not limiting my attention to Dániel Berzsenyi alone. In particular, my father may be viewed as such too; at least, that is how his former students viewed him. Probably, rightly so. And even if they exaggerated a bit, he certainly deserved much more than he received from his country.

The above reflections of mine were written on 10-27-2009, more than a decade ago. Nothing changed since then as far as my feeling are concerned with respect to my homeland, but I wanted to say a few more words about my father's military career.

First of all, as an officer of the artillery he was trained in handling not just cannons, but mines as well, and hence during World War I, he and his unit were clearing mine fields in Northern Italy as part of their assignment. By the way, at no time during the war was there any fighting within the borders of Hungary; our soldiers were all on foreign land when the war was over. The conflict with the marauding Rumanian and elsewhere with Czech and Slovak soldiers happened only after the war was over.

In World War II, my father was engaged mostly with the defense of the country against aircraft, and hence his unit was charged with the job of shooting at the bombers attacking our cities. He was stationed in Szombathely, but in spite of the fact that Hungary was at war against the Western coalition, at first our artillery saw no action. A secret agreement allowed for the use of Hungary's airspace by the British and American bombers as long as they didn't bomb our cities. That agreement became obsolete as the war progressed; by then (from September of 1943 until July 1944) my father was assigned to the defense of the oil fields near Lisper in the Province of Zala.

That's where his father, Jenő Varga was born, and it was in that area, where supposedly some land was owned by the Vargha family. Somewhere I also read that my grandfather Jenő spent some time in his youth surveying the land near Lisper, which would make sense if indeed the family owned there some of it. I was also told that he had to part with his inheritance of the land when his brother, Károly lost a lot of money at cards, and he had to bail his brother out. It could be that the story originated with my aunt, Mici néni, who was known in the family as a creative storyteller, but it could also be that Great-grandfather Imre Vargha indeed acquired some properties while he was serving in Lisper and nearby Nagykanizsa, where my father's older brother, Laci bácsi was born and more than likely, my grandfather grew up. The fact that my father was charged with the defense of those oilfields probably had nothing to do with the ownership of the land there; nevertheless, it is an interesting coincidence.

By the way, prior to World War II, the oil fields of Lisper were operated by MAORT (an abbreviation of the Magyar Amerikai Olaj Részvény Társaság), a joint Hungarian – American company, where my father found a job for his younger brother, Gabi bácsi, who was a PhD geologist. However, that job didn't last long when Gabi bácsi's drinking problem surfaced, and he lost his exemption too. He had to report for military duty. Fortunately, my father managed to get his brother assigned to his unit and to keep him safe. His youngest brother, Bálint died a month or so earlier in the fight against the Russians, he could not afford losing Gabi bácsi too.

One of the exploits of my father's brigade while serving in Lisper was the downing of the first American Liberator on the 20<sup>th</sup> of February 1944, which was the subject of an article on page 26 of the February 6, 2016 issue of *Magyar Nemzet*. A reduced version of it is shown on the right, with its second picture enlarged below.



Clearly, his soldiers were jubilant since rather than destroying the aircraft, they managed to capture it after its crew successfully landed the plane. Important military secrets could be learned from having the plane intact. I looked closely at the pictures but didn't find my father among the men; he would have considered such an involvement beneath his dignity.

The article was sent to me by Géza Kokas, who found my father's signature on a letter of commendation of his father, Endre Kokas. It is shown on the right.



Géza remembered that his father always spoke highly of my father and managed to find me and share with me the article above. We corresponded some and I also corresponded with the author of the article but found no other references to my father.

Interestingly, among my father's correspondence I found a letter written by another younger officer of his after the war and reporting on the whereabouts of his fellow officers, including Endre (Bandi) Kokas, who found employment as a miller. Others found similarly low-level employment, while yet others found none. That letter, whose author's name I can't decipher also comments on the ones, who were missing in the war.

I found yet another letter among my father's correspondence that was written by the wife of Zoltán Zankó on August 16, 1948, complaining against the Ungár family. Seemingly, they occupied several rooms of the apartment of the Zankó family at Dózsa György út 84/C and in spite of promises to do so, they were not willing to give them back. The woman described in vivid details the poor treatment of her furniture by the Ungárs, the lack of cleanliness of theirs and their poor behavior in general. Being familiar with my father's decency and honorableness, she appealed to him for his help. I don't know what my father did about it, but I seriously doubt that he could influence Károly bácsi. As mentioned elsewhere, they behaved similarly towards us both in Szombathely and then in Nikla – hence I don't doubt anything in that letter.

I was fortunate to have lived with my father in 1950-51 in Budapest, then from 1956 to 1961 in St. Louis and from 1962 to 1965 in Ft. Worth. I learned a lot from him, and I passed on much of that knowledge to my children. I can certainly credit him for my patience, as well as for my domesticity. He was able to fit in with most every group of people, and thanks to his example, so can I. He was always diligent and hard-working; I try to be like that too. But I doubt that I will ever be even half as good a bridge player as he was!

Much of my information concerning his military history comes from a friend, Péter Szabó of the Hungarian Military Library and Archive in Budapest, which I visited a couple of times in 2005. Unfortunately, the files on my father were rather thin. Later I also found a couple of accounts by my father concerning his involvements; they were written under duress by the communist examiners, who wanted to know why my father didn't desert his command and join the occupying Russian forces. That was a ridiculous question since he would never have abandoned his post and become a traitor.

Unfortunately, my father never wrote any kind of reminiscences, and he rarely spoke about his past. Only here and there would he drop a word or two, but they turned out to be of great value, like the maiden name of Great-grandmother Franciska Hudeček, which was not known by any of my cousins.

Once he also told me about joining a German field-marshal in his military Volkswagen on an exploratory mission behind enemy lines, since he served as the liaison to the German High Command during their retreat to Germany. Seemingly, the field-marshal was totally fearless as they were fired on by the Russians several times while they zig-zagged and made mental notes of the positions of the Russians. My father was most impressed. His own military behavior was deeply in his blood too, and hence he kept his fear to himself. In general, one could recognize his military upbringing in all of his actions.

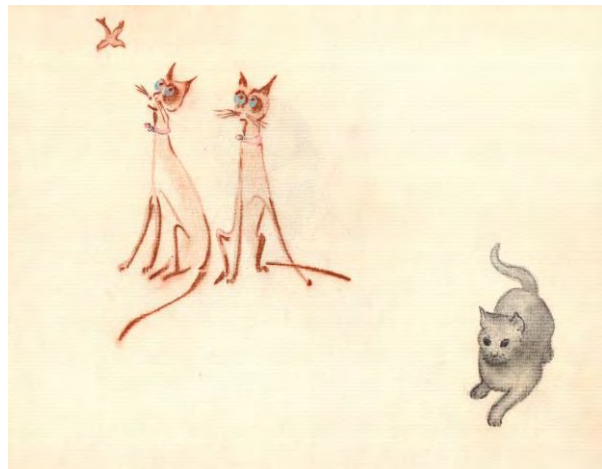
He liked to live in America, he felt at home in this land. Therefore, I am saddened by the delays I allowed in his coming back here after my mother's death. I had the airplane ticket to and from Hungary and I missed my window of opportunity. It would not have been easy to have him with us, but we would have managed it somehow.

I still miss him a lot!

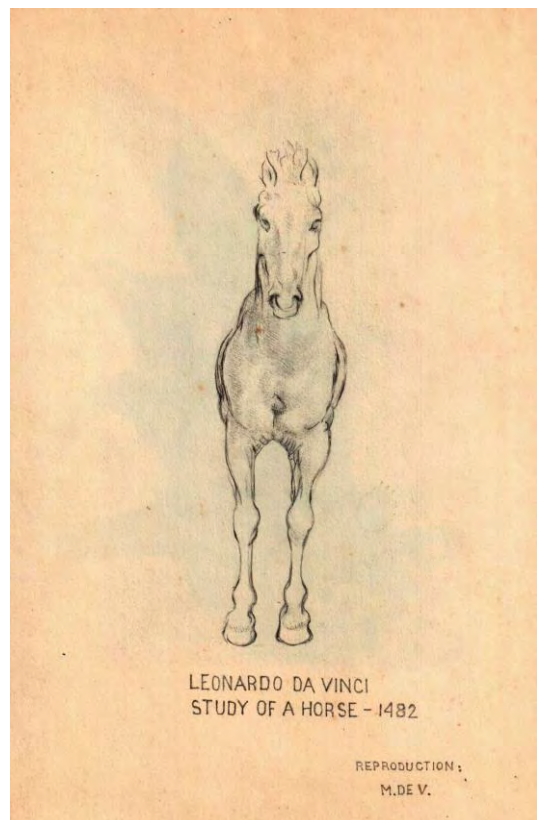


### My father's sketches

I found them among my brother's papers during my trip in 2011 and sent duplicates of them to all four of our kids. Adam and AJ framed them beautifully; nevertheless, I will reproduce them below. I remember well when my father worked on them, truly painstakingly and with a loving touch. My only regret is that there were no more of them, and that I could not locate any of his brother's, Gabi bácsi's drawings, whose sketches of Budapest's famous buildings appeared in a Sunday supplement to a newspaper published in Budapest while he was a university student there. Hopefully, someone will find them too; they would be a fitting memorial to him.



Naturally, as in the case of your grandmother, Xelpho, all of the drawings were reproductions; he did them all during the years he spent in Fort Worth, Texas, teaching horseback riding. Larger copies of them are in my files. While neither Zolti nor I inherited his talent, I am happy that two of his grandsons, Adam and Daniel did.



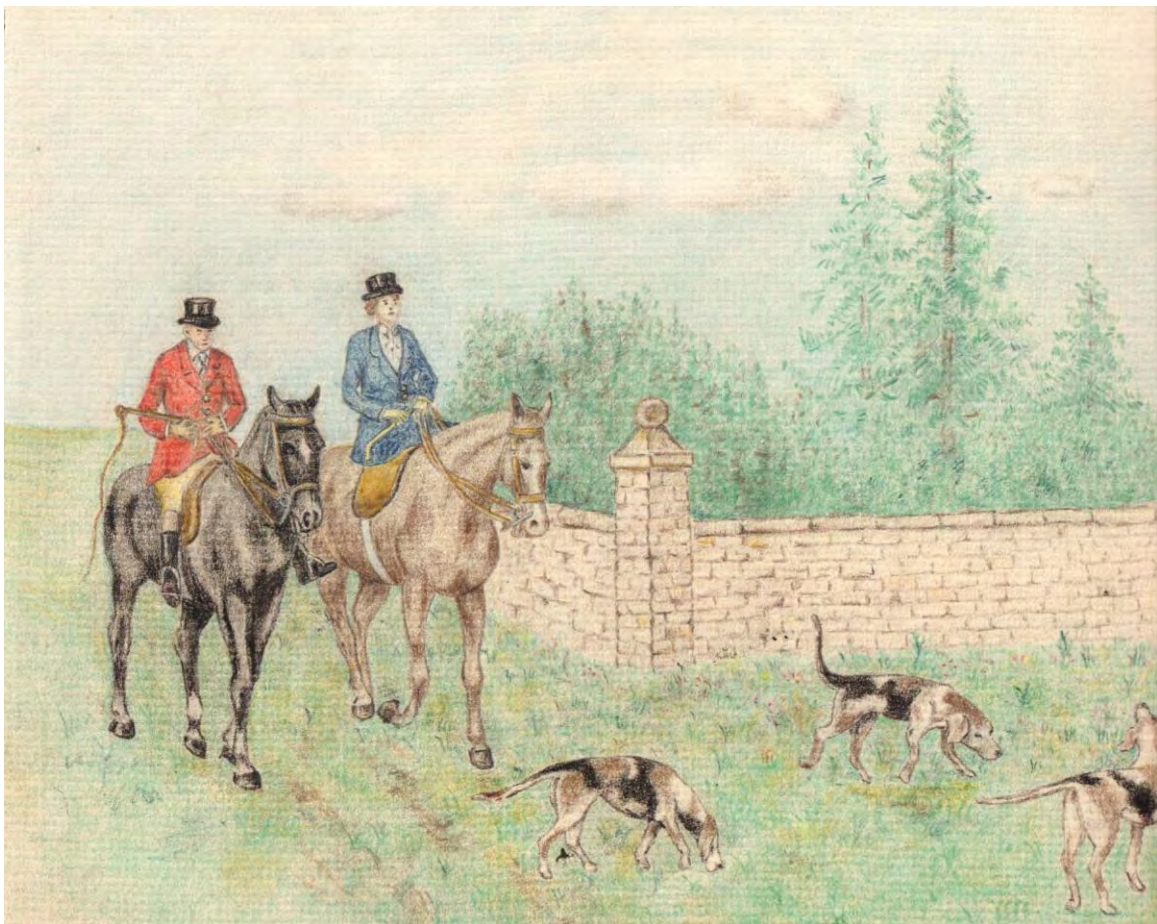
## Parents

## My father's sketches

Of the next two sketches, the lower one was probably his favorite. He truly loved horses and in his youth, he was an excellent hunter too. Unfortunately, he too was born in the wrong era, and I doubt that he had either the freedom or the means to do much hunting during the relatively poor economic times between the two world wars. Nevertheless, he did the best he could.

He even tried racing his own horse as a young officer, and he must have gone on a starvation diet to do so. Of course, when his superiors learned about it, he had to give up that pastime.

In order to keep up with hunting, he even bought a Hungarian vizsla, a highly regarded hunting dog sometime in the 1940s. I vaguely remember it but have no idea where he kept Hector. I doubt that it was in Nikla, in spite of the fact that there was plenty of space for a dog there.



### My mother, Zsuzsanna Kornélia Györgyike Berzsenyi

My mother was the fourth child and third daughter of Sándor Berzsenyi and Lenke Juhász. She was born in Nikla on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March 1904 and was christened Roman Catholic as were her sisters, even though her father was of the Lutheran faith. Her two brothers died in infancy, which must have been very difficult for her parents. Therefore, one can easily understand their protectiveness of the three girls. Thus, rather than sending them off to school, they were home-schooled at first, with French, German, and English governesses guiding their studies. They more or less mastered all three languages and learned to play the piano as well, as was expected of young women of their social and economic class. Since my grandfather was an excellent manager of his estates, the family lived relatively well, with lots of servants to do all the chores. Thus, my mother and her sisters were spared from household duties in spite of the fact that my grandmother was an excellent homemaker, who should have passed on to her daughters the secrets of managing a household. Instead, they were allowed to pursue their interests and hobbies without learning much about the workings of a home. I guess it was expected that they would always have a cook and other servants, and that they observed how to order them around and keep them accountable. Unfortunately, that's not what the future had in store.

While Babi néni was interested in reading and gardening throughout her life, my mother (whom everyone called Donci) and Piri néni were more outdoorsy and enjoyed riding and driving carriages. They formed a team, and often excluded Babi néni from their activities, though that may have been her choice too. Nevertheless, it seems they stayed apart. Since they had each other, my mother and Piri néni needed no other friends. With respect to Piri néni, while I know she also rode, I don't think she had any accomplishments. It is hard to imagine three sisters so different from one another!

It seems, Babi néni was sent off to school first, and spent two years in Budapest at the finishing high school run by an English order of nuns, the well-known "Angolkisasszonyok". She was joined a year later by Piri néni, who stayed there only for a year. Maybe my mother was to join them both yet another year later, but the war and its aftermaths must have forced my grandparents to reconsider their education, and my mother never went off to school. Hence, she was there in Nikla when her father died in March of 1921 at the age of 69, leaving his widow and daughters in charge of the large Berzsenyi estate.

Sometime during the last year of her life Mother decided to write about her youth so that Zolti and I will know how they lived. I found her 3-page-long write-up in 2011, copied it, transcribed it and translated it into English, adding a few comments. In it she recalled who was who among her relatives, commented about some of them, thereby adding some personal touches to my genealogical writings. Thus, for example, I didn't know that Vilma néni, her mother's half-sister lived in Pusztakovácsi and that they visited her often. Neither did I know that Matild Csonka lived with a brother of hers in the house where Antal Berzsenyi, Mother's great-uncle used to live. Unfortunately, she didn't say which brother, and said nothing about her paintings. Thus, I still know nothing about the art of Matild Csonka. But I learned that my grandmother played beautifully on the piano too, and that my grandfather was particularly fond of the sad Hungarian songs she played. She told about her Aunt Ida, who moved up to Budapest after the death of her husband and lived there until her own death. She also listed all of the young men of the family, who spent some their vacations working with the harvests, as well as the ones who were somewhat older and not all

related, who were their dance partners and tennis partner, since, unbeknownst to me, there was a tennis court in the orchard too. She also remembered at least to the extent of a list her riding acquaintances, their English, German and French governesses and piano teachers.

Mother also recalled the various pets they had, like Kontess (Countess written phonetically), the white goat, whom they harnessed to pull a baby carriage; Bari, the lamb that used to follow them around like a dog; Cuni, the cat; as well as Szuszi, their dog, that used to run after their father when he went hunting and chased away the rabbits, quails and pheasants to her father's dismay. They also had a donkey named Kicsiny (small in Hungarian) and a pony named Szikra (spark in Hungarian) and drove around in a little cart with them and had lots of enjoyment for many years.

Later their father bought them a couple of ponies named Jancsi and Rencsi from Feri bácsi<sup>1</sup> Bogyay. They learned to ride on them. In wintertime they would go around in sleighs with bells ringing. When they got bigger, they got saddle horses, and she went on to name all of them, with special attention to the ones which led her to trophies in various competitions<sup>2</sup> including the driving of foursomes and fivesomes, jumping and dressage in places like Keszthely, Pécs, Balatonfüred, Siófok and Budapest.

She also described the rooms and the furniture in them, and even the pictures on the walls. She recalled playing 'hide and seek' in front of the house (i.e., towards the road, which had rows of bushes among elevated flower beds and carefully kept walkways. The grape harvests in Gomba were particularly memorable to her, as well as the roasting of chestnuts, which they would take over to their aunt's, Mariska néni's house, who would reward them grape juice and pecan pastry, as well as tasty figs. She also remembered fondly visits to their grandparents in Pusztakovácsi, recalling that their grandmother used to treat them to coffee tasting meringues and pastries with almonds in them.

I will return to my mother's memoirs later, but don't hold your breath for learning great family secrets from her writing. While it is informative, its basic tone is lamenting the loss of her youth, when she didn't have to face any of the ugly realities of life, especially under communism. She must have really regretted becoming an adult!

As far as I know, the family didn't travel much prior to my grandfather's death, which was caused by heart problems. In fact, my mother told me about having to be quiet in the house much of the time so as not to disturb him. But they must have gone to Abbázia, a resort place on the Adriatic Sea in former Hungary, since I have photos to prove it.

And I know they went up to Budapest to the balls, which were traditionally attended by all families with marriageable daughters in search of husbands of proper social standing. I suspect that is how Piri néni met Károly bácsi, who then introduced my father to my mother, but that was much later. Piri néni got married in 1928, while my mother married my father on the Feast of Christ the King (October 27) in 1935 after three years of formal engagement. In other words, my mother may have been set in her ways just as much as my father was.

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<sup>1</sup> meaning uncle, but used here as an expression of respect for an elderly man

<sup>2</sup> Being a member of MACSE, I am a subscriber to Arcanum, which allows me to see the reports on the competitions in the various newspapers; her results were indeed impressive

## My mother --- Photo Addendum

Unfortunately, very few pictures survived the war (WW II) and the various upheavals of the family after the war. I only know of the hundreds of photos that were destroyed in Szombathely, since many of them were ground into the floor of our apartment by the boots of the Russian soldiers, and only a few were salvaged by my mother. I can only surmise that many were lost in Nikla too, where both the Russians and the people of the village had a free run of the place while we were away during the last part of the war (the last two months of 1944 and the first four of 1945).

While my mother was always very protective of her few memorabilia, some were probably lost when she came out to America too. First, when she came only for a visit in the Fall of 1964, and entrusted her belongings to her sisters in Nikla, and then, when she legally emigrated and left behind some of her things once again. Finally, while I feel certain that my brother salvaged whatever he could, it seems likely that some of her pictures and other valuables didn't turn up at the time of her death either. She might have entrusted some to Piri néni but she couldn't speak during her last days. Evidently, she tried very hard to tell something to my brother in private, but her sister, Piri néni, refused to leave her sight.

One of the earliest photos I have of my mother is the group photo on the right, where I don't know the person on the left – she could be a governess. Next to her is my grandmother and my grandfather, while in the back from left to right is Piri néni, Babi néni, and then my mother. Next, I have two photos of my mother with Piri néni and a pony – probably taken at about the same time.



In the first one, my mother is on the right, while in the second one, she is sitting on the pony. She is in a side saddle; that's how she rode throughout her youth. From the stories I heard, Babi néni didn't care about horses; she was much more interested in gardening and flowers and above everything else, reading. And while I heard that Piri néni was also riding, I have no evidence thereof. Gaston claimed that there was a fire in Nikla in the living quarters which they occupied, and that everything was destroyed in that fire. Maybe one day his daughter will relent and search through their belongings, and then we will see a few more memorabilia from Nikla. Even the guest books kept by my mother while she was in charge of the Berzsényi Museum disappeared. Fortunately, my brother located them but a bit too late for me to peruse them. Those books would be of interest to me too, since many of my friends visited there after I left Hungary, and I would like to see their names as well as their comments. By the way, I recently learned that prior to the reputed collapse of communism (1990), as many as 10,000 people visited the museum every year. That number was much reduced in recent years due to widespread economic hardships.

## Parents



## Pictures of mother



The next photo below shows my mother at the piano – probably at around the same time. I suppose, the girls were in their early teens in these pictures, and their father was still alive. Concerning my mother’s piano playing, unfortunately, I never heard it. But one of my late cousins, Sándor Barcza told me about her playing the piano at her grandparents’ house in Pusztakovácsi. Hence, I assume that she was at least fair, since her grandmother, Emilia Svastits, was a superb pianist, who gave charity concerts even in her latter years, and probably mentored my mother too. I know that she had a strong influence on her other grand-daughter, Márta néni, who wrote most fondly about Grandmother Svastits in her memoirs.



Concerning the picture on the right, I suppose, it may have been taken a bit later. There, Babi néni is on the left, Piri néni in the middle, and my mother is on the right. There may have been a date following “Nikla” at the bottom, but I failed to include it on my scanned copy.

Next, I have a photo from 1925, when my mother was already 21 years old. The picture was probably taken in Abbazia, which was a popular vacation spot even after the tragic “Treaty” of Trianon, when the Adriatic seashore was taken away from Hungary and given to the newly created “country”, Yugoslavia. In the photo, my grandmother is in the back of the boat, with Piri néni sitting in front of her and my mother facing the photographer.



Unfortunately, that must have been their last trip to Abbázia, due to a nearly tragic accident that happened there. My grandmother was opening a can of some sort, cut her hand in the process, and it got infected. With no penicillin in those days, infections were a lot more dangerous, and it was a wonder that the famous surgeon, Tibor Verebély, could save her hand. The operation left her hand paralyzed, but she never allowed her infirmity to influence her life. In fact, the following year she embroidered a beautiful Hungarian flag for the Berzsényi celebration held in Nikla, when the plaque was unveiled on the present museum --- then Mariska néni’s house.



This next photo shows from left to right Piri néni, my grandmother, Mariska néni, Babi néni, my mother, and probably, Mariska néni’s cousin and companion, Margit Gyarmathy --- probably on the same trip. Mariska néni and her companions made several more trips to Abbázia, but I think that was the only trip there for my mother. She had fond memories of the place and some less pleasant ones too on account of her mother’s accident.



The next photo is of Piri néni, her friend, Márta néni (who later married István Lájpczig (Pisti bácsi, who also lived in Nikla) and my mother, with a portion of her dog, Ripp, in front. The photo is of about the same vintage (1925), prior to the marriage of Piri néni, who got married in 1928. Ripp was my mother’s favorite dog, in fact, the only one she ever talked about.

Mother also had some favorite horses; two of them were named Csinos (Pretty) and Móra (Fun), but I don’t remember whether she rode them or drove them. She competed both in dressage and in jumping, as well as in driving twosomes, foursomes and fivesomes. The photos below are from

her competitive days. In the first one (on horseback), she is in front of the house with the door to the cellar visible, as well as the window to the room where my grandmother stayed after we moved back into the house in early 1946.



The second photo shows her winning first prize in Kaposvár, with Sándor Hosszú and another Berzsényi employee serving as back-up drivers in case of complications. In addition to Kaposvár, she competed successfully in Székesfehérvár, Keszthely and Balatonfüred too. The final pictures of this section show her at two such events, as well as a ‘close-up’ photo of my mother with one of her rivals.

Unfortunately, along with many other valuables, my mother’s trophies didn’t survive the upheavals of the previous century. I have only a small memento from one of her performances, my brother has another one, and we both have a few sentences in her own voice remembering the “good old days”. They are on the tape prepared by Zolti for us during the Christmas season of 1976, following my first visit home with you, Adam.





That tape has many wonderful messages from not only my mother, but my father, Babi néni, Piri néni, Gaston, Hugi, Laci, etc. I will need to transcribe it as well as save it on my computer, but first, I need to locate a tape player!

I also found a number of clippings in various newspapers about my mother's performances; some of them are reproduced below.

30 kilométer országúti kocsiverseny: 1. Bartha Miklós. 2. Bagyay Szilárd. 3. Berzsényi Györgyike. (AzEst\_1929\_07\_\_pages210-210)

*Kettesfogatu ugetőverseny  
holgyek reszere.* 1. Baro  
Jeszenszky Andor, Csavargo, Lenest,  
hajtja Jeszenszky A. barone.  
2. Berzsényi Gyorgyi, Szelvesz,  
Rettie.

(Dunantul\_1926\_10\_\_pages4-4)

*A. NEMZETI LOVARDA* szombati és vasárnapi lovasmérkőzése főképpen a hölgylovasokat fogja próbára tenni. A hölgyek díjugratásába tizenhat ismert hölgy versenyzőt nevezett. Többek között *Fáy Halász* Ida, *Fónagy* Sári, *Hárcsy* Erzsébet, *Almássy* Pálné grófné, *Berg* Dieda bárónő *Berzsényi* Györgyike, *Le-dovszky* Ágnes és *Vajda* Béláim neveit találjuk a programon. Ennek a zsűrinek *Burián* Mihály az elnöke. Tizenegy hölgy' nevezett a díjugratás P: kategóriájára, amelyet vasárnap délután hat órakor tartanak meg *Pr&ny* Sándor zsüricluók- nöklésével. Urlovasaink legkiválóbbjai indulnak még a versenyen. Külön érdekességet ad még a mérkőzésnek, liogy a versenyek számokban azok a lovasok és lovak is szerepelnek, amelyek február 5-én a berlini nagy lovasmérkőzésen a magyar szilieket, fogják képviselni. Mindkét napon délután négy órakor kezdődnek a mérkőzések. (Magyarország\_1930\_01\_\_pages206-206)

8. *ürlovasnők díjugratása*, „©"-kategória: 1. Géczy Nóra, 2. Éber Amália, 3. Berzsényi Györgyike (PestiHirlap\_1931\_07\_\_pages382-382)

The first two reports were about driving events, the third one announced the upcoming jumping competition and the last one reported on its outcome. While she didn't necessarily 'set the world on fire' with her performances, she was a leading competitor for years both as a rider and as a driver of twosomes, foursomes and fivesomes of horses.

It seems appropriate to close this section with yet another view of her passport photo from 1931. It is one of my favorites. She and Nagymama requested their visas in order to go to Czechoslovakia and visit relatives there, but I have no clues as to the identity of those relatives. Presumably, they were related to us either via our Juhász or Pretsinszky ancestors, but I don't know.

Many other pictures of my mother appear elsewhere in these volumes. For the years 1929-1935, the only photo I have is my parents' wedding picture, which I will feature separately. Unfortunately, many of the people therein are still unidentified, and I didn't make a good enough effort when I could have done so to ask around about them. Moreover, I don't have any separate smaller group photos, like those of the Ungár wedding; either they didn't make any, or they were lost or, quite possibly, someone else in the family is sitting on them.



## A tribute to my mother

In spite the fact that my mother and her sisters grew up in Nikla, where their great-grandfather, Dániel Berzsenyi lived most of his life, they probably knew very little about their famous ancestor. They learned German, English and French from their governesses, as well as how to play the piano, and her sisters also spent a year or two at the well-recognized ‘Angolkisasszonyok<sup>1</sup>’ in Budapest. Nevertheless, I sincerely doubt that they learned much literature beyond the basics. Moreover, my mother was much more interested in horseback riding and driving carriages (foursomes and fivsomes too) at competitions, than in scholarly matters.

Nevertheless, she became very knowledgeable about the life and poetry of Dániel Berzsenyi, when the Museum was opened in the old family home in Nikla and she was appointed with a meager salary as its guide in 1953 – thereby easing our utmost poverty a bit.

During my mother’s tenure the Berzsenyi Museum became a huge attraction in the country, with thousands of visitors coming every year. Busloads of schoolchildren were brought by their teachers, as well as individuals even from nearby countries, making Nikla almost a rival to Russia’s famed Yasnaya Polyana.

She kept that position until she came to America for a visit, and then retired as of December 31, 1965, making sure that her sister, Piri néni gets appointed as her successor. She returned a year later, on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March (I think) 1967 and stayed for exactly 5 years to get her American citizenship. Then, after a year or so in Austria, both of my parents repatriated and settled in Nikla for good.

Fortunately, the American Dollar was a strong currency compared to the Forint, and hence with my father’s meager Social Security checks, my mother getting half as much as his wife, supplemented by her small pension of HUF 500 – they lived relatively well. Well enough for my mother to feel generous and arrange for a scholarship for students at the Berzsenyi High School / Lyceum in Sopron, where her famous great-grandfather (as well as grandfather) went to school. I have a copy of the draft of the letter she sent to Ferenc (Feri) Tóth, a teacher of literature at the school, making arrangements for sending HUF 10,000 to start the foundation. Since postage was HUF 2 for a letter, it was a decent amount of money. By the way, I don’t know how she met Feri and his wife Mária, but they became good friends, just like their daughter, Ildikó is to me. She and her mother are Berzsenyi-relatives of ours, which was probably not recognized by either Mária or my mother. My mother was also friends with Endre Nagy, a retired teacher of literature in Sopron; later, I got to know his son and cousin. Endre wrote a nice article about Dániel Berzsenyi and at my mother’s request, he made copies of Noszlopy’s book<sup>2</sup> for Zolti and me, for which I was most grateful. In other words, Mother did her best to keep up with the Berzsenyi scholars and admirers in Hungary and helped us to be abreast with them too. The scholarships were announced as the school celebrated its 425<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and the following year they already gave out five of them of HUF 2,000 - 2,500.

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<sup>1</sup> A Catholic order of teaching nuns, known as the Loreto Sisters in English-speaking countries.

<sup>2</sup> *Berzsenyi Dániel és családja*, Kaposvár, 1910

In addition to the scholarship, Mother also sent to the school a painting by Tihamér Gyarmathy, which he did, along with the portraits of Dániel Berzsenyi and his son, Farkas, while honeymooning in Nikla. I don't remember the painting, but Zolti does; it would be interesting to learn what happened to it. Unfortunately, I knew nothing about that gift of Mother at the time we were in Sopron, but I will ask around.

Throughout her life, my mother was an incredible correspondent. She kept me informed about the happenings in the family, the village of Nikla, as well as the ongoing celebrations of our famous forebear. Thus, I learned whenever a new edition of his poems appeared, and usually she got me a copy thereof. She also kept up with many of our relatives, and time and again, I could turn to her for their addresses. In fact, I am most thankful to her for passing on to me the interest in keeping up with friends and relatives via regular correspondence, which is the key to my successes in genealogy.

Below on the left, I copied the description of the Berzsenyi Award from the website of the Berzsenyi High School / Lyceum of Sopron on 10-19-2009, while on the right, I show a blank copy of the certificate to be given to the recipients of the scholarship established by my mother in the name of her sisters and herself, 'The Berzsenyi-great-grandchildren'.

### Berzsenyi-Díj

A Berzsenyi-díjat 1982-ben alapította a Liceumi Diákszövetség jogelődje (Berzsenyi Dániel Gimnázium Öregdiákok Baráti Köre) és a soproni Városházépítő Egyesület az öregdiákok és a Berzsenyi-dédunokák adakozó készségének felhasználásával. Olyan diákok kaphatják, akik az iskolában eltöltött négy-, illetve nyolcéves szorgalmi időszak alatt kiemelkedő tanév végi osztályzatot érnek el. Feltétele az elismerés odaítélésének kiemelkedő társadalmi-közösségi-egyházi tevékenység végzése, valamint az Országos Középiskolai Tanulmányi Versenyen való sikeres szereplés. 1997 decemberében a Berzsenyi-díj alapítványi összegéhez csatoltuk a dr. Majoros József által örökségképpen ránk hagyott összeget. A célt támogatók - a díj nevének feltüntetésével - az iskola számlájára [OTP Soproni Fiókja 11737083, Berzsenyi Dániel Evangélikus Gimnázium (Liceum) 20067625] való befizetéssel csatlakozhatnak.

(this wa



In closing, I should add that in nature, as well as 'in looks' I was very similar to my mother and hence, we conflicted a lot. Unfortunately, in spite of being patient with others, I was never patient or understanding towards her. I never recognized how strongly she was clinging to her birthplace of Nikla in spite of the awful memories she had of our struggles there. Thus, for example, she never gave up the hope of getting back her old home; by buying it back years later and renovating it, Zolti was fulfilling a promise he made to her. I was not supportive of Zolti's huge and successful project. While I made my peace with the people of Nikla, I didn't forget or forgive their behavior.

## My Parents

*Unfortunately, and greatly on account of circumstances beyond their control, my parents lived their lives separate from one another with the exception of a few years here and there. In what follows, I will try to describe their 51 years together by breaking them into appropriate time-intervals. Some of my comments will be shorter, others longer – depending on the circumstances. This portion of my writing is supplementary to the separate pieces I wrote about them and should be read after those pieces.*

*The photo on the right was taken in the late 1960s at the home of Laurie McDonald, one of the most devoted students of my father in English-style horseback riding and jumping. Many years later, Laurie became friends with Adam, and then with me and our family. She not only visited my father's grave, but wrote an imaginative screenplay about him, which I read and treasure.*



### 1931 – 1943      Mostly together

They got married in 1935, after 3 years of being engaged. And they probably knew each other for at least another year prior to engagement too. Why did they wait so long? I could never understand it. Was the management of the estate in Nikla so poor as to cause difficulties in putting together the required 'kaució'<sup>1</sup>?

At the time they got married my father gave his address at Gomika's place in Budapest at Soroksári út 75, where she lived with her oldest daughter, Margit néni, a kindergarten teacher. Later he was serving in Székesfehérvár, and then in Szombathely. That's where my brother was born, and that's where the picture on the right was taken about a year earlier.

I was born in Budapest on the 17<sup>th</sup> of August 1938. In Szombathely we lived at 28 József Wass körút<sup>2</sup>; the picture on the right was taken in our apartment there. Its living room was furnished with heavy, 'Biedermeier' pieces, a wedding gift from Nagymama to my mother.



<sup>1</sup> Monetary sum that must be deposited to ensure that the military officer can maintain his social status.

<sup>2</sup> Like the Kis Körút and the Nagy Körút in Budapest (i.e., by their popular names), the one in Szombathely went, at least partially around the city center (kör means circle and út means street in Hungarian)

In fact, I think that the estate in Nikla covered the cost of the rent too; the salary of a military officer was not enough for such luxuries.

The next picture on the right was taken in Szombathely, as we were walking around in the city. One of my frightening memories is connected to that square. Mother was pushing the stroller with Zolti and was almost run over by a speeding thug of the Hungarian Nazi Party on a motorcycle. My father was in uniform, nevertheless, the thug drew a gun on him when he yelled at him for riding his bike so recklessly. They were dangerous times for everyone.



### **Three letters by my father**

During my first genealogical trip to Hungary, in November of 2000, I visited my 2<sup>nd</sup> cousin Iluska Török nee Svastits, who remembered me as Gyurika from the time when I was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade in Budapest, and my father and I lived with Kató néni on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of Veres Pálné utca 28. I mention the location partly because Daniel and I were there during the summer of 2003, visiting with an artist couple, where the wife was recommended as an excellent painter of family coats of arms – it was an unexpected coincidence. In any case, when I lived there and shared a room with Cousin Márti, at times I was also asked to answer the door and let in Kató néni's and Tóni bácsi's patients. As you know, they were both dentists, whose example was followed first by their daughter, Márti, and then by Márti's daughter, Mártika, your 2<sup>nd</sup> cousin. It turns out, Iluska Svastits (she was not yet married) was also a patient of my aunt, and she remembers me guiding her to the waiting room. Strangely, at times, she still addressed me as 'Gyurika'.

She shared with me a copy of a letter my father wrote to her father in November 1938, telling his first cousin how sorry he is for not writing sooner. He explains that his military assignments were demanding, but more importantly, he became a father, and that his fatherly duties took precedence. Naturally, I was rejoiced seeing that letter as his first reference to me.

The other two letters I want to write about were in Zolti's collection of memorabilia; that is, among the bundles of letters Nagymama had and Zolti acquired after her death. One was dated March 21, 1939, in which my father wished happy birthday to Nagymama, whom he called "Csoszikám", an endearing term I never heard before reading the letter. Not that they were not loving towards one another later, but somehow the term disappeared. He starts the letter saying how happy he was to be able to interrupt his military life and visit in Nikla for at least a short time and be present at the wedding of "Babszi". Seemingly, that was his nickname for Babi néni, my mother's oldest sister. He goes on to say that the three Berzsenyi girls are all married now – some more fortunately, and some less so. Maybe Babszi managed best, says my father. He goes on to say that maybe at Easter he can come to Nikla during his 10 days of leave – seemingly, I was staying there with my mother at the time. My father, whom I usually simply called "Apa" also inquires whether my mother got the oranges and waffles sent by him and emphasizes that I should be given a whole orange every day, but only its juice, sweetened with powdered sugar and diluted with boiled, but lukewarm water if needed – after the meal, but not if it was prepared with milk. Reading this, I was saddened

by the fact that he didn't live long enough to see my three boys following so closely in his footsteps. Not that Terry isn't as good as you three, but I can't take any credit for that!

His third letter was written on April 18, 1941, again to my mother, and again to Nikla. It seems, and my memories are such too, that my mother went back to Nikla time and again, taking me along and staying there with her mother. One of her reasons was that she needed to help her mother with the management of the estate. But I suspect, as I told you already, that she never felt at home in Szombathely. In this letter, my father expresses his appreciation for the letters and packages that were awaiting him when he got back to Szombathely from his assignment and wonders why nothing arrived to Nikla of the things he sent: gifts for mother, a child's bed for me, and an Easter rabbit for me too. He also wonders whether I still remember him and assumes that I grew more attached to my grandmother than to him. But he still calls my mother Csoszikám, and his letter is most loving. By the way, my mother was known to everyone as "Donci" or (to the younger ones as Donci néni). She signed her name that way in her letters too.



Even during the first years of their marriage, my **mother** spent much time in Nikla partially because she never managed to fit into the lifestyle of the military wives in Szombathely. The photo above shows my mother and Piri néni with the three of us kids in Nikla.

Being from the countryside and lacking sophistication and worldliness, I am sure that Mother felt awkward among the avid bridge players, who were also up to date with respect to the local gossip, as well as with the affairs of the world. She was also a bit older than many of them, since my father was always youthful and felt best in younger company. Moreover, she was probably not very good in bridge, since I doubt that she grew up playing games. At least, I don't recall playing any games with her.

On the other hand, my **father** was excellent in a variety of card games including bridge, tarokk<sup>3</sup> and alsós<sup>4</sup> and I am sure he was much sought after as a partner. He also enjoyed dressing well, while my mother was probably always self-conscious about her appearance. Thus, they lived somewhat separate lives even when my mother was in Szombathely.

Nevertheless, I know that she was there on January 25, 1943, when my brother was born, since I remember well when my father took me to the hospital to see him and Mother. I had a big fall in the hall, and he rushed over to hold me. I also remember Zolti in a baby bed in Szombathely, both in the apartment and later at the convent, where the nuns gave us a room after the Russians ordered us out of the apartment.

<sup>3</sup> An old favorite in the 'Officers' Club' of the Austro-Hungarian Army

<sup>4</sup> Another favorite in the Officers' Club; later he used to play it with Pista bácsi (István Mátyás) in St. Louis, MO

**1944 – 1945                      Mostly apart**

My **father** had a stomach operation, and I have fond memories of spending some time with him during his recovery. Soon afterwards he was back in action in charge of the defense of the oil fields near Lispe. While Hungary was officially in the war, it was not until March 19, 1944 that we were bombed, and hence (on account of a secret agreement) we didn't fire on the enemy planes either. Nevertheless, my father's involvement was probably more intense since he served as a liaison to the German forces. In fact, towards the end of the war he was second-in-command of the artillery defense of 'Trans-Danubia' (Dunántúl).

My **mother** took us (Zolti and me) to Nikla much of the time. Being aware of the eventual outcome of the war, my father offered to send a couple of trucks to evacuate all of us from there, but Mother refused – possibly, on the advice of Károly bácsi, who was in Nikla with his family too. Not much later, the Ungár family went back to Budapest, and then, just before the siege of Budapest they joined us in Szombathely. Our rescue from Nikla was accomplished by Bandi bácsi, who sent a car to take us from Nikla to Szombathely late in the fall of 1944. As far as I remember, my father came to see us there only once, maybe around Christmas. Then he had to retreat with his unit to Germany, where he became a prisoner of war of the American occupying forces.

My mother, Nagymama, and us (Zolti and I), as well as Bözsi survived the Russian occupation of Szombathely, the eviction from our apartment, and Zolti's frightening illness at the convent. Having not heard from my father for months, we didn't even know whether he was alive.

**1946 – 1950                      Mostly together**

After the war, when my **father** also got back from Germany, he took over the management of the 300 acres we were allowed to keep. His first task was to round up some of the horses and cattle that used to belong to the family but got scattered during the war. He threw all of his energies into managing the relatively few acres of land left to my mother's family after most of the land was taken away and distributed among the peasants of Nikla. At first, he was facing incredible difficulties with no money, machinery, farm animals or even people to do the work. Nevertheless, he succeeded by thinking on a larger scale, and concentrating on lumber and other building materials to fix the houses and barns first. Starting with a single steam-driven saw and a trusting and skillful carpenter, he soon built a large lumberyard, providing service for nearby villages too. With the profit, he could employ more people, and cleverly diversified his involvements. He also managed to become a part-owner of a tractor and of a combine, just in time for the harvest of 1946. He also started a kiln for bricks, as well as a manufacturing process for fertilizers, and had a huge barn built for the processing of tobacco leaves, where he gave employment to 15-16 women during the winter months. Of course, he was on his feet for long days directing and supervising the work, but he was in his elements in spite of the fact that he never had any experience with any such processes before.

To make matters even less pleasant for him, some of his employees were far from being appreciative of having a job and were performing it reluctantly. Due to the ongoing propaganda, they became less and less respectful in their behavior and one of them even threatened my father by grabbing a pitchfork, during an argument. Fortunately, he stared the man down.

At another time they broke into the cellar and stole several sacks of potatoes stored there. It was in the middle of the night, there were several of them, and they didn't even keep quiet, feeling confident that nobody will dare to stop them. Fortunately, my mother managed to keep my father from going out to confront them; it would not have been safe to do so.

Yet another time the barn where the tobacco leaves were processed caught fire. It was a calm evening, and hence, someone must have started that fire. Fortunately, it was put out in time for the ongoing work to be continued, for otherwise in addition to our loss, the women working there would have lost their jobs too.

As I might have said already, there were a total of 300 acres that the family was allowed to keep, 100 each of Nagymama, Piri néni and my mother. Since Babi néni and Mariska néni left the country in 1945, neither of them got anything back. Károly bácsi chose to stay in Budapest, and in fact, never showed himself in Nikla after the war and during those turbulent times of the communist takeover. Instead, he sent Piri néni there, especially during the summer to be sure to pack fruit and other products for their use, as well as to be fed there. At times, Hugi came with her, that I enjoyed. But of course, her main activity was to keep an eye on everything so as to ensure that they get their fair share. And while she didn't do anything, she still put her nose into everything. I don't recall her ever showing any appreciation towards my father for all that he has done for them. Once he asked my mother whether he could use one of the horses for riding, to which Piri néni responded negatively – hence, he continued to manage the land by going everywhere on foot. Looking back, at the very least he should have gotten at least a bicycle for himself.

Neither do I understand why Babi néni, her husband and son and her family were not included more in the family. My Nagymama and Mother should have shared with them and Mariska néni at least the proceeds of their 200 acres. She was just as much of a daughter of Nagymama as the other two. My mother was always so emphatic about being just and sharing things equally with her sisters. Why did she and Nagymama ignore the struggles of Bandi bácsi in nearby Marcali, rather than sharing with them their meager riches? Was it still held against Babi néni that she asked for her inheritance some years earlier? I will never know. How could my mother and Nagymama forget that after turning down my father's offer, it was Bandi bácsi who rescued the family from Nikla in the last few days before the front reached that part of Somogy?

There was a shortage of tobacco, and hence he got a good price when he sold the bundles of leaves, but success like his could not be tolerated by the communist system. They levied taxes on him well beyond his profits, threatened him with lawsuits, and even evicted us from the house he painstakingly rebuilt after the war. He had to plead to have the land taken away and he offered to the state all of his hard-earned machinery, buildings, and other possessions. Even then, we were constantly harassed for overdue taxes and other fees, with the clear intention of making our lives unbearable. In other words, his success was too much for the communist bosses of the countryside.

Unfortunately, after the war my **mother** went through some difficult times too. Her hysterotomy was followed by another operation for the removal of a tumor, and she was bedridden for weeks at a time. Fortunately, my father was there during those years and Nagymama and Bözsi was still with us too. But not for long. We had to let Bözsi go, when the Government discontinued my father's pension in 1947 and Nagymama died soon after the communists evicted us from our home



and had to move back to Mariska néni's house in the spring of 1949. The following year was a hard one on the family, greatly on account of the constant harassment by the communists, who took their time to finally free us of the last 7 acres too, which were scattered and totally useless.

### 1950 – 1951            **Apart**

Once again, my parents were separated – this time on account of my **father** leaving Nikla to avoid further harassment from the communist authorities there. Thus, he ended up as a shoe repairman, working with his brother, who was a PhD geologist without a job too. All people of noble birth along with everyone else who had any position of importance prior to the communist take-over were considered enemies of the people and were excluded from nearly all jobs. A number of them were also imprisoned, interned or deported for no reason at all. Studies beyond the elementary school were also limited to the children of the proletariat.

He took me along, hoping that it will ease the burden on Mother if she doesn't have to take care of me too. Of course, we had no idea of getting caught in the upcoming deportation, but we had to register as living with Kató néni, and hence we had to go with them

After the death of Nagymama and after we had to let Bözsi go, my **mother** somehow managed to pull herself together and overcame many of our difficulties during our worst years of dire poverty.

### 1951 – 1953            **Apart**

The separation of my parents continued during my **father**'s deportation. I remember sending him 'care packages' of apples and other things, writing letters, and getting letters from him. I was supposed to accompany him there, but my mother's petition was successful, and I was allowed to join her in Nikla. Hence, after a year in Budapest, I went back for the 7th and 8th grades to Nikla and graduated from grade school there.

I also remember assuring my father on my 13<sup>th</sup> birthday not to worry, since I am there to take care of matters. And indeed, I did some field work, and there was a time one summer that I worked near Balatonfenyves too. A truck would pick us up in the morning and take us back to Nikla in the evening every day. I also made trips with a borrowed bike to Marcali to sell belts that I made from scrap lather provided by Laci (bácsi) Popper and his friend, Rácz; time and again they would also send back some goodies with me, like a loaf of bread or some shortening.

My **mother** continued to struggle as best as she could in Nikla, keeping chicken, ducks, getting vegetables from Babi néni's garden, fruits from Mariska néni's orchard, and spiritual help from Bandi bácsi while he was still alive. Both him and Mariska néni died in 1953 and I went off to school in Csurgó.

### 1954 – 1956            **Partly apart**

My **father**'s deportation ended right about the time I started high school. From then on, he worked as a land surveyor (figuráns in Hungarian) whenever possible but was back in Nikla between jobs. That was the case in the summer of 1956 too, when he continued working in a summer job I had at the grain collection center in Nikla. Thus, he was there during the revolution and knew about my involvement in it too. His decision to leave the country with me might have been sudden, but I am sure my mother knew about it.

## Parents

## Another view

Seemingly, my **mother** always gave into being sick, weak and helpless whenever my father was there. She was often bedridden at such times, complaining about various pains, as well as about her pitiful situation, the ugly behavior of the peasants, the ruthlessness of communism. Nevertheless, deep down she was stronger than my father, and hence our family became separated in 1956.

I still remember vividly the endless arguments with her prior to our leaving Nikla, and then Hungary. I wanted the family to leave and stay together, and my father was arguing for the same. She claimed that she would die during the trip, and flatly refused even considering it. Hence, at the end I had to announce that I can't wait any longer and made plans to leave (with Gyuri Miseta) the next morning.



After all the humiliations and disappointments, and after returning from two years of deportation and struggling to have any kind of job for years, my father was ready to join me when the crushing of the 1956 Revolution necessitated that I leave the country. At age 60 he was willing to make a fresh start regardless of what it took.

Many years later I finally understood that my mother's refusal to leave Hungary in 1956 was partially stemming from her inner need to be in control. She felt that once she leaves Nikla, it will slip out of her hands.

### 1957 – 1964      **Apart**

During these 8 years of separation, my **father** went through some very difficult years of working as an elevator operator, school bus driver, and janitor in a huge apartment building, while I worked in a variety of jobs too and attempted university studies at most half-heartedly. We kept up with my mother via frequent letters and care packages we prepared for her. My father also sent money to her and then to Kató néni to help with Zolti's educational costs, but probably not enough. While he lived very frugally, he had a weakness for nice watches, cars and clothing, and at times he could not resist his urges. During the last couple of years, he was also helping me with my school expenses, which were high at the University of Dallas.



Meanwhile my **mother** struggled in Nikla with lots of visitors to the Berzsenyi Museum, as well as with Zolti's needs, which were taken over by Kató néni when she assumed responsibilities for him in Keszthely. Fortunately, everything worked out well in the 'long-run', with Zolti ending up with the most accomplished career in the entire family.

At the beginning, my father and I were living on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the house of our Bogyay relatives, Pipet bácsi and Manyi néni at 7 Parkland Place in St. Louis, Missouri. Later we moved to an apartment, then my father got a job as a school bus driver for a private school in Clayton, just

outside of St. Louis, and finally a job as the janitor for a huge and fancy apartment building in Clayton, prior to moving to Texas as I was preparing to go to Los Angeles with Laci Papp.

When he lost the janitor job due to no fault of his, he took a chance and moved to Ft. Worth, Texas, to teach horseback riding there. That was in 1961, and while it took some years to establish himself, that was a wonderful turning point in his life. Recognizing the excellent horseman, the gentleman, and the superb teacher in him, the community of knowledgeable horsemen of Ft. Worth made him feel welcome there. They addressed him as Colonel Vargha, thereby according him the respect denied by his own country. His students made him proud by performing excellently at horse shows and followed his teachings throughout their riding years. In fact, many of them still remember him fondly now, 40 years after he retired and nearly 25 years since his death.

Next, I show a picture taken in the summer of 1964 in Vickery Park with Libby and Kay. We were already engaged to be married by then. Thus, it is appropriate to display here our best wedding photo with Xelpho and my parents in attendance. Unfortunately, it is of very poor quality.



1965 – 1967 Partly together

In spite of us not getting married until January 16, 1965, Kay was already very much part of our family towards the end of 1964. Hence it was not totally unreasonable for my father to borrow money from her for mother's ticket for a visit to America in the fall of 1964. Unfortunately, I was far from being understanding, and certainly not diplomatic when I insisted on her returning to Hungary after her visit and getting official approval for leaving Hungary. I strongly believed that Zolti's chances of getting into the Academy in Keszthely would be seriously jeopardized if she would become an illegal dissident too. Our relationship became very tense, and even my father took her side much of the time. Thus, for example, they attended our wedding, but not our graduation from U.D.



Nevertheless, **mother** went back to Hungary. Once there, she immediately started her application for permission to leave the country, which she managed to get on the 12<sup>th</sup> of November 1966. She came out only some months later. Interestingly, during her absence our relationship with my father went back to normal even to the extent that he came with us to Kató's place at Christmas. The photo above shows him talking with Kató while I talked with Marika behind them, and Pista's mother, Joli néni was standing by herself.

**1967 – 1972 Together in Ft. Worth**

For all one could see, my parents were doing well, with my father continuing to teach English-style horse-back riding, dressage and jumping, and my mother in the background, which continued after her return too. Having achieved her goal of returning to America made her more relaxed.

I show a picture of them with Adam, to be followed by one taken at Christmas, 1967, when they visited us in Monroe, Louisiana – along with our friend, Attila Telkes. A couple of years later, when we moved back to Texas, at times they came to see us, at other times we visited with them, and even went to Galveston together once, as evidenced by a photo on the next page. There I also show a number of other pictures taken during our visits back and forth – with Eric joining us too, but not Daniel. You, Dani were born only after my parents moved back to Nikla, Hungary.



## Parents

## Another view

My father kept teaching until their departure, but at a different location. I went there with him once but didn't know the owner of the stables or even his students or parents thereof any longer. Looking back, I know I should have paid closer attention to his affairs, but we were busy with our lives – studies, papers, travels, kids, etc. Excuses, not reasons! Clearly, I should have made more time for them, should have paid more attention to their affairs, my mother's new friends, and the plans she was making. I was not aware of their finances either.

In the pictures below, I show them with us, with Pal, the dog I got from George Irvin, their red VW bug and their chinchillas. Someone talked them into raising chinchillas, which my mother enjoyed, but their business failed for some reason.



I also regret that we failed to take more pictures when we were with them. Consequently, we have only a few, and even those are not very good.

There was a time when I thought that they would move closer to us in retirement; we even looked at a house in Beaumont, but I had to pull back from buying it when I learned that my father was going to continue teaching horseback riding rather than retiring. They started talking about moving back to Europe, Zoltan was urging them to do so, while I opposed such plans in my letters. In those days telephoning was still expensive, and hence we wrote letters back and forth arguing about it.

In the meantime, my mother worked hard to get her American citizenship as soon as possible. And unbeknownst to us, she also made definite plans for their moving back to Europe. I barely arrived with Lydia to say farewell to them, as they were already going to the airport with Feri bácsi<sup>5</sup>, an old friend of mine, who became their friend too. Below, I show a picture of Feri bácsi and his wife, Bözsi néni with my mother, as well as one of Lydia saying good buys to her nagypapa.



Looking back, I recognize that my mother was planning on that move ever since she came back here in 1967, and I never had a chance to talk her (or later, my father) out of it.

**1972****Together in Bernstein**

At first, they hoped to settle in Austria, and rented a place in Bernstein, close to the Hungarian border, but soon recognized that they will not be able to afford living there. Going back and forth to Hungary without a car turned out to be difficult too, and hence I got an urgent letter telling me that I must send them tickets for them to return to America. I refused, but offered to help them financially, and to help them get a car.



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<sup>5</sup> Ferenc Gál came out in 1956 too. His wife, Bözsi néni joined him in Ft. Worth too I wrote about him more extensively in my account entitled „My non-mathematical friends”.

**1973 – 1986 Together, mostly in Nikla**

Indeed, we bought them a car. In the meantime, they managed to get their application approved for *repatriation*, made arrangements for getting their Social Security checks in Hungarian forints, and having their living quarters in the former servants' quarters of Mariska néni's house (the present museum) restored to them.

Fortunately, compared to Hungary's forints, the American dollar was a strong currency during these 15 years, and hence they managed to live quite well in Nikla. They could also afford to travel a bit, to rent a place by Lake Balaton some of the years, and my mother could afford even to make a donation to the Berzsenyi High School in Sopron for a scholarship for students.

The first picture on the right shows them arriving to the Museum in the winter, while the second one shows Laci Köllő next to his mother, Babi néni, Károly bácsi and my father in the back, and Piri néni with my mother in front.



**1976 Visit with Adam**

It was great to see them again in 1976, and they too were happy to see Adam and me again. Looking back, I recognize that my father was just a little older than me as I am writing this account. Unfortunately, the two weeks went by very fast. Nevertheless, we managed to reconnect with my cousins too on both sides of the family, and even had a mini reunion with my maternal cousins and their families in Nikla.



Nevertheless, the picture on the right shows only my parents and Zolti in addition to the two of us. Zolti and Ildikó were no longer married, and he didn't yet meet Judit, his wife. Thus, we stayed with him in the apartment on Hungária körút.



Below, I also show a picture of us in Nikla, standing next to the Berzsenyi Dániel bust, which was new to me. Thereafter lots of us visitors had our picture taken there, so much so that I could almost put an album put together of those photos.

## Parents

## Another view

After we returned to the United States and me to teaching at Lamar again, I was happy to learn that the school is planning to offer sabbatical leaves to deserving faculty members. Since I was just appointed to the USA Mathematical Olympiad Committee, and since Hungary was recognized as the birthplace for national mathematics competitions, I had a chance for putting together a winning proposal.

I did so, and after a lot more work and preparations, we were on our way to Hungary.



**1978**

### Sabbatical leave to Hungary

We arrived there in June and stayed in Balatonfenyves until school began in the fall. We saw my parents several times that summer and at times during the fall too, but not often enough. The distance to Nikla was too large and we had to get back the same day since there was no place to stay there. With school on Saturdays too and church on Sundays, we were limited timewise too.

Nevertheless, I have an individual picture of each of you with your grandparents. Except for you, Daniel, that was your last chance for such! I should also point out that we did a poor job of photography, our lives were hectic, and that the films of the 60s and 70s were in an experimental phase. Thus, even the pictures we took, didn't all survive the passage of time!



After your pictures with your grandparents, I will have one of the four of you with your aunts, Babi and Piri néni, who were both very happy to see you.





Next came some hard-working years when I had no chance to spend time away from the home front, and we didn't have money either for such long trips. Nevertheless, knowing that my parents were not getting younger, I had to squeeze in a trip, and it was your turn to go, Dani Boy. More precisely, you were the only one who could fly half-price.

### 1983 Visit with Daniel

To commemorate it, I have a photo on the right, serving as an introduction to Judit and Zoli too. Being my godson, I was also anxious to meet Zoltán György Berzsenyi, my only nephew.

It was also the first time that I met Judit Czékus, Zolti's second wife, who became one of our dearest relatives. Even though she barely knew our kids, she remembered everything about them, recognized them from their pictures and always inquired about them. Therefore, some years later, Kay and I had an album prepared on the children and sent a copy of it to Judit, as well as to my cousin, Hugi, who was similarly keeping track of all of them.

Judit and I became good friends, but I never managed to convince her to stand up to my brother's domineering attempts more effectively.



## Parents

## Another view

Next, I have two more pictures from 1983 – one of you with your loving grandparents, and one of Zolti and me with them. As far as I know, that is the only photo of the four of us. Unfortunately, that trip was a short one too, and to fill the gaps, we had to resort to postal letters once again.



### A thousand letters by my mother

I have them all, or at least most of them, and as mentioned earlier, I also managed to retrieve most of the letters written by me to my parents during the last 15 years of their lives. I hope to reread and categorize them, as well as to summarize their content if time permits. If not, I will have to leave that job to you, Dani Boy! I have them all in a box, which also contains several letters by my father too, as well as letters by me to him alone.

Moreover, I have lots of letters and a bunch of beautiful postcards from Zolti, who used to be a good correspondent too. Nowadays we correspond mostly via e-mail and we talk on the phone too, with him doing at least some of the calling (via a subscription plan I arranged for him and Márta). Zolti's letters are in that box too, but I also have a file of them too. He wrote especially often when he was working on his candidacy in East Germany and the Soviet union.

### Reflections

It saddens me a lot that I never managed to express my sincere appreciation to my parents for all that they did for me. Many of their actions were well beyond normal parental duties and often meant personal sacrifices by them in difficult times, and I didn't even recognize them until recently. I can only hope that they knew how I felt, and that my actions spoke more volubly than my words. Hopefully, they knew enough about my accomplishments in my professional life to have some pride in that too. And they had to be aware that none of them would have been possible without their guidance and the example they showed throughout the years. Nevertheless, it will ease my conscience to list at least some of those things, in no particular order, for which I am

particularly thankful to my father, with whom I spent many of my adult years along with a formative one, when I was in 6<sup>th</sup> Grade. He must have seen how much I followed in his footsteps, and that should have pleased him.

- He was there to pick me up when I fell and cried; two such instances I still remember
- I even remember him singing to me “Sárga a csikóm, ...” once
- He was there to calm me when I had some awful nightmares after the war
- He took me with him to Szentgotthárd and Budapest to see relatives when I was little
- He took me with him to Budapest in 1950 and looked after me during that school year
- Visiting with him and Gabi bácsi at Gabi bácsi’s shoe repair place and having a ‘sós kifli’ with them are among my favorite memories
- Spending some of the summer of 1954 with him was most wonderful too
- He came out with us (Gyuri Miseta and me) to Austria, where he spoke the language
- He came with me to America and looked after me to the best of his abilities
- He cooked for us, and I could live with him rent-free when he was working as a janitor
- He taught me how to play bridge and tarokk, which we played a lot
- He was paying my tuition at U.D. when I joined him in Ft. Worth
- He got along with Kay and enjoyed her company
- He was with me when Adam was born and worried about him alongside me
- He was a wonderful grandfather to Adam, doing his best to spoil him when he was little
- He was loving to his other grandkids too in 1978, and especially so to Daniel 5 years later
- He let me drive his cars whenever I wanted and/or needed
- He showed me by example how to be modest, understanding, loving, decent, honorable, considerate, thoughtful, happy, positive, dynamic and always optimistic

Indeed, I am most thankful to my father for all that he did for me and for all the love and care he showed especially towards me throughout his life.

Concerning my mother, my thoughts are more confused. In nature I am more similar to her, and that led to conflicts, misunderstandings, and even resentment at times. Consequently, I feel guilty for not being more patient and understanding with her, for allowing myself to get into arguments with her, for not being there, when she needed me the most. Nevertheless, I am thankful that

- She passed on to me her pride in the family and our ancestry
- She showed me by example of how to keep up with relatives
- She shared with me a lot of information, pictures and other memorabilia about our relatives
- She protected us during the most difficult times after the war
- She forgave my ‘desertion’ when I went to Budapest instead of Nikla at the end of my freshman year in high school
- She did her best in clothing and feeding us when we were extremely poor
- She taught me to speak more clearly, by ‘rolling my r-s’ and saying my s-es (sz-s)
- She stood by my father during his last years, which were hard for both of them
- She was there for Zolti, when he needed her
- She taught both of us proper behavior, and gave us the right code of ethics too

At times, when I was most upset with her, my father would say “She gave me two wonderful sons, so I can’t complain”. Indeed, that was the case. Both of us ‘turned out’ to be productive and good. And both our parents did a lot to make that possible.

They both lived long lives in spite of the many difficulties and struggles. My mother was 82 when she died, while my father had passed his 91<sup>st</sup> birthday when he died – more than 33 years ago.

**But I still miss both of them.**



### **1986            Mourning for my parents**

There were several warning signs in the last few letters of my mother, which I failed to heed. She repeatedly suggested that I should go back and bring my father with me since she is no longer able to take care of him. Unfortunately, her phrasing was still somewhat self-centered, feeling sorry for herself rather than describing how frail and demanding he became. The latter was totally out of character for him. I learned for example, that he would have her take his soup back to the kitchen if it was not hot enough. In the old days he was more subservient to her needs.

She had a stroke and had difficulties in talking. Nevertheless, on one of her last days in Nikla she wanted to tell something to Zolti alone, so she motioned to Piri néni to leave. Seemingly, Piri néni refused to do so – hence we will never know the ‘secret’ mother wanted to share with Zolti. I probably would have removed my aunt by force if needed. Mother died a few days later in Marcali, in the hospital there.

After her death, seemingly, my father was in shock. He refused to accept food from anyone, suspecting poisoning, and refused to leave Nikla in spite of efforts made even by my cousin, Márta at my request. Therefore, I was happy that Zolti eventually managed to talk him into going up to Budapest with him. While there, I even talked with him on the phone a couple of times, and we were making plans for me to bring him out to America. He even had his passport photo ready; I show it below, along with the last photo taken of my mother. I had my ticket to go for him, but seemingly, his system was not strong enough to have yet one more cycle in his life. His blood pressure dropped, and he died within a few days at Saint John Hospital in Budapest, where my brother took him.

Later I learned that on his deathbed he asked for me and talked about me, which makes me sad since I had the tickets to fly to Budapest and I didn’t do so. I bought the tickets to bring him out to America and I still believed that he would get well and I can do so; the thought of his dying never occurred to me. Needless to say, I should have been wiser!

## Parents

## Another view



As shown in their death notices above, Mother died on the 9<sup>th</sup> of November, while Father left us on Christmas Day, December 25, 1986. Both of them were buried in Nikla in the Berzsenyi Crypt, with Zolti taking care of the arrangements, as well as the financial obligations. I am certain that my parents had enough in their savings account to cover the costs; fortunately, I made sure that Zolti was a co-signer there. Two years later, when I went home for a longer visit in the summer of 1988, we divided between the two of us the few possessions left by them; Zolti allowed me to bring out the old mortar and pestle and the silver-coated tray which I remembered using, and he also turned over to me a silver cigarette case, a cigar case, a small trophy our mother won, as well as my father's ring (which was a replacement of the old one that he had to sell years earlier). That's when I paid my first visit at their gravesite – interestingly, with Kati, my 'old flame' at my side. Though she didn't know my mother, she knew my father well from our years in St. Louis.

### Further reflections

Exactly a third of a century went by since the death of my parents, and yet I still think of them often. At times, I can still see both of them in my mind's eyes, though I can no longer conjure up their images at will. My mother was short, maybe 5'2" or 5'1", while my father was relatively tall for his era, maybe 5'9" or 5'10", but gave up as much as an inch or two as he got old. Both had good posture, probably on account of riding – my mother only in her youth, my father later on as well. Thus, I never saw them slouch, like I often do, or even sitting back on a couch, luxuriating in its comfort. For that matter, Mother seemed to be sitting only on the edge of chairs as if to avoid being comfortable.

My father's disposition was usually cheerful or at least, inclined to be such, while Mother tended to be morose, easy to turn sad and negative, as if she preferred such state of mind. He looked forwards, while she seemed to prefer the long-ago past, but not to talk about it with joy, but to bemoan it's passing. He was adventurous, she had no interest in trying anything new and unfamiliar. He was interested in social interaction – be it card playing, visiting, miniature golf, or going to a swimming pool; Mother had no such interests. I can remember only a couple of times when she was totally relaxed, but I hope that during their years in Ft. Worth and then in Nikla she was more content.

On the other hand, in spite of her being sickly, she was stronger both in having her way and in not giving in to temptations for choosing the easier route. I don't recall a time that he won an argument over anything. In addition to having military trucks on the ready to pick up the family in Nikla and escape to the West with some of our possessions towards the end of World War II, he also recommended selling our fledgling enterprise in 1946-47 and restart our lives in Switzerland or somewhere in the West. He sensed the coming of communism and the closing of the borders and wanted us to move to a safer world. But my mother wouldn't listen then either. And thus, we stayed there for the worst years of communism.

Interestingly, my parents were 'per tu'; that is, they addressed one another informally (in Hungarian 'tegezés', like the French 'tois'), while my mother and her sisters addressed each other formally (in Hungarian 'magázás', like the French 'vous'). Zolti and I, as well as with our parents, used the more informal 'te' form of 'you' rather than its 'maga' form. By the way, 'per tu' became 'pertu' recently and you say it as you toast your friend, clinking your glasses of wine, saying 'let's drink a pertu'.

Returning to my parents, my father was very athletic, muscular and strong. Loved the outdoors and enjoyed teaching and practicing horseback riding – both dressage and jumping. He was happy playing miniature golf with Kay and me also, as well as with our friend, Kálmán Halász, when he was available. And he also enjoyed shopping at Neiman Marcus, buying what appealed to him, without looking at the price tag. He limited himself usually to a tie or very occasionally, a watch. And he loved his Buick Limited, but parted with it when I joined him in Ft. Worth and bought a VW for me to drive back and forth to the University of Dallas. It was a huge sacrifice for him!

Compared to him, my mother was always frugal and careful in her spending. But I have no idea about their everyday life during her 5 years in America. Did she accompany him to the grocery store? How much of the cooking did she take over? Most of it, I think, but I doubt that she did any of the shopping. And I doubt that she accompanied him to the stables or paid any attention to the horses, even to his horse. Makes no sense, but that's how she was. And even the chinchillas were an investment, though she seemed to have warmed up toward them.

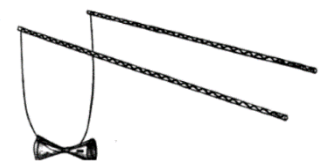
She prayed a lot; seemingly, there were specific prayers in her missal which she read every day, but I don't remember her ever picking up a novel; of the three sisters, only Gabriella (Babi néni) was a reader. Babi néni read enough for the three of them, but I can't remember what kind of novels and where she got them. My father read some too, but only at bedtime, and then only a page or two.

Of the two of them, Mother was the disciplinarian. I remember getting spanked by her, but not by my father. In fact, she is the one who brought us up and saw to our needs in everything – at first, with Bözsi's help, later by herself. Bözsi (Erzsébet Stefanics) was in the family's employ as a 'gyerek lány' (child girl, looking after Zolti); we had to let her go in 1949 when we could no longer pay her salary. I will write about her more in **Part 3** of these **Tales**.

Of his siblings, my father was closest to Kató néni (Katalin) and Gabi bácsi (Gábor); of them, Mother liked Gabi bácsi, but her relationship to Kató néni was complicated. On the one hand, she resented that compared to our poverty, Kató néni was well off. While prior to communism, they were the 'poor relatives', who had to work for a living, after the communist take-over in 1949, our roles were reversed. One by one, Mother had to part with the few pieces of jewelry that she managed to salvage, and they all ended up at Kató néni's for however much she chose to pay for them. It would have been dangerous to try to sell them outside the family; even the possession of them would have been a crime under communism. And thus, all of them, even Mother's wedding ring was sold to Kató néni. My father was the 'carrier', who often went to Budapest at the request of Kató néni, who seemed to take advantage of his availability – much too often, according to Mother. Indeed, he ended up escorting my cousins, Kató and Márti to various events and was very close to them. At least Kató remembers him more fondly than of her own father. I also suspect that Father's being at Kató néni's 'beck and call' was at least partially welcomed by him, since it meant an escape from Mother and our poverty.

Later on, Mother was forced into appealing for Kató néni's help with respect to Zolti's schooling, which meant even more indebtedness and resentment too. So much so that even my father turned against Kató, and in spite of living in the same town (Fort Worth), as far as I know, they never got together with them during Mother's years in America (1967-72). Even Móni's sickness and tragic death was ignored by them, and I am sure that Mother also resented my continuing friendliness towards them.

I also remember my father bringing some books from Kató néni's prior to the summer of 1950, as well as some games and a dog named Daisy, which was loved by all of us. The games included one called Tivoli, as well as the 'flying cones' shown on the right, while 'Robinson Crusio', 'Robin Hood' and 'A moment in Peking' were among the books, as



well as volumes by Jules Verne and Karl May – they were no longer of interest to Kató and Márta. Seemingly, the dog was a gift to Kató néni, but they already had a big black dog named Némó and couldn't keep Daisy. Hence, Father brought it home. At first, Mother was not keen on it, she didn't care for being the recipient of 'hand-me-downs', but Daisy grew on her too. Concerning hand-me-downs, Mother had an acquaintance in Szombathely, whom we knew only as 'The poor woman' (in Hungarian, Szegény asszony; that was our name for her), who seemed to be struggling in bringing up several children by herself. Even in our worst poverty, Mother would prepare packages for her, including clothing we had outgrown. In other words, in addition to holding grudges, Mother had a lot of charity in her. As another trait of hers, let me mention that at every meal, Mother would leave a morsel of everything she had on her plate. I asked her about it but got no answer.

Father smoked until the last 15 years of his life and drank his coffee with 5 teaspoons of sugar; and I happily emulated him. He quit smoking years before I did and urged me in his letters to do the same. He was concerned about my health, and seemingly, rightly so. Fortunately, he didn't live to see my struggles with it later on.

Unfortunately, after deportation and during the times that he was in Nikla, his patience was lacking when it came to helping Zolti in his studies. While I never needed any attention with respect to my schoolwork, Zolti struggled and would have preferred fishing to attending school. He could be extremely stubborn and probably chose to resist Father's interference. All in all, their attitude towards one another was poor. It didn't make sense to me since one of the things I admired about my father was his patience with his riding students (as well as with me), which was also exhibited when it came to sharpening a pencil with a pocketknife: the outcome was symmetrical all around, like a piece of art.

When we were arguing back and forth in November 1956 whether the whole family should leave the country, Father repeated time and again that after we settle in the West, he would put Zolti into a boarding school; hearing that, Zolti was probably relieved when it was decided by Mother not to leave the country and to keep Zolti with her. Their relationship improved after my parents settled in Nikla in 1973, but never became as good as mine was with Father. He was old and set in his ways, while later I learned from experience too that Zolti can hold a grudge just as well as Mother.

In some ways, Father was a born American, allowing everyone to prove themselves, not being judgmental about a person's color or origin or educational background. He would have been happier staying in America, rather than living in Nikla for the last 15 years of his life. But Mother had different ideas, and in fact, I am sure that she was intent on staying here only long enough to get her citizenship and move back right afterwards. During their last couple of years in America, Zolti was also encouraging them to move back, and hence, I was clearly outnumbered.

In characterizing my parents, I should add that both were very smart in their own ways, and both were wise in some ways too. They were very different from one another and extremely poorly matched, but loyal to the end. They brought us up to be decent, caring and true to the values inherited from our noble ancestors, and on the whole, both Zolti and I turned out OK. Paraphrasing our father, 'Why should anyone ask for more?'



## My paternal aunts and uncles

Concerning the birth of my father and his seven siblings, in addition to the official church records, I have an even more authentic affidavit in their mother's handwriting, shown on the right. It was found at the Lutheran Archive in Budapest by my wonderful cousin-in-law, Imre Gyimesi among the notes of Zoltán Daróczy, a well-known genealogist. It seems Daróczy was preparing an entry about the Vargha family for an upcoming issue of his Nemesi Évkönyv (Yearbook on the nobility), and Gomika, my paternal grandmother was providing information for it. Not only about the birth of her children, but also about her late husband's siblings. Moreover, she 'reported' that she forwarded the inquiry to János Vargha in Balatonfüred, thereby proving that she kept in touch with the Varghas there too. Unfortunately, this

A kívánt adatok miatt minőjait írtam  
Jánosnak Türecsre és Mariskának Hapossvár-  
ra, hogy kövöljék azokat veled. Magdával  
már évek óta nem levelezünk, csak annyit  
tudok, hogy férje boszári Ivánszék Géza, Abji-  
negyházban Lőrincy síki birtó, két gyerme-  
ke van Rik Kónil Ella 20, Géza 18 éves. Mag-  
da 1867. évi született Lőpén.  
Magdalállam Magda és Karoly keresztleve-  
leit az iratok között és elküldtem.  
A minőjait <sup>Vargha Jenő anyósja</sup> Jánosnak közlök az adatok ezek:  
Jenő 1865. évi született Lőpén júl. 5. meghalt  
1908. jan. 20. Solymanon.  
Az évi leánykori nevem Fritsch Anna születés  
1874. jan. 8. Sopron.  
Laci született Hamisán 1891. maj. 27.  
Margit - Vácon 1892. nov. 19.  
Marianne (Mici) Leván 1894. szept. 8.  
Miklós - Pakospalotán 1895. dec. 19.  
Katica - Vácon 1898. jan. 8.  
Ilonka - Vácon 1901. jan. 6.  
Lajos - Vácon 1902. okt. 27.  
Bálint - Solymanon 1907. aug. 4.

piece of paper, as well as the more extensive 'rough draft' about the family turned up only after I did much of the research concerning the birth of my father's siblings.

## Laci bácsi

was born in Nagykanizsa on May 27, 1891 and was named Emil László Zsigmond as the first-born child of Jenő Vargha and Anna Jozefa Fritsch. I learned from his baptismal record that my grandparents lived at Hunyady utca 1073, my grandfather was a certified pharmacist, and the godparents of Laci bácsi were Zsigmond Rémi and his wife, Viktória Marchal, Gomika's first cousin. They must have been close, and it was probably through the Rémis that my grandparents met, but I don't know. I just surmise it from the fact that the Rémis were the witnesses at my grandparents' wedding and that Laci bácsi was given the name Zsigmond too.



The first photo on the right was seemingly taken of him in 1910; the others below show him in uniform. He was a first lieutenant in the Austro-Hungarian Air Force, who shot down several enemy planes during World War I. Therefore, he became the recipient of the equivalent of the Medal of Honor twice, along with the German Iron Cross, and several other decorations. Unfortunately, he died in a tragic accident right after WW I, so I never met him.



I also have one more photo of Laci bácsi, showing him in much more relaxed times. Unfortunately, I can't identify any of his companions, and nobody responded when I put up an inquiry about it onto the Hungarian Radix website.

Laci bácsi died a tragic death in the prime of his youth. I will tell you about it in the section to be entitled "More about Laci bácsi".

Next, I have a few words about



### **Margit néni,**

who was christened Margit Erzsébet, was born in Vác, just a bit north of Budapest, on February 19, 1892, and her godparents were her father's sister, Magdolna, and her husband Géza Svastits. Interestingly, it was also noted in the 'Comments' column of her baptismal record that her parents were married on February 17, 1890, in Ferencváros, a part of Budapest. It was with the help of that comment that I managed to find my grandparents' marriage record; otherwise, I wouldn't have known where to look for it.

Margit néni became a kindergarten teacher and later the headmistress of a kindergarten in Soroksár, which later became a part of Budapest too. Gomika, my paternal grandmother lived with her after her other children grew up. Probably, at Soroksári út 75, since that's the address my father gave when he got married in 1935 as his home address. I saw her only once when I visited

her and Gomika with my father. Margit néni died in the late 1940s, soon after that visit. Unfortunately, I don't even have a photo of her.

### Mici néni

was the third child of my paternal grandparents; she was christened Marianna but was known to us all as Mici néni or Micike to my older cousins. She was born on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September 1894 in Léva, where my grandfather was working as a cashier for the railroads. Seemingly, he gave up on the field of pharmacy, and from that point on he was working for the railways of Hungary throughout his short life. When he died at age 42 in 1908, all of his children were less than 17 years old, and hence not only Margit, but Marianna had to grow up very fast. Thus, she could not further her education either, but learned typing fast and became a secretary as soon as she was old enough. She worked in that capacity throughout her working career, which included some years in Pécs, where she was the executive secretary at some big firm. Later she moved to Budapest, where she lived with her younger brother, Gábor at Hungária körút 198. Many years later that became my brother's apartment, where we also spent some memorable times – with you, Dani in 1983, Eric in 1995 and Adam in 2000, Lydia and Rochelle were also there in 1991.

With respect to Mici néni, I show a photo of hers taken in the early 1940s with her niece, Kató and one taken in 1978, when all of us were in Hungary. In the second one, your mom stands with her and the four of you, Adam, Lydia, Eric and Daniel. I find it remarkable how little did she change in all those years!



Later we took Mici néni with us to Keszthely, when my cousin, Miklós Kovács was visiting there with his family, and his brother, Gyszi invited us to join them at his place too. Unfortunately, I don't have any photos from that visit, which was the only time that the daughters of Gyszi and Miklós and our four kids were together. Looking back, I am sorry that we didn't spend more time with Mici néni too, since she died a couple of years later. I always liked her in spite her critical tongue and strange ways. And I remember her 'smuggling me' out of Budapest and taking me by train to Keszthely (to Ili néni's place) in June 1951 to escape deportation. I stayed there until my mother's petition was acted on favorably later that summer, and I could go back to Nikla to finish Grades 7 and 8 there.

By the way, Mici néni's godparents were her paternal grandfather, Imre Vargha and her maternal great-grandmother, Anna Hudeček neè Prachar.

Gomika's fourth child was my father, Miklós, whose birthday we celebrated always on the 18<sup>th</sup>, rather than the 19<sup>th</sup> of December, like Gomika claimed. Unfortunately, the records of his birth and baptism are not available to verify the correct date.

Gomika's 5<sup>th</sup> child was

### **Kató néni,**

called Katica in her account. She was born on January 8, 1898 in Vác. I know nothing about her youth, except for hearing that she spent a semester or a year at the Sorbonne in Paris, probably after she got her degree in medicine, specializing in ophthalmology, but switched to dentistry upon meeting and marrying Antal Bosnyák in 1927, whom we called Tóni bácsi. He was a dentist too, and hence they practiced together. He was extremely hard-working, but far from generous – hence, the year my father and I spent at their place (1950-51) as Kató néni's poor relatives, was most difficult for my father. During deportation the following year Kató néni divorced Tóni bácsi, and when deportation was over in 1954, they went their separate ways. Tóni bácsi moved back to his hometown of Komló, near Pécs, while Kató néni moved to Keszthely. Nevertheless, they collaborated wonderfully in building the house where their younger daughter, Márti (for Y'all, Márti néni) lives now at Sasadi út 33. It was to be for both Márti and her older sister Kató (the younger Kató néni), but Kató left the country in 1956 – along with husband Pista and daughter Ani – and hence the huge house, to which Márti added later yet another floor, is Márti's now.



Over the years our relationship with Kató néni became a lot more interwoven, than with the other siblings of my father. That was partially on account of her relatively frequent visits to America to be with Kató and family, and hence you and your mother got to know her, and partially since my brother lived with her in Keszthely for several years during his high school and college years. Her fluency in English was also helpful in making our visits with her more memorable. And of course, I got to know her better during my year in Budapest. Moreover, apart from his younger brother, Gabi bácsi, my father was



closest to Kató néni, which served us well in some ways, but also caused some arguments on the homefront, with my mother being upset about my father's willingness to rush to Budapest whenever Kató néni called for him. And yet at the same time my mother had to be grateful to Kató néni for buying whatever jewelry was salvaged by her during the war. Piecemeal, as we became more and more desperate, including even her wedding ring at the end.

Next, I have three more pictures of Kató néni. The picture on the previous page shows Kató néni with her older daughter, Kató, Kató holding Alex, Pista, Kay, and our four kids in Ft. Worth, TX in 1974. The first one below shows her with my father in 1983, when you, Daniel and I took my father to Budapest and spent some time with Kató néni too. And the second photo shows her with younger daughter, Márta and Márta's grandson, Márk; this picture was taken in 1995, when you, Eric joined me in Hungary for a week. That was the last time I saw Kató néni, who died in 1997 at the age of 99.



Following Kató néni, next in birth was

### **Ili néni,**

or more properly, Ilona, whom Gomika called Ilonka. She was born in Vác too, on the 6<sup>th</sup> of January 1901. She was an excellent cook, a wonderful homemaker, and a loving relative. She was also a kindergarten teacher. Her husband, Gyula Kovács, whom she married in 1929, was the technical director of postal services in Keszthely, and a jovial and loving giant of a man, at least, that's how I remember him from my childhood.

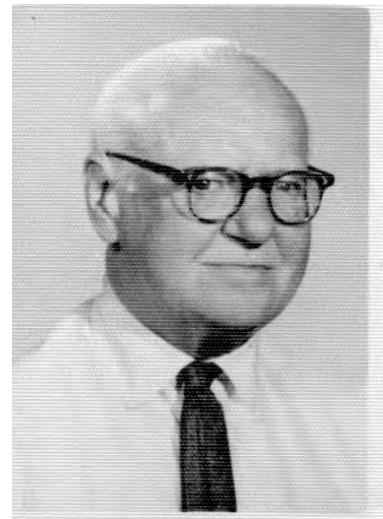
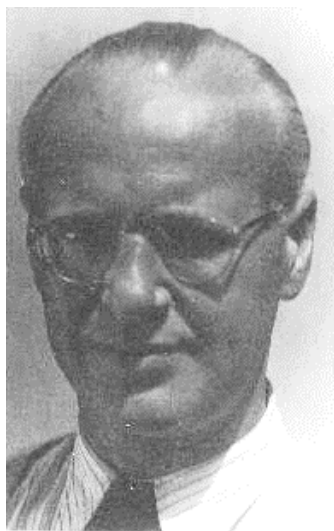
I liked both of them and have fond memories of the months I spent at their place during the summer of 1951. I saw her again when I went back to Hungary in 1976; by then she and Gyula bácsi were divorced too. Nevertheless, we were fortunate to see him at their son's, Gyszi's place, when you, Adam and I visited there briefly. And we all saw her, as well as their younger son, Miklós and his family in 1978, when we all went to Gyszi's place in Keszthely for a nice big get-together to which we took Mici néni too. Later it was via an old letter written to Ili néni that I managed to reconnect with our Vargha relatives in Balatonfüred, and it was via Miklós that I located my second cousin, Miklós Péterfia.

After Ili néni came



### Gabi bácsi,

my favorite uncle. He was named Gábor, was born in Vác on October 27, 1902, and became a doctor of geology, but worked only a few years in his field due to a drinking problem. In his youth, he also showed great talents in art, and was commissioned to make sketches of famous buildings of Budapest for the Sunday edition of a newspaper; I would love to locate those drawings of his. Three pictures of him are shown below, the first from his university document, the second one is from the 1940s, while the last one is from his identity card in the 1970s.



Next, I have two pictures taken during one of his visits to Nikla. In the first one, it seems we were shopping in nearby Marcali, while in the second one he stands on the right next to my mother. The picture also shows my maternal grandmother in the center, Piri néni and Károly bácsi, as



well as us kids, with me between Hugi and Gaston. She liked Gabi bácsi and couldn't get upset with him even when he came home tipsy back in Szombathely during the war, bringing along his friend, Pali Pulszky, as well as a songwriter friend, and would wake me up, mumbling to me sweetly. I still remember a song I learned from them on one of those nights. By the way Gabi bácsi was engaged to the sister of Pali, but they never married. To keep him out of trouble, my father had Gabi bácsi assigned to his unit during the war, and they were together as American POWs also. After they escaped from there, Gabi bácsi settled in Budapest and lived with Mici néni in the apartment on Hungária körút, which later became my brother's when the two of them

moved in with their maternal uncle, Emil bácsi, upon the death of Emil bácsi's wife. Gabi bácsi died there in 1976, just before my first trip back to Hungary; he is buried in Keszthely with Gomika, Ili néni, Gyszi bácsi, Ili néni's son-in-law, Endre Halász, as well as Ili néni's son, Cousin Gyszi.

After Gabi bácsi's death, Ili néni moved in with Mici néni, but later she moved back to Keszthely to live with a friend of hers. She died there in 1983. Mici néni died a couple of years earlier at Márti's place after Márti recognized that she can no longer take care of herself, and took her in.

It seems, Emil bácsi's wife had a nephew, whose name may have been Emil Rendreis (according to Cousin Márti), who kept bothering Márti about the stuff left in the apartment at Kisfaludy utca15 in Kispeszt, after Mici néni died. Finally, Márti let him do whatever he wanted with it. It is sad, since Mici néni collected whatever she could about her Fritsch - Hudeček grandparents, and now all of that is gone. And all of Emil bácsi's possessions are gone too.

I have fond memories of Gabi bácsi repairing shoes with my father in 1950-51 in the back of a small clothing store on Veres Pálné utca; time and again, it would be my job to deliver those shoes to their owners. And I will always treasure the wonderful letter written by Mici néni and him in 1965 congratulating us on our wedding.

Returning to Gomika's family, the youngest child of my grandparents was

### **Bálint bácsi,**

who was born in Solymár on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August 1907. According to everyone in the family, he was a brilliant young man, with talents in music, mathematics and other areas of art, but, as far as I know, he didn't accomplish anything in life. I have only one photo of his, coming from his university 'index', a booklet in which his courses and grades were recorded. This ended up at my brother somehow. Though he was old enough to stay out of it, he volunteered for service during World War II, and died on a mission defending Hungary's border at the Carpathians. I knew about his death but didn't know the date (October 26, 1944) and place (the village of Tivadar) of it until I learned them from Dr. Péter Szabó, one of the senior researchers at the Military Achieves in Budapest, whose information also revealed that Bálint was born in Solymár. At that time, I didn't



yet have Gomika's note, and hence I didn't know when and where my grandfather died either. Suspecting that it was in Solymár, I asked another friend, Béla Puskás, to check on it; that's how I learned that indeed, Grandfather Jenő Vargha died there on January 20<sup>th</sup> 1908 of cancer of the liver and was buried there in the B-section of the Catholic cemetery. Unfortunately, that part of the cemetery was turned into a housing project, and hence, there is no hope for locating his grave. With respect to Bálint, I also learned from Dr. Szabó that he was an ensign in the reserves and was serving in the 63<sup>rd</sup> Regiment of the Hungarian Army. His death was recorded in a thick volume edited by Dr. Szabó and his colleague, János Bús. Unfortunately, I never met him.

At this point I should mention that my only other uncles on my father's side of the family were

**Tóni bácsi and Gyula bácsi,**

both by marriage only. Neither of them did I know well enough to say much about them. I saw Tóni bácsi only occasionally during my year in Budapest (1950-51) and then once at Márty's towards the end of his life. Similarly, I remember only fleetingly of Gyula bácsi from the summer of 1951 and from his appearance at Gyuszi's when you, Adam and I visited them in 1976. And I don't even have a photo of either of them. On the other hand, I was a lot more around my maternal uncles, and hence will have a lot more to say about them. As you will see, there were also two of them, Károly bácsi, the husband of Piri néni, and Bandi bácsi, the husband of Babi néni. And thus, Gabi and Bálint bácsi were my only blood-related uncles (along with Laci bácsi, who died earlier), of whom I knew only Gabi bácsi – along with the four that married into the family

Concerning aunts, I had the four natural ones, Margit, Mici, Kató and Ili néni on my father's side of the family and – as you will see – two on my mother's side of the family. No aunts via marriage on either side of the family.

**All in all,**

except for brief encounters, I spent very little time with any of my father's siblings and their families. Hence, I can only surmise that circumstances kept them apart much of the time. With their father's untimely death, Laci bácsi and my father were sent off to military school – thanks to Gábor bácsi of Szentgotthárd, who was a 5<sup>th</sup> cousin of my grandfather and a man of influence in such matters. And Gomika didn't have a house or a big enough home to serve as a meeting point for her family, or even a hometown, which would have attracted her children back. Of course, they didn't have the means to entertain or to visit relatives either, resulting in nearly complete isolation from other members of the family.

Due to the early death of my Vargha grandfather and then with the death of the family's eldest, Laci bácsi, Gomika's efforts to keep her family together were not successful. Rather than staying close to one another, they broke up into segments, with Gomika living with Margit néni, Mici néni with Gabi bácsi, Bálint bácsi being brought up by too many women, and hence distanced from his brothers. Kató néni, Ili néni and my father got married and went their own ways. My father, for example, remained close only to Gabi bácsi and to a lesser extent Kató néni; with respect to the others, he seemed to be more distant. Mici and Ili néni became closer only after Gabi bácsi's death, while Kató and Ili néni found each other only after they both divorced their husbands and Kató néni moved to Keszthely.

Thus, it was only later that they rediscovered their Svastits relatives too, and it was probably too late for them to forge a stronger relationship with their second cousins, the 'Berzsenyi girls' even after my father married one of them.



### My maternal aunts and uncles

While in my father's family, all 8 of the children survived and reached adulthood, unfortunately, in my mother's family the first-born Farkas Kálmán László Lajos lived only 24 days, while the last-born Dániel Zoltán even less, only 6 days. Hence, it was natural that my grandparents were most cautious in the upbringing of their daughters, even to the extent of spoiling them. Their caution was further justified by the fact that two of my grandfather's cousins, Zoltán and Szerafin, also died in infancy when he was just a little boy, while his cousin Matild, who was only 4 years younger than him, died at age 16 of cholera while a student in Pest. And even earlier, Dániel Berzsenyi's sister also died as a child of 2 years of age. Such tragedies must have influenced my grandfather's views, who was in his 50<sup>th</sup> year when his first daughter,

#### Babi néni,

Mária Gabriella Alexandra Berzsenyi was born in Nikla on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January 1901. It seems she was a plump little girl who preferred domesticity, flowers, reading and a quiet life, rather than horseback riding and such activities – and thus, she was often left alone by her more boisterous younger sisters. She was also the only one who had a life-long friend among the girls of the village, while her sisters had each other and would not have lowered themselves to befriend a mere peasant girl. She had a huge heart, a sunny disposition, and was as different from her sisters as if they came from different families. The picture of hers with her mother shown on the right was taken in 1907 in Abázia, which was a favorite resort town on the Adriatic Sea in those days. As a young girl, she must have been beautiful, but far from shapely, and hence it was no wonder that in spite of being the oldest, she was the last to get married. I liked her a lot. Below I show two pictures of her and of Bandi bácsi, her husband – one at their wedding, on March 18, 1939 and one sometime afterwards. Her wedding photo is on the next page.



Unfortunately, Babi néni was resented by her sisters, when she asked for her rightful share of the Berzsenyi holdings, but Nagymama relented, and turned over to the newlyweds the vineyard in Gomba, the field that was known as 'Lók', as well as some other lands in the vicinity of Marcali, where Babi néni and Bandi bácsi lived. Later they moved into

some living quarters in Gomba; once we visited them there. I also remember being at a grape harvest in Gomba in 1942 or '43.



In the picture above, I recognize Piri néni (right next to Bandi bácsi's mother in front) and my mother (behind Babi néni to the right) next to my Juhász Nagymama, with Mariska néni (almost covered on her left). My father is the third man in the back from the right. To the right of Piri néni is István Lájpczig (Pisti bácsi), a fellow land-owner and a distant Berzsenyi relative. And I even have a picture of the carriage that took the newlyweds away.



After the war, when we all lived in the present Berzsenyi Museum, Babi néni did a lot of work in her vegetable garden, and later helped my mother with the chickens and ducks we kept. We also depended on Babi néni for news from the village; she often went on long walks from one end of the village to the other on 'tours of gossip', which were frowned upon by my mother, who kept to herself most of the time and went only to the church when she felt well enough to leave our yard. Mother also fussed at Babi néni constantly because of her poor housekeeping habits, but to no avail. They were both set in their ways and coexisted in a caring but loveless companionship.

It speaks well for Babi néni that of the three sisters she was the only one who had a lifelong friend in the village. Margit Vecsernik was similar to her both in nature and in stature, and Babi néni often visited her. Margit néni lived with the barber, János Sárdi, but couldn't marry him since he was divorced. As a favor to Babi néni he cut our hair much of the time.

After the untimely death of Bandi bácsi, Babi néni had to struggle a lot to bring up their only son, Laci. She had a small salary for being the cleaning woman for the museum, and my mother helped her whenever needed. Fortunately, when Laci became a student at the high school in Csurgó, he too became a 'ward of the state', and hence she no longer had to worry about him. Unfortunately, after his marriage, Laci distanced himself from his mother, making her isolation even worse. She read a lot, novels of all kinds throughout her life, while I don't remember my mother or Piri néni ever picking up a book.

Babi néni died on the 18<sup>th</sup> of September 1982, and hence I didn't get to see her on my third visit to Hungary. She was laid to rest in the Köllő crypt in Marcali next to her husband, but unfortunately, only her maiden name was engraved there, and not even her dates of birth and death, while 'full honors' were given to her son's mother-in-law later, in spite of the fact that she doesn't even belong there. Babi néni deserved more.

Mother's other sister,

### **Piri néni,**

who was christened Piroska Ida Antonia, was born on February 21, 1902, also in Nikla. She was only 2 years older than my mother. Both of them were short and thin, of an ideal shape for horsemanship, which they enjoyed a lot. Nevertheless, it seems my mother was more single-minded in such pursuits, since I never heard about Piri néni winning anything, while I know my mother competed and won trophies not only in dressage and jumping, but also in driving foursomes and fivesomes. In the picture shown on the right, she is on the left, while my mother is on the right.



All three girls were instructed at home in languages (German, English and French) by live-in governesses, who also taught them to play the piano. Later Babi and Piri néni also attended a private school in Budapest known by the name 'Angol Kisasszonyok' (English Maiden), conducted by young ladies from England, who were sent to Hungary since they could not practice their Catholic religion back home. Somehow my mother missed out on that – possibly on account of the fact that their father was not in the best of health. Grandfather Sándor Berzsenyi had a weak heart, which eventually killed him in 1921 at the age of 69.

Next, I show Piri néni's wedding photo below. She married a highly decorated officer of the Hungarian Army, Baron Károly Ungár, known to us as Károly bácsi on June 23, 1928 in Nikla.



Piri néni and Károly bácsi lived in Budapest, but spent a lot of time in Nikla, when I was there with my mother. My memories of them date back to those days, as exemplified by the photo on the right, where Piri néni and Károly bácsi stand on the right of my Nagymama, while Gabi bácsi is on her left.

Piri néni was a frequent visitor in Nikla immediately after the war as well, as if to make certain that they got their share of everything. She was a shameless grabber of goods for her family instead of being appreciative for what my parents have done for her and the Ungár family. I remember well her packing box after box of foodstuff and sending them to their place in Budapest just to make sure that they got their share of the produce.



My father worked from daybreak till late in the day, walking from place to place in order to oversee the work being done by our employees (in the fields of the tobacco plants, the sawmill, the brick-laying place, the feeding of the animals, etc.). And yet, when he asked my mother whether he may train one of the colts for himself (so as to go from place to place on horseback rather than on foot),

my mother felt that she needs to check with Piri néni (since they, as well as my grandmother were co-owners of everything) about it first. Her answer was a derisive 'no' instead of granting such a small favor in return for all the work my father did for them.

In 1951 the Ungár family was also deported to the Province of Békés. Following that, my mother saw to it that they were also given living quarters in the Berzsényi Museum in Nikla. All three sisters were involved with the care and operation of the museum and lived in the former servants' quarters / kitchen / storage area subdivided into 3 rooms, a kitchen, a toilet and a bathroom. When my mother came out to America, it was Piri néni who took over from her as its guide and switched rooms with her without even asking. Thus, she ended up with the largest room. She continued to serve in that capacity until the last year or two of her life, relating the story of her great-grandfather in French, German, English or Hungarian, as needed.

On the right I show a picture that was probably the last one of Piri néni. It was taken by you, Eric, when we visited my cousin, Gaston in March of 1995. Throughout her life she was a selfish, self-centered person, who took advantage of my mother's loyalty to her sisters. I didn't like her. In a way she got her 'just deserts' when after my mother's death, in his bereavement my father threatened her repeatedly, banging on her door saying, 'I will kill that cruel witch!' My father was a perfect gentleman throughout his life, and it took lifelong irritation by Piri néni for him to lose his 'cool'. Naturally, I feel sorry only for my father for having suffered so many insults by her that he lost his incredible self-control.



Neither did she show any appreciation towards my mother, who secured for them an apartment in Nikla following the release of the Ungár family from deportation. Instead, as soon as my mother left for a visit to America in 1964, they put all her stuff into a smaller room and took over her slightly larger room. That's how they showed their appreciation to my mother, who not only secured a place for them, but turned over her job to Piri néni as guide at the Berzsényi Museum. Moreover, the guest books turned over to Piri néni by my mother somehow 'disappeared'. They would have been of interest to me for the addresses of distant Berzsényi relatives who visited the Museum when I was organizing our first Berzsényi reunion in 2005, but they failed to surface.

### **Károly bácsi**

became one of the most decorated officers of the Hungarian Army, greatly on account of his brave exploits during World War I. Thus, by the time I knew him, he was a general, a baron, was knighted as a 'vitéz' (brave) and was given the forenames "bukoweberdói és ujsiceia", but nevertheless visibly damaged, at least psychologically, by his experiences in the war.



The second pictures of him shown on the right, displays many of his awards (including the order of Maria Theresia). Nevertheless, even as a child, I couldn't help noticing his contradictory nature and behavior. On the one hand, he was very charming and complementary to everyone. He was always nice to me, and later I learned from Zolti that upon his visits to Nikla after our mother came out to America, Károly bácsi was always fatherly towards him. And I also remember him playing the Coppelia waltz on the piano, when he was in better spirits. But I also remember his extreme agitation when some American parachuters landed near Nikla; I was puzzled by his rushing back and forth, peeking out this window and that after he had all of the curtains closed. Since Gaston was sickly with ear problems, it may have been excusable to spoil him a bit, but the extent to which that was done was truly extreme. His sister, Lenke, who is still Hugi to me (in spite of her being a couple of years older), was seemingly blamed and punished for all the mischief Gaston committed. (And yet, she remembers him kindly. Seemingly, Piri néni was even worse to her.) And I also remember him going on and on with derogatory comments about Bandi bácsi, inciting my father too, when Babi néni asked for her part of the estate. The vicious name-calling behind Bandi bácsi's back was uncalled-for too, especially, in the presence of children. And I can't help wondering how he could justify getting on the first available train to take his family from Szombathely to Budapest, leaving my mother and his mother-in-law alone with two small children in the dangerous aftermaths of the war. Seemingly, that was how he thanked us for sharing our home with them for months.



Piri néni and Károly bácsi moved back to Nikla sometime in 1957 (after I left Hungary). Below I show a photo of my mother, her sisters and Károly bácsi sometime in the mid-1960s, along with a picture of Károly bácsi having a cup of afternoon tea with his son, Gaston and his nephews, Laci and Zolti. Since he died in 1975, a year before I made my first visit back home, I never saw him again after 1951.

He was the first of his generation to be buried in the Berzsényi crypt in Nikla, and unfortunately Gaston was allowed to commit the sacrilege of listing his forenames and military honors on the granite. In comparison, for the great poet, Dániel Berzsényi and all of his descendants it sufficed to have their names and dates appear there. Seemingly, for the 'upstart', who only married into the family, that was not enough!



**Bandi bácsi**

Like my father, he was of Transylvanian noble origin with the rank of 'lófő' (the equal of 'baron') and forenames 'gyergyószentmiklósi' and 'gyergyócsomafalvi'. At the time of his marriage to Babi néni, he was a captain in the gendarmery<sup>1</sup> and was stationed in nearby Marcali. Like in the USA, there were rivalries among the various branches in Hungary too, with some feelings of superiority by some. Thus, it was not surprising for Károly bácsi to look down on Bandi bácsi, who was not only younger, but was of lower rank and in a 'lesser' branch too. Moreover, he made the 'mistake' of convincing Babi néni to ask for a car as their wedding gift from Nagymama. It was considered frivolous by my mother and Piri néni, who opted for furniture in their apartments, but Nagymama complied. It was also assumed, probably rightly that he was behind the scene when Babi néni asked for her part of the estate.



But the brunt of his criticism was reserved for the imposing Köllő crypt commissioned by him in the cemetery in Marcali. His parents, three of his brothers, his sister and her husband, as well as Bandi bácsi and Babi néni are buried in the Köllő crypt along with Laci's mother-in-law. And finally, Laci also joined them in August 2015 and was followed by his wife, Márta less than a year later. Above I show a picture of Bandi bácsi the way I remember him, a picture of the Köllő coat of arms, and a picture of the Köllő crypt decorated at the top with the Köllő crest.

The partial division of the Berzsényi estate led to the division of the Berzsényi houses too among the sisters. They agreed that Babi néni should inherit the house and orchard of Mariska néni (Berzsényi Great-great-grandfather's youngest sister), where the Berzsényi Museum is located now; my mother was to inherit the old family house that is presently owned by my brother; while Piri néni was to get the old Fischer house, which was bought earlier by Grandfather Berzsényi, and was to be totally rebuilt according to the desires of Piri néni and Károly bácsi.

<sup>1</sup> In Hungary the policemen (rendőr in Hungarian, literally translated as 'guards of order') were in charge of the cities, while the gendarmery (csendőrség in Hungarian since a 'csendő' is a 'guard of quiet') was in charge of the countryside. Both were branches of the military.

Everyone seemed to be satisfied, since my mother was the most traditional, Piri néni wanted something newer and better, while there was a special bond between Mariska néni and Babi néni. Mariska néni liked Bandi bácsi from the outset and appreciated Bandi bácsi's gesture to have nice markers put on the famous trees in the orchard that were planted by Miklós Wesselényi, Gábor Döbrentei and Dániel Berzsenyi.

In fact, Mariska néni liked and trusted Bandi bácsi so much that not only did she go with him and his family to Torony, where Bandi bácsi found living quarters for his family, but went with him to Germany too, when the Köllő family chose to retreat there. They came back after the WW II, and eventually settled in Nikla too. However, since they left the country, they were not given any land back. Therefore, Bandi bácsi had to try his hands at a variety of things to earn a living for his family, including the purchase of a wagon and some horses in order to haul firewood and other loads of goods for hire. He also tried to rejuvenate the orchard, and I remember the peach and apricot trees he planted there. I remember him bringing home two little goats at one time; we had lots of fun with them. He also had visitors at strange times; they were members of his former outfit from surrounding villages, who looked upon him as their leader, and sought his advice. Some of them may have been hoping to organize some form of resistance to the growing communist oppression, while others were just in search of companionship. They were all upright, decent men, not in favor with the riffraff which they used to keep in line, and who were running the country now. It was dangerous to associate with them, but Bandi bácsi ignored the dangers.

Later he switched his 'employment' to repairing shoes too; presumably, he learned about it from my father, who pursued that miserable occupation with his brother, Gabi bácsi in 1950-51. I have fond memories of watching Bandi bácsi work at his desk on some well-worn old shoes, singing his favorite songs in a rich baritone. I still remember some of those songs, and I even taught Mom one of them, employing it as a lullaby when Adam was a baby. It was about the famous Hungarian outlaw, Jóska Sóbri – an interesting choice for putting a child asleep.

Bandi bácsi died on the 17<sup>th</sup> of January 1953 of a heart attack, while I was running all over the village in search of the doctor, who arrived too late to revive him. It was the first and only death I witnessed, and I still remember it vividly.

### All in all

I spent much of my childhood either with the Ungár family, at least during the summers in Nikla at the old mansion that was my grandmother's home, or with the Köllő family year-round after the war, when that became our refuge under the worst years of communism. Thus, I got to know each of my maternal aunts and uncles very well. We also shared our apartment with the Ungárs in Szombathely in 1944-45, and I also saw them during the year (1950-51) that I spent in Budapest. Moreover, I saw my aunts during my visits in 1976 and 1978, but by the time I went back in 1983, Babi néni was no longer with us.

On the whole, they were relatively close-knit to one another, at least in my mother's eyes, to whom her primary family remained her sisters and her mother throughout her life. In reality, just like the sisters, the three families were very different from one another.



### The Svastits connection

Let me start by recalling that my father's paternal grandmother, Ilona Svastits and my mother's maternal grandmother, Emilia Svastits were sisters, and hence not just my father and mother, but their siblings too were 2<sup>nd</sup> cousins to one another. Therefore, one could expect that their families would also be close to each other. Unfortunately, that was not the case, and they didn't get closer to one another even after the marriage of my parents.

Naturally, there were reasons and justifications for the distance. For one thing, Ilona Svastits was 10 years older than her sister, Emilia, and married a military officer in my Great-grandfather Imre Vargha, while Emilia married Great-grandfather Kálmán Juhász, who was a landowner by then. In the next generation, based on the birth of their children, my paternal grandparents lived first in Nagykanizsa, and then in Vác, Léva, Rákospalota, Vác again, and Solymár, moving locations at least 5 times in 16 years, due to my grandfather's job with the railroads. By contrast, my maternal grandparents were settled in Nikla, where the Berzsenyis lived for more than 100 years.

Consequently, the two families differed economically as well, with Jenő Vargha supporting a family of 8 children on his salary as an official of Hungary's railroad company (MÁV, i.e., Magyar Államvasutak – Hungarian Railroads), while the Berzsenyis were relatively rich. Moreover, while Gomika became truly destitute upon the untimely and unexpected death of her husband in 1908 at age 42, my Juhász grandmother was a lot more prepared (in view of his ongoing heart problems) not only for the death of her husband in 1921 at age 69, but also for taking over the management of the estate. Thus, while saddened, she was not devastated like Gomika.

Nevertheless, with three eligible daughters, she was probably nearly overwhelmed by the task of finding suitable husbands for them. In addition to taking them to balls in Budapest, Kaposvár, Balatonfüred and other cities, she organized hunts and ran an excellent household with superb meals and wines to attract suitable young men. Relatively speaking, they were pleasant tasks.

On the other hand, Gomika truly struggled with poverty. I still have no idea how she managed to bring up her children on the small pension she received. Even after Laci bácsi and my father were sent off to military school and Margit and Mici néni started to earn a living, she still had 4 young ones at home. And to top it off, in 1921 her mother died in America, and she had to come out for her father. And hence she had to look after him too for the rest of his life.

As it turns out, it was my Nagymama who reached out to the Vargha relatives by asking Károly bácsi to bring my father for a visit to Nikla. In those days within the social circles of my ancestors it was natural to nourish such connections. Military officers were welcomed as suitors among the wealthy landowners and vice versa, the officers were almost forced into marrying well-to-do women, whose family could afford the so called 'kaució', a huge monetary deposit to assure that the officer can afford to live like a gentleman should.

Concerning the lack of closer relations between the Vargha and Berzsenyi families, one can blame the wars (WW I & II), the economic conditions between the wars, the communist dictatorship's various atrocities, the scattering of families due to deportations, emigrations and imprisonments, as well as a number of other negative outside influences, but it is also true that there were a number of divisive attitudes in them too: jealousies on account of wealth and/or education and stations in society and unjustifiable feelings of inferiority/superiority.

Interestingly, my grandmothers were of the same age, both being born in 1874.

## **My brother, Zolti**

My earliest memory of Zolti dates back to the time when he was still in the hospital in Szombathely, where he was born on January 25, 1943, and my father took me there to see him and our mother. It seems they must have just finished mopping the floor there, because I had a huge fall as soon as we entered the floor where they were and hit the back of my head. Thus, my only memory of that visit is that I was crying, and our father picked me up and consoled me as much as he could.

My next memory is more vivid and dates back to the time when he was already at home and in a baby bed. He was crying, got all the attention, and I was definitely jealous of him. I also remember the time when we were living at the convent in the spring of 1945 and Zolti and I were sampling the fruits in the garden there; it seems that led to his lengthy dysentery, which almost killed him. I remember well the loving care our mother, our Nagymama and Bözsi gave him day and night, as well as the prayers of the nuns, who were most wonderful to us throughout our stay at their convent.



In the pictures above, taken some time in 1943-44, Zolti is in Nagymama's lap and in the group photo our father holds me, while the other two persons are Mariska néni (Grandfather Berzsenyi's youngest sister) and Fr. József Baráth who was the priest in Nikla at that time. More than likely, it was Fr. Baráth who baptized both of us.

Zolti was baptized Zoltán Károly, possibly in honor of my mother's second cousin, Fodor Zoltán (who was my godfather) or Károly bácsi, (who was my mother's brother-in-law), but I don't know. Since in Hungary almost nobody uses his/her middle name (of which there are often many), I learned about Zolti's middle name only upon seeing his birth certificate, of which I have a copy. Unfortunately, I don't have his baptismal certificate, and hence I don't know who his godparents were.

Following his recovery in Szombathely, Nagymama and I took a train to Öreglak and from there went to Nikla to see what happened to the old house and other belongings. I learned only recently that Nagymama had to get a special permit to take me there. I have a copy of that permit too; it very specifically limited our trip to take place between the 23<sup>rd</sup> and the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 1945 and was

issued by the Police Headquarters of Szombathely. Seemingly, the upcoming communist regime's people were already in a position of control by that time, though their actual take-over didn't happen until a couple of years later.

In Nikla Nagymama and I stayed at the house of one of her former foremen, since our house was completely gutted. Even the doors and windows were missing, taken, presumably by the people of Nikla. Fortunately, Mariska néni's house, which is the Berzsenyi Museum now, was in much better shape, and Nagymama could furnish a couple of its rooms by the time our mother and Zolti arrived – along with Bözsi, who was a local girl originally hired to look after Zolti. We lived in that house until the late spring of 1946, and then moved back to the one, where we used to live before 1945. By that time our father, who came back from an American prison camp in Germany in the fall of 1945, managed to renovate it at least partially.

Unfortunately, in May of 1949, we had to move back to Mariska néni's house, since ours was taken away as part of the systematic harassment of the former landowners by the communist government. Mariska néni was already there and soon Babi néni (Mother's oldest sister) and her family moved there too, with each of us occupying one room. The 4<sup>th</sup> room and the kitchen area were in very poor condition, so we didn't use them at all. They were renovated when the Berzsenyi Museum was established in 1954.

With a difference of 4½ years between the two of us, Zolti and I were never really close to one another. It didn't help either that I was away for a whole year in 1950-1951, and that starting in 1953, I was studying in Csurgó, spent the summer of 1954 in Budapest, and worked during the summers of 1955 and 1956.

Our father's absence from 1950 until 1953 (being in Budapest with me and then deported to Füzesgyarmat) and occasional absences in the next 3 years (when he could get a job) were probably detrimental too — both in Zolti's development and in their and our relationships. It didn't help either that my father was so much older and hence less patient toward Zolti, who was certainly a poorer student than I was in those formative years. Thus, our parting in November of 1956 was possibly a bit of a relief to Zolti in spite of the hardships he suffered afterwards. I still remember well the discussions prior to our departure, when our parents considered the possibility of the whole family leaving Hungary, and my father kept repeating that as soon as we are settled, he will put Zolti into a boarding school. That idea couldn't possibly appeal to my sensitive brother.

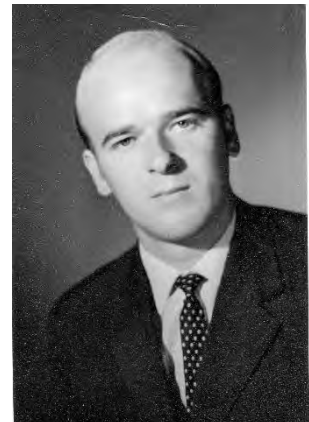
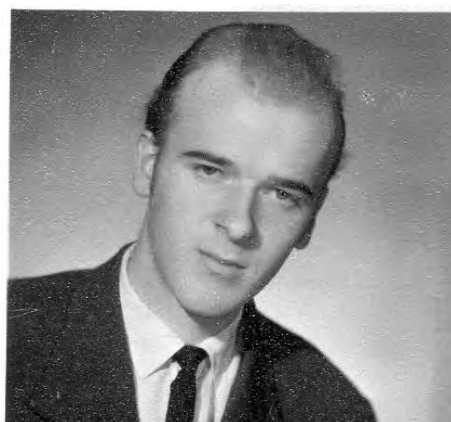
Unfortunately, I have no other childhood photos of my brother. Of course, in those days not only did we not have a camera, we had no electricity, running water, proper heating and warm enough clothing, and we were also struggling to put some food on the table on a daily basis. We had to carry the water in a bucket from a neighbor's well, and at times we had to sneak out to the end of the orchard (which was no longer ours) to gather some branches or cut down a small tree so as to keep our rooms at least somewhat warm. Therefore, it is no wonder that for many a year after I left Hungary in 1956, I kept repeating to myself the self-accusatory 'mantra', "elvetted az öcséd játékait", which roughly translates to "you took away your brother's toys", since I knew that from then on all of the chores of the family would weigh on his shoulders. While our mother was very capable in many ways, she was sickly, and could never adapt to the changed status of the family, to the ugliness or at best, indifference of the people in the village, and yet she could not even imagine leaving Nikla, where she was born and had a wonderful and carefree youth. Even after her return from America, she chose to live in Nikla, rather than move to Kaposvár or Budapest,

where life would have been so much easier on her and so much more pleasant for our father, who certainly deserved a better life.

After our father and I left the country, we kept up with Mother and Zolti via frequent letters, doing our best to send either money or some packages of goods whenever we could. Looking back, we probably should have done better, but life was difficult here too, and their struggles were far away. It didn't help that Mother's letters were always full of complaints; sad as it is, we probably became somewhat numbed to her constant bemoaning of everything. I went through years of 'growing pains' too, flunking out of two good schools and being madly in love with bridge and tarokk<sup>1</sup> and the 'wrong girl' too. Thus, I was only half-aware of my brother's continuing difficulties in school. Eventually, Mother appealed to Kató néni, her sister-in-law for help, and thus Zolti managed to transfer to the Vajda High School in Keszthely and graduated from there in 1962. I show here his invitation to his graduation, along with three other photos he sent to us in 1958, 1963 and 1967; he used the middle one on the invitation to his high school graduation.



Below them I show some pictures of him with our cousins, Lenke (Hugi) and Gaston Ungár and Laci Köllő, along with our mother, Piri néni and Károly bácsi (Gaston's and Hugi's parents) and Babi néni (Laci's mother) taken some time between 1957 and 1962. Unfortunately, Laci's father, Bandi bácsi died much too early, in 1953. He was one of my favorite uncles, hence I not only remember him well, but also of his tragic death from a heart attack.



<sup>1</sup> An old Austro-Hungarian card game which was a popular pastime among the gentry and the military officers.



After graduation from high school, fortunately he was accepted at the famous Agricultural Academy in Keszthely, and he got his degree from there in 1966. Following that, he worked for a couple of years prior to returning to the Academy for a diploma in plant protection. After that he was invited to take a position at the Postgraduate Institute of the Ministry of Agriculture in Budapest, which led to his PhD (summa cum laude) in 1972 at the Agricultural University in Gödöllő. After that and some scholarly work in East Germany and the Soviet Union he became a Candidate of the Agricultural Sciences in 1980 and joined the Agricultural Research Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Martonvásár in 1982. There he was appointed to be the Head of the Maize Production Department in 1984 and kept that position until his recent retirement.

At this point, I must call attention to the fact that I stayed away from Hungary for nearly 20 years before my first visit in 1976 with you, Adam. In those days the only means for communication was via letters and postcards, of which we wrote a lot. Telephoning was too expensive, and not only was there no telephone in Nikla (though we had one prior to the end of World War II), but most people didn't have a telephone even in Budapest. And even in 1978, when we all spent 6 months in Hungary, it was hard to find a working public phone in Budapest.

In those days, Zolti wrote often too. In particular, I treasure an album nearly filled with his postcards from East Germany and Russia. Knowing my love of beautiful postage stamps, he also made sure that his letters from Hungary were always decorated with the most recent commemorative stamps. In those days Hungary was still ahead of the rest of the world in producing wonderful stamps. Naturally, I also wrote to him, as well as to our mother – sometimes with more, at other times with less regularity. Nevertheless, we could never bridge the gap of 20 years during which we didn't see one another.

And thus, it was not easy to get adjusted to the fact that the 13-year-old boy I once knew was a 33-year-old man with incredible accomplishments already behind him when I saw him again in 1976. While I didn't realize it at the time, but your presence, Adam was the 'icebreaker'. By then our parents managed to resettle back in Hungary too, and in fact, Zolti was married and divorced too. As it turns out, his first wife, Ildikó Kováts even visited with us prior to their engagement. I have some photos of her visit but will limit myself to a photo showing the young couple at their civil ceremony, with our cousin, Mártyi on the left is their witness. The picture next to it shows Zolti with our parents in front of their living quarters in Nikla right around the same time.



Unfortunately, their marriage broke up much too soon, and as far as I know, Ildikó never got married again. Though I don't know when their divorce took place, I know that they got married on February 12, 1972, and that they were already apart when I went to Hungary in August 1976.

Next, I show some pictures from that visit, starting with a group picture in Nikla, in front of the Berzsényi Museum.



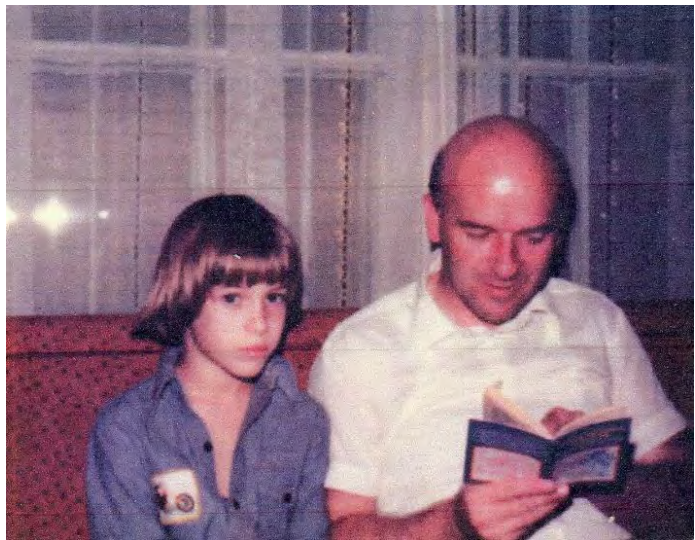
In it Zolti is standing behind our parents, Gizi (Gaston’s wife) and Gaston are standing behind Piri néni, Hugi is next to Gizi, Laci and Márta (Laci’s wife) are standing behind Babi néni, and in front from left to right are Adam, Kriszti (Gaston’s and Gizi’s daughter), and Zsolt (Hugi’s younger son). Eszter (Laci’s and Márta’s daughter) is barely visible in front of Hugi.

In addition to the three great-granddaughters of Berzsényi Dániel, all five of his great-great-grandchildren, as well as four of his nine great-great-grandchildren were there.. Of the latter, only Hugi’s older son, Laci and my three younger kids, Lydia, Eric and Daniel were absent, as well as Zoli, who was yet to be born. Károly bácsi died earlier, and hence only my father was there of the Berzsényi sons-in-law, and of course, your mother was missing too. Hugi was back with Laci’s father, but he probably chose not to come.

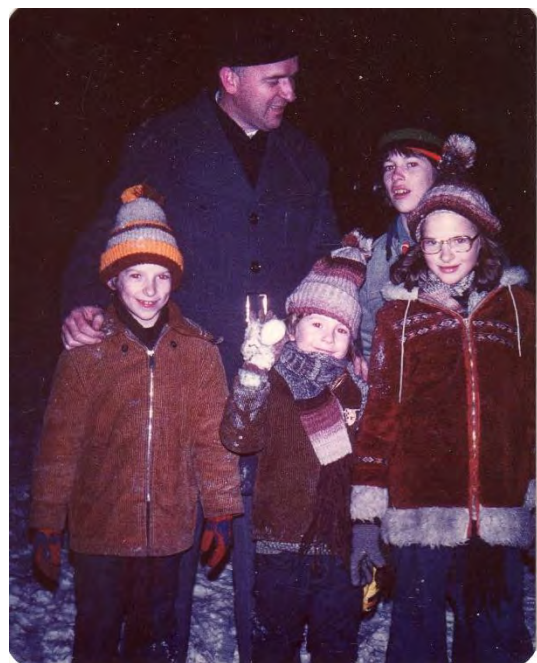
Next, I show one more picture from 1976 prior to turning my attention to pictures taken in 1978, when I took the entire family to Hungary for a half-a-year.

It was taken at Zolti’s apartment at Hungaria körút 198, which used to be Gabi bácsi’s (and Mici néni’s) until they moved in with their uncle, Emil Adorján (formerly, Fritsch) following the death of his wife.

The next two pictures were taken two years later. In the first one, Zolti and Mother are shown along with Adam and Daniel (and me reading something).



In the second one Zolti is shown with all four of you as we were preparing to say our farewells to the ‘old country’.



Fortunately, the Year 1980 turned out to be a happy one for my brother, since in that year he met and married Judit Czékus, the niece of our Berzsényi relative, Elemér Halden, who was widowed and lived in Budapest. The marriage of Judit and Zolti took place on the 14<sup>th</sup> of June 1980, and soon afterwards the young couple was invited to share the home of Elemér bácsi on Németvölgyi út. I show here a wedding picture of Judit and Zolti, with Judit's brother, Laci next to her (as her witness).



A year later, on the 22nd of July their son, Zoli was born. The first photo shows him at the tender age in a horizontal position, while the second one shows him 14 years later in a vertical position with his proud father. I will write about him separately, attempting to fill in the in-between years and the ones since then.



Returning to my brother, next I show a picture taken some years later of Judit and him at their home on Németvölgyi út. It is one of my favorite photos of them, as well as of the bowl of pogácsa, a typical Hungarian pastry in front of them. With Judit being such an excellent cook, it is always a pleasure to visit them.



Next, the picture on the right shows Zolti and I and the Berzsényi coat of arms on the wall at their home in Budapest in 1988.



In addition to the apartment on Németvölgyi út and the old family home in Nikla, which he thoroughly renovated, they also own a plot of land with a small dwelling in Martonvásár, where he used to work. Its main benefit is the fruit of its trees, from which Judit makes excellent jams. Moreover, they inherited half of the apartment where Tibor Berzsényi used to live in Kaposvár and bought its other half from the niece of Tibor's wife later. Zolti was sweet in letting us make that apartment our headquarters when we visited in Hungary; its closeness to most places in the Dunán-túl (Trans-Danubia) made it convenient. We used to enjoy staying at his place on Hungária körút, but he sold it.

Returning to my brother's academic career, I should note that his scholarly output includes several dozen publications in 4 different languages, the direction of the work of several PhD students, and participation in conferences throughout the world.

In 1995 Eric and I were happy to be present at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences when he was awarded the highly coveted Doctor of Sciences degree – a truly outstanding recognition. A huge crowd of scientists gathered at the large lecture hall of the National Academy of Sciences in Budapest in order to see who will receive the 'big doctorates', a degree which is absent in the USA. On the left, Eric is sitting next to Zolti, while on the right Zolti is in the process of receiving his most impressive degree.



Next, I show the certificate itself, along with a photo of him and his family proudly displaying it. His son holds the newest recognition of his father's accomplishments, while Judit and I look very

pleased too. I will write separately about my nephew, who is also Kay’s and my godson; the photos thus far serve only as a brief introduction to him and his mother.



I am happy to add that in 2016 there were two other wonderful happenings in Zolti’s professional life. First of all, he published a significant book which is shown below. It summarizes his research methodology in the field of plant growth during the past 10 years, advising others in the field doing similar experiments. The book is nearly 600 pages long, it sells for 2600 Forints, and its publisher was Agroinform. Unfortunately, I don’t have a copy thereof, and in fact, I learned about it only recently from the internet. Maybe he didn’t want ‘to brag’ with it? My relationship is warm and loving with him, but maybe not that close.

I left Hungary – and him – almost exactly 62 years ago, on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November 1956; he was 13 and I was 18 at that time, and we grew up in worlds far apart not just in miles, but in spirit too. He was brought up by our mother, while I grew up under my father’s influence; he in communist Hungary, while I in the USA. Thus, I have to accept the status quo!

Zolti’s other news was that he was awarded the Eötvös Wreath by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 2016.



„Laureatus Academiae”

The medal given with the award is shown on the left. Its owner is entitled to use



with his name – signifying that he is indeed a celebrated and well-recognized scientist in his field. The importance of this award is probably best understood by knowing a bit about its history and its prerequisites.

First of all, it is named after Baron József Eötvös (1813 – 1871), who served twice as Hungary’s Minister of Religious and Educational Affairs, and as a president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He was a writer of great importance, and the father of the renown physicist Lóránd Eötvös, who followed in his father’s footsteps and was also influential in putting his country on the right path with respect to mathematics and the sciences.

The award was established in 1992, and the conditions for granting it were finalized in 1999. Accordingly, to receive it

1. One must have received the doctorate of the Academy,
2. One must be recommended by his peers and be chosen by a carefully selected committee of the Academy, and
3. One must be at least 70 years old.

Clearly, Zolti met these requirements, but nevertheless, I must also point out that each year only 7 scientists receive the Eötvös Wreath. Therefore, he is indeed “in select company”. We all should be very proud of him. In what follows, I will have a few photos of him accepting the award.

The first picture shows Ádám Török, the Secretary, Beáta Barnabás, the Assistant Secretary, and László Lovász, a superb mathematician and the President of the Academy, along with your Uncle Zolti as he was accepting the award, while the second one shows the audience that was present on the occasion, with Zolti sitting on the side.

The photos come from the website [Képgaléria az elismerések átadásáról](#) (a gallery of photos about the presentation of the awards).



Zolti in America

This is a picturesque report on his visit in **Beaumont in the summer of 1985** with hardly a word here and there. He came via Los Angeles, and if I remember correctly, he had something shipped from there to Houston. Hence, we had to retrieve that box from the Port of Houston. It was also the time that I learned about Laci Bihari being in the USA and having a wife too. Somehow, nobody told me about that earlier.

He could have escorted our father, but we didn't discuss that earlier even though our mother started to advocate that he should come back to America. Taking care of him was weighing on her more and more heavily. It was Zolti's first trip to the US – hence, he probably wouldn't have wanted the extra responsibility of having him along anyhow.

That was probably the longest visit by him. I remember learning from Carita how to fix gumbo, which we did, but Zolti preferred to eat ham instead of our home cooking. Nevertheless, he came with us to catch the crabs.



Adam, Kay and Zolti



Eric, Zolti, Daniel, Lydia and Kay



## My brother

## In America



The next time he stayed with us was in Terre Haute 7 years later; at that time, we drove to both Purdue and the University of Illinois for him to meet some of his research associates. Later he took the car and spent some days at the University of Michigan to visit some other associates of his there. Unfortunately, we took no pictures during that visit of his, not even of the 5 thousand we gave him, the first such amount we ever managed to save. The idea was to enable Zolti to buy a car since the one he inherited from our father was getting very old. It was 3 years later that he actually bought the car when Eric joined me for a week in Hungary.

We also offered to have Zoli come out and stay with us for a year; he didn't share that information with his family to any extent. Unfortunately, nothing ever came out of it. We might have helped Zoli at that time. Agi was new to America too, hosting both of them would have worked out nicely.

We met and walked and talked when he came to Chicago, and Adam managed to gather him and host him at their house when he came to Denver. I had to turn around on account of a thick fog when I first went into town to meet him (we lived in Pine Junction at that time) but managed to have him spend the last night with us so as to see where we lived. Unfortunately, he showed little interest in our magical surroundings. And however much I tried each of the 5 or 6 times he came to the USA, I never could talk him into adding at least a few days to his stay so that he could spend some more time with us.

**Zolti's house in Nikla**

It was built by our Great-grandfather Farkas Berzsenyi; that's where my maternal grandfather and his siblings, as well as my mother and her siblings grew up. It was looted and made totally uninhabitable during the Russian occupation of the village at the end of WW II. A portion of it was refurbished by my father afterwards and we stayed there until the spring of 1949, when the communist leadership of Nikla decided to claim the house for their headquarter. As it turned out, they never moved any of their offices there; it was just an excuse to justify our eviction.

Thereafter the house was abandoned to the derelicts, the Gypsies, and they even ended up with horses kept there. Thus, all of the refurbishings done by my father were wasted and the house became nearly unsalvageable when my brother was given an opportunity to purchase it in 1989 as Hungary's communist system was about to be transformed into a semi-capitalist regime in which the former communists instantly became the new capitalists, dealing and wheeling with the formerly private properties that were confiscated by them earlier. Thus, for example, they could sell the country's sugar factories to some German investors and divide the profits among themselves as if they were the rightful owners thereof.

The pictures below show how poor the condition of the house was when Zolti bought it. In particular, the roof was close to collapsing; that needed attention first. In particular, a huge beam had to be imported from Croatia, since my brother couldn't find an appropriate one locally. It must have cost him a fortune just to rebuild the roof, as well as the attic and the high ceilings throughout the house.



The pictures below show the mansion with its new roof from several different angles and displays the incredible amount of work that needed to be done in order to prepare the walls to be furnished with doors and windows anew since nothing was salvagable from what remained there.

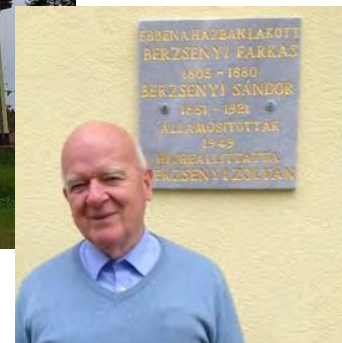
I can't even imagine the costs Zolti must have incurred. Fortunately, for several years his salary was doubled due to his Széchenyi Professorship and I imagine that there had to be some good years as far as his income was concerned from his agricultural holdings. I suppose, he spent most of it on the house, which became truly a wonderful mansion once again.

## My brother

## In Nikla



The final outcome is shown below from the side facing the street, with a marker explaining that the house was built by our great-grandfather, Farkas Berzsényi, who served as the revolutionary Lieutenant Governor of Somogy in 1848-1849.



The inscription on the house is **Berzsenyi Család** (Family), with my brother standing in front of the plaque placed on the house by him. A couple of views from the back of the house follow, with the main entrance shown below.



Next, I will show some of the interior of the house starting with a view of the porch opening from the kitchen, followed by our gathering in the kitchen in 2007, sitting around the table in the large dining room in 2011, some of the furnishings in the various rooms and then some of the wonderful displays on the walls and/or to be placed there.







Zolti's display boards shown above are the equivalents of my books; they tell the same stories a bit differently.

The last of these pictures is the oldest one, taken in the kitchen in 2007, when Cousins Gaston and Laci were still around, with Zolti and Zoli in the back.

I hope you enjoyed this picturesque display of our ancestral home, which I would have probably inherited if Hungary's history would not have taken such a negative turn after WW II. Austria was just as much of a loser in the war and yet it was not turned over to the Russians and to communism and the properties of the people were not confiscated. The former ruling class was not persecuted, imprisoned, deported and declared the enemy of the newly established ruling class of the proletariat like in Hungary. In fact, Austria received 962 million dollars via the Marshall Plan, while Hungary was required to pay reparations as if we caused any damage to any other country in WWII.



As an ‘Add-On’ to the present account, I show below a picture of the back of the mansion from 1926 that I recently found on the internet. I scanned it from a display of the Darabanth Auction House in Hungary, which sold it for HUF 3200, a bit less than USD 10. Unfortunately, I missed the auction, and hence the photo bears the mark of the auction house.

It was a photograph made into a postcard by a photographer named Kuchera in Marcali and was sent from Nikla as a Christmas card by someone named Pista to a young lady named Teréz Lakos in nearby Marcali. Their identity remains a mystery of no importance; what is important is that the card survived and that I learned about it. I would be much more interested to know who the people were in the entry way shown in the photo, but no enlargement of this copy of a copy is of any use in solving that mystery.



The main entrance to the house was indeed in the back of the house since its visitors would arrive via carriages, which would be driven there. Similarly, when we wanted to go somewhere, we would call for the coach driver to pick us up there. He would come up from the stables, located on the left, and we would depart via the ‘drive-way’ next to the house on the right to the paved road between Marcali and Öreglak. He could also drive around the circular arrangement of rose bushes and other flowers and take a dirt road parallel to the paved one, to go directly to Pusztakovácsi, where we often went to visit Béla bácsi (Nagymama’s brother) or the Bogyay family.

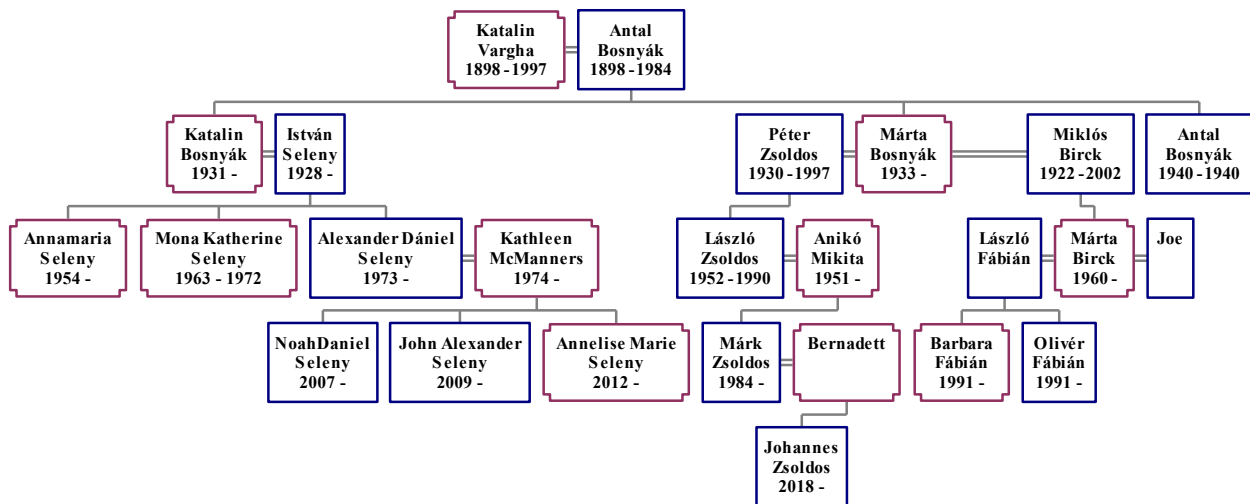
### More about my first cousins

One's first cousins are the children of his parents' siblings. Since of my father's siblings only Kató and Ili néni had children, I have a total of 4 paternal first cousins, **Kató** and **Márti Bosnyák** (Kató néni's daughters), and **Gyula (Gyuszi)** and **Miklós Kovács** (the sons of Ili néni). Similarly, since my mother had two sisters, Babi and Piri néni, I have 3 maternal first cousins, **László (Laci) Köllő** (the son of Babi néni) and **Gaston** and **Lenke Ungár** (the children of Piri néni).

Please recall that Gyuszi, Miklós, Gaston, Laci and Kató are no longer with us, and that of the 7 first cousins, only Laci was younger than me. And of course, they are all néni and bácsi to Y'all.

### My paternal first cousins

I will start with a descendant tree of Kató néni, whose son, Antal died as a baby, and hence I didn't include him as a cousin of mine.



Starting with

### Kató (Katalin, KisKató),

I must admit that I had a special bond with her, since we both left Hungary in 1956 and spent some extra time together first in Budapest, when my father and I lived with them in 1950-51, and later in Ft. Worth, Texas too. In Budapest, I was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade while she just graduated from high school and in search of a job since she was not accepted into a university. While her parents were allowed to practice their profession (both were dentists), they were declared 'enemies of the people', like most of my relatives, and hence their children were denied the right to higher education regardless of their abilities. Kató was an outstanding student, who wanted to study medicine, but that dream of hers was never attained. Upon arriving to America 6 years later, she settled for nursing and became an anesthetist instead. Back in 1950-51 she completed a course in typing and shorthand, hoping to get a job as a secretary. That didn't materialize either, since she and her family were deported to the 'Big Planes' of Hungary along with my father, since he was registered as members of their household.

## More about

## My 1<sup>st</sup> cousins

She got married as soon as her deportation ended, since she found the right man in István (Pista) Szelényi, who changed the spelling of his name to Seleny upon arriving to America. But before I show wedding photos of hers, let me share with you two of her baby pictures below, along with a picture of her and her sister, Márti.



Kneeling behind her in the first photo is her sister, Márti, who got married earlier.

I first saw Kató again in Fort Worth, Texas in the spring of 1961 on my way to Los Angeles with Laci Papp. We stopped there to see my father, who just started teaching horseback riding there. He rented a room from Kató and Pista, whom I already knew from 1950-51, but their daughter, Ani was a pleasant surprise. As well as Marika, the girl who took care of Ani. She came with them from Hungary and remained in their employ until their son, Alex was born. Marika took care of Kató's second daughter, Móni too, until her untimely and tragic death.



Following that brief visit with Laci, next I saw Kató at Christmas, 1961, when I visited my father. And then during the summer of 1962 she and my father talked me into moving in with my father and to make another attempt in getting a degree. It was a 'hard sell', since I finally admitted how poorly I did both at Washington University in St. Louis, MO and at Los Angeles City College. But Kató was insistent and went with me to the University of Dallas to 'explain my poor grades' to Sister Margaret, the Registrar there. Thus, I owe my eventual success at least partially to Kató.

## More about

## My 1<sup>st</sup> cousins

Throughout the decades we maintained an excellent relationship with Kató and her family marred only by the fact that our many visits to their place were reciprocated only twice. As a consequence, Alex grew up without the companionship of my kids, who were close to him in age. The two exceptions mentioned above were the following: (1) Kató took us in soon after you, Adam were born, after learning that we are struggling, and she turned over her little house behind the big one to us until your mom recovered. They all were very sweet and helpful at that time. (2) They visited with us in Pine Junction, when Kató's sister, Márta (along with Márk, Márta's grandson) was visiting with them, and they vacationed together in Colorado. On their way back to Fort Worth, they 'dropped in' to see us (probably, at Márta's request). With both of us living in the USA, and time and again even in the same city (of Ft. Worth, TX, since she never moved away from there), naturally, I am closest to Kató and her family. For that matter, Pista was my best man at our wedding, Kató's daughter, Móni was my goddaughter, and I visit with their daughter, Ani time and again whenever I can. And naturally, we visit with the Selenys whenever we are in Texas. Thus, I have lots of photos from which to pick.



## Márta (Márta)

and I were roommates in 1950-51; that is, I slept in her room. She graduated from high school that year and was probably the most popular girl in her class. She had several admirers among the university students who frequented the house and were treated to coffee and conversation in Kató's room, which served as a small living room in view of the fact that the practice of Kató néni and Tóni bácsi (her husband) required many of the other rooms. Márta also had to have several tutors to assure her graduation; in those days studying was far from her mind.

## More about

## My 1<sup>st</sup> cousins

To provide a picturesque introduction, let me start with three photos of hers taken in 1950, '57 and '68, respectively. It was even earlier, in 1942 or '43 when I met her and Kató for the first time. My father brought them to Nikla and organized a zsúr (party with dance) for them.



Her marriage to Péter Zsoldos was rushed in order to avoid deportation with her parents. A wedding photo of hers is shown on the right.

Though her marriage to Péter was short-lived, it was blessed by a son, László (Laci), who became a doctor, but died much too young. Márk is his son; he too was brought up mostly by Márti.



Some years later Márti married Miklós Birck and had Mártika by him. Mártika became a dentist too, following in her mother's and grandparents' footsteps.

The pictures on the right show Márti between her two husbands.



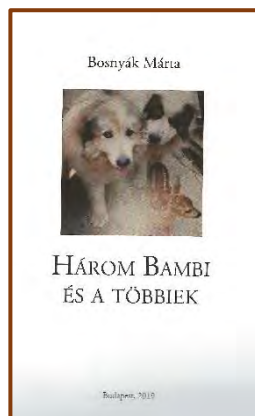
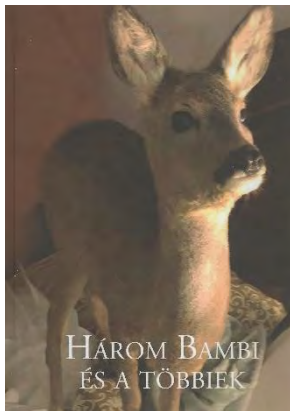
Here I should mention that after divorcing Péter, Márti became very diligent, and in addition to obtaining her own degree in dentistry, she saw to it that both Laci and Mártika, and later Márk too succeed in their studies. Moreover, she seems to pay close attention to the academic development of Mártika's children, Barbara and Olivér too.

## More about

## My 1<sup>st</sup> cousins



Márti deserves a few more mementos – hence the pictures above from her more mature years. Moreover, I want to have at least a picturesque celebration of her wonderful book, *Három Bambi és a többiek* (The three Bambis and the others), published this fall (2019) in Budapest, of which she kindly gave me a copy. It is a story of the three small deer she brought up in her backyard over the years, with two or three huge dogs helping her in the process. She tells their story most delightfully, with some wry humor, as well as instructive words to her younger readers about the care of animals and their personal traits. I show the front, back and inner cover of the book along with a picture from it showing the third Bambi and Collin with the 3 big dogs. And I say farewell the Kató and Márty with a picture of their visit with us in Colorado.

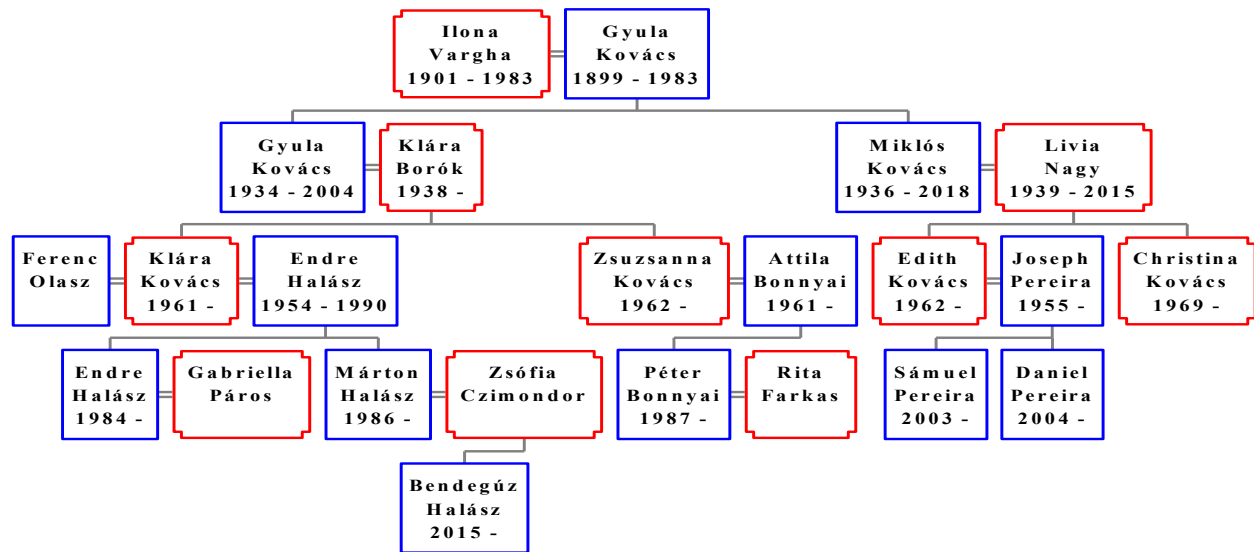


I was particularly appreciative of Márti's financial assistance in 1978, when we were unable to get to my salary for months, and hence had to borrow lots of money from her to pay our bills. Her trust in me was wonderful. Kay and I stayed with her for a couple of days in 2003, and then with Christopher in 2007 and Collin in 2011, occupying her 3<sup>rd</sup> floor apartment. Her love and hospitality continue to please and amaze me. Kay and I had a nice visit with her in 2017 too; her prescription of antibiotics helped Kay to overcome her ear-infection.



The picture above shows Márti in 2011 with Kay, Collin and Márk.

Next, I display the descendant tree of Ili néni and attend to her sons, who were my first cousins.



**Gyula (Gyuszi)**

and I knew each other a lot less prior to my visiting them with you, Adam in 1976. At that time his daughters, Kláríka and Zsuzsi were still little girls, who played some music for us. Later Gyuszi's father, Gyuszi bácsi dropped in too, so I got to meet him again for the first time since my summer at their house in 1951. Unfortunately, he and Ili néni were divorced by then, just like Tóni bácsi and Kató néni. We saw Gyuszi again in 1978, when he invited us to his house on the occasion of his brother's family being in Hungary too. We were living in Budapest by then, and we took Mici néni along. Unfortunately, I remember very little about our celebratory dinner with them, and we took no photos to refresh my memory.



## More about

## My 1<sup>st</sup> cousins

I saw him again in 1995; a picture from that visit is shown on the right.

Adam and I saw Gyuszi again in 2000. By then Gyuszi was bedridden on account of an industrial accident that crippled him earlier. His older daughter, Kláríka, whose husband died earlier, lived with her two sons in a house built further back on the lot; we visited them too.

The last time I saw Gyuszi and his wife, Klári was in 2003, when Kay and I dropped in on them for a short visit in Nemesbük. He died a few years after that. Since you, Daniel lived in Hungary then, I managed to have some flowers sent to his funeral.

(Here I want to mention that during the last 5 years prior to my retirement, I included a \$20 bill with each of my letters to Gyuszi's wife, Klári, to Hugi, as well as to my friend Zsuzsa Odor. It was just a gesture of good will on my part.)

(Another parenthesized remark: During my visit with Klári in 2000, she gave me a copy of a letter sent to Ili néni by Jolán Kasza of Balatonfüred. That letter became the 'steppingstone' in my search for my Vargha relatives.)

Unfortunately, Klári stopped responding to my letters, and Kláríka isn't much of a correspondent either. But I have high hopes for her son, Endre!

I sent a gift when Kláríka's younger son got married. In 2015, when I paid for the 'renewal' of the Vargha graves in Keszthely (where my grandmother, Gabi bácsi, Gyuszi, Gyuszi's parents and Kláríka's husband are buried), I turned over the receipts to Kláríka. And I also shared with her my entire collection of Svastits music – to no avail. Will have more about her later.

## Miklós

and I were in yet another one-sided correspondence, except for the fact that he called me whenever he received a letter from me. He was loving and seemingly interested in my work in genealogy, especially when it came to our Fritsch ancestry. But he became totally lethargic since the death of his wife, Livia. She came down with some form of Alzheimer's disease.



She used to be my Christmas-card-correspondent earlier. On the right I have reproduced a picture of hers from her obituary along with one of Miklós from his.

Other than the summer of 1951 and a brief encounter in 1978, Miklós and I didn't meet either. As a young and talented soccer player, he was a local hero back in Keszthely. Seemingly, that helped him to go to Austria a couple of years after 1956, and defect from there along with his wife. They settled in Montreal, Canada and similarly to Guszti and Klári, have two daughters, Edith and Christina.

Sometime back in the 1970s, when Miklós visited Kató in Ft. Worth, he could have visited us too in nearby Beaumont, but he chose to go to Mexico instead. I am sorry, he didn't, but I am pleased that on one of his visits to Hungary he went to Nikla to visit my father. Hence the photo of him on the right.

After leaving Hungary, Miklós not only completed his university studies, but received a doctorate in the field of agriculture, and was employed in that field. Maybe as a researcher – I don't know. But seemingly, he managed to gain enough importance in his field to be well-received in Hungary on his visits there.

Next, I will turn my attention to

**my maternal first cousins,**

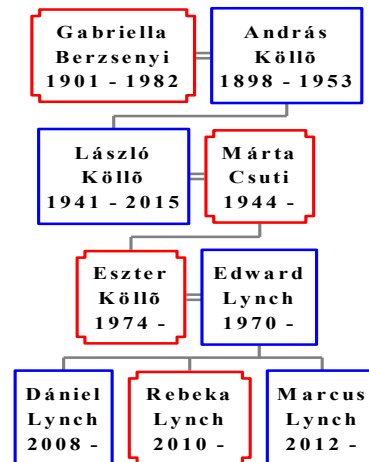
starting with a descendant tree of Babi néni on the right. Babi néni's son,



**László (Laci)**

grew up in Nikla, along with Zolti and myself in the present Berzsenyi Museum from 1949 until 1956, when he also became a student in Csurgó. Being closer in age, Zolti and Laci were closer to one another, and that remained the case even after I left Hungary.

Unfortunately, I have only two photos of Laci as a child. They are displayed here, but one can't really see him well enough. Nevertheless, the pride of Bandi bácsi is evident in them.



## More about

## My 1<sup>st</sup> cousins

Next, I show a few pictures from a report made in 1955 with Laci and Zolti in Nikla, in which the two of them talked about their ancestry, their studies, as well as about their main hobby, fishing.

Seemingly, they also showed the reporter their favorite tree, as seen in the second photo. For the third one Dézi, our dog showed up too; we all liked her a lot.



The next time I saw Laci was in 1976, when I went back for my first visit to Hungary, taking my eldest, Adam with me. Then we had a wonderful visit with him and his family. The pictures shown below commemorate that visit, as well as the one to Nikla, with Babi néni in the picture too. The first one below shows Vica, his mother-in-law on his left, Márta, his wife on the right, and Eszter, their daughter and Adam in the middle.





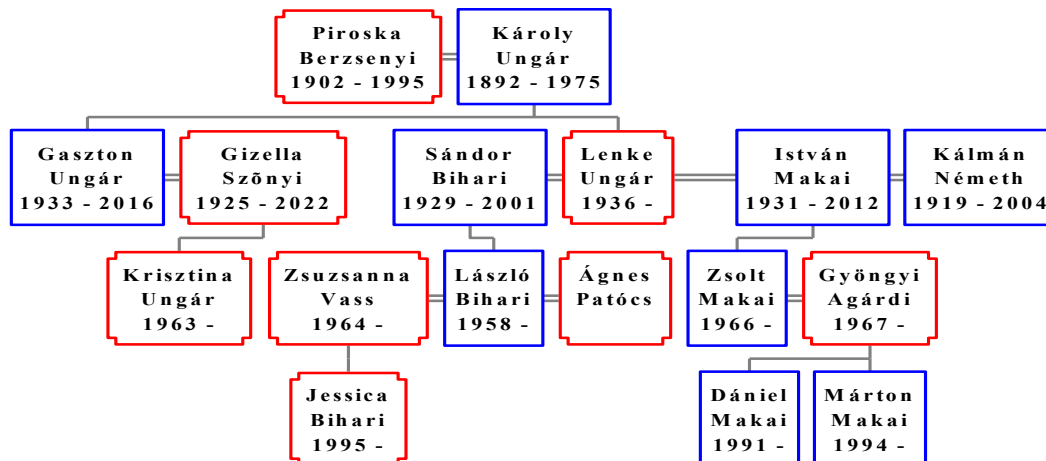
Next, I show a picture of the Köllő family (without Eszter) nearly 30 years later, with Laci on the left, Márta on the right, and I between Judit and Hugi.

Correspondence with Laci was always nearly one-sided, though I did get a couple of cards from him, as well as a reasonably long message once. I stopped writing too but made an effort time and again to visit them or get together with them at Zolti's place.

Fortunately, we managed to get hitched via Skype during the last few months of Laci's life; more precisely, I called him that way 5 times between January 27 and May 26, 2015, talking a total of more than 3 hours. Laci died on July 20, 2015, and was followed by his wife, Márta less than a couple of years later.



Next, I feature a descendant tree of Piri néni to pinpoint who is who.



**Gaston**

was not only Lenke's older brother, but he was like a 'big brother' to me too. As children in Nikla during the summers the three of us played a lot together. In particular, we used to play 'ipi-apacs' during the day, which was a form of 'musical chairs' played among 'designated' trees, or ride around in a carriage pulled by 'Madár', our donkey. It was a strange name for our pet, since 'madár' means 'bird' in Hungarian. There were also some indoor games for the evenings, which I learned from Gaston, like 'I came from America, and my occupation is', where one had to pantomime the occupation and the others had to guess that occupation like doctor, teacher, seamstress, policeman, etc. We also played a word-game, whereby one had to fill out a form with terms beginning with certain letters under headings like country, city, river, animal, boy's name, occupation, etc. and we counted who got the most. Since I didn't yet know how to read and write, one of them would be my 'scribe'.

I also remember getting into trouble after stealing cigarettes for Gaston from my father, as well his taking apart a metallic frame of some sort for a recliner in Szombathely, and my father being very upset by it. Naturally, Károly bácsi came to the defense of his darling son, and the argument between my father and Károly bácsi is still vivid in my memory. Károly bácsi was walking back and forth as he was throwing insults at my father, who didn't hesitate to respond, but kept his anger under control since Károly bácsi was of higher rank in the military. Therefore, my father limited his statements to 'throwing back the insults' with short responses like 'that's you', 'you are', 'you are more so', etc. In spite of the fact that the atmosphere was tense, I found that style of arguing between them amusing. That was during the winter of 1944-45, when the Ungár family joined us in Szombathely and my grandmother was with us too. Somehow my father managed to come home for a few days and was angry when he saw the results of Gaston's skillful destruction of that frame, with nuts and bolts all over the place.

Since Gaston (nicknamed by his parents as 'Puci' or 'Pucikám' (the latter meaning 'my little Puci')) had a number of inner ear operations, his parents spoiled him a lot. Even to the extent of buying him some sort of priestly outfit and paraphernalia so that he could 'say mass', with me dressed up as his altar-boy. Such sanctimonious behavior was typical of both Gaston and his father, but I didn't subscribe to it even as a little boy.

I also remember that after the war, when Gaston spent a few weeks of the summer of 1946 in Nikla, we dug a deep bunker right in front of the house, imitating the ones which were still there in the orchard as ugly reminders of the front which went through Nikla during the war. Naturally, my father made us put the soil back into the bunker as soon as he saw what we did.

But my most pleasant memories of Gaston date back to 1950-51, when I was in Budapest, and I went with him to the motorcycle races in the Városliget (city park). I still remember the names of Szabó and Puhony, who rivaled one another in the 500 cc. category, as well as the strange maneuvers of the occupants of the sidecars in the turns of the road. They had to lean out dangerously in order to balance the motorcycle at high speeds, and it fascinated me to watch that. Gaston and I had our favorite spot for seeing the races.

The next time I saw Gaston was in the summer of 1954, when I went up to Budapest at the end of my freshman year in high school. He was serving in the Hungarian Armed Forces but was 'armed' with a shovel instead of a gun. They were 'munka-szolgálatos', as the work-brigade was called, That was the typical treatment of our class, usually referred to as 'enemies of the people'. That was the last time I saw him as well as his sister, while in Hungary. We exchanged a letter or two

## More about

## My 1<sup>st</sup> cousins

while I was a student in Csergő, and even after I came out to America. But we both got busy, and our correspondence ceased.

I learned about his eventual success in getting a degree to teach mathematics at a trade high school, as well as about his marriage to Gizi (Gizike), who was a teacher of biology at the same school. I even met Gizike's parents in 1976, I think. Gaston and Gizike, as well as their daughter, Kriszti lived in their house, which they inherited after the death of Gizike's parents.

I wrote to Gaston a couple of times in the last 10 years, and I even called him a couple of times during the last few years. As well as 3 or 4 times in the last few months of his life. My last action was to get him a walker via Zoli, who delivered it about 10 days prior to Gaston's death. It was a nice gesture, but a bit too late.

During the last 15 years, Gaston had to have many operations to treat his prostate cancer, which was spreading. Hence, he suffered a lot, and was hospitalized time and again. Nevertheless, he kept going. In particular, he attended nearly all of the celebrations of Dániel Berzsenyi, not only in Nikla, but also in Egyházashetye and elsewhere, often as the invited speaker of the gatherings. He and his family also attended all three Berzsenyi family reunions (2005, 2011 and 2015), which I really appreciate. They also came to Zolti's place in Budapest and Nikla whenever he gathered the family – the pictures below commemorate those occasions.



The last time I visited him was in 1995 with Eric; that was the last time I saw Piri néni too. The picture on the right, showing Gizike, Kriszti, Eric and Gaston commemorates that visit. Piri néni died a few months later. Though I didn't like her, I was saddened by her treatment by Gaston, as well as by his daughter, Kriszti; as I later learned, the parents of Gizike were treated similarly poorly by Gaston, who could hardly wait for them to die and in order to inherit their house. Seemingly, Gaston was treated no better during his last few weeks by his wife and daughter. He died on the 29<sup>th</sup> of December 2016 and was buried in Nikla in the Berzsenyi crypt on Saturday, January 14, 2017. Seemingly, it was a more elaborate affair than appropriate, referring to him as 'baron' and as 'méltóságos úr' (outdated title on the level of 'your highness'), and reciting his forenames (i.e., those earned by his father in WW I).



All in all, Gaston and I always got along well, and I have many fond memories of him. However, unfortunately, they will always be tainted by his attempt to have my father institutionalized following my mother's death. Admittedly, my father was dangerously disturbed by her passing, and Gaston's concerns for his mother were justified, but so was my father's hatred for his sister-in-law.

### Lenke (Hugi)

As you might remember, a year or two ago I wrote a lengthy piece about Gaston's younger sister, Lenke, whom we all called Hugi. In Hungarian the term "húg" means "younger sister", which was indeed the case since she was the younger sister of Gaston Ungár. It is also true that younger sisters often acquire the nickname "Hugi", and that others start calling them so regardless whether they are older or younger. Though I was younger by a couple of years, that's what happened to me too, and in fact, that's how I have called her ever since I remember.

She is one of my best pen pals, who tells me about all the happenings in the family time and again. With Gaston being 2 years older than Hugi, and Hugi being 2 years older than me, we formed quite a trio when I was little in Nikla.

The pictures below commemorate those days.



Gaston, Hugi and I  
and our donkey, Madár  
in Nikla in the early 1940s



## More about

## My 1<sup>st</sup> cousins



We also played board games, as well as hide and seek, and a bunch of popular games of guessing, which I learned from my cousins. The house was huge, as well as the areas surrounding the house, including the orchard, where we also spent a lot of time. Usually, just the three of us, since both my brother and our cousin, Laci Köllő were much smaller, and I don't even remember Laci being brought to Nikla by his parents.

After the war there was also a summer (1947, I think), when Hugi came down to Nikla with her mother, and I remember how good the lecsó was that she made time and again. I also remember visiting with the Ungár family during the year I was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade in Budapest (1950-51), though at that time I was mostly with Gaston, enjoying our favorite pastime, the motorcycle races. There were competitions for men as well as for women in different categories depending on the size of the motor in the motorcycles, and hence the races always lasted for several hours. We would sometime go to different locations to watch the races, which were a lot of fun.

The next time I saw her was during the summer of 1954, when I went to Budapest to be with my father rather than going back to Nikla to my mother when I finished my first year in high school. By that time Hugi managed to go back to Budapest in order to work in heavy industry on the island of Csepel. Thus, she sub-rented a room on Telepi utca from an elderly lady, who had some old magazines which she allowed me to read, when I arrived early and Hugi was still at work. I also remember going out with her and Gaston to the *Pipacs* and the *Jereván* and some other nightclubs, lying that I was older in order to get in. I also have a vague memory of being at a party with them and getting confused about my age. I was prepared to lie about it by a couple of years but ended up lying by 4 years since the question was put to me differently. While I always loved mathematics, its applications never appealed to me. Moreover, while I was tall for my age, clearly, my maturity was lagging behind!



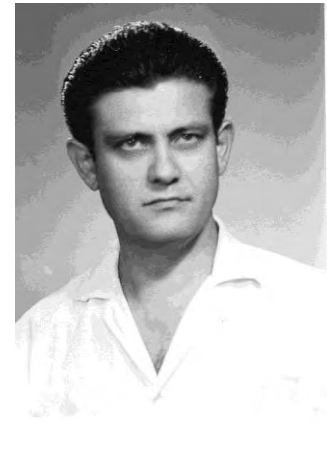
## More about

## My 1<sup>st</sup> cousins

Next I show a “glamour photo” of hers from 1957, when she was 21 years old, along with one with her cousins, Zolti (my brother) and Laci (Köllő) from the same year. By then I was in America, and we were to wait 19 more years before we saw one another again.



Next I show a couple of identification photos; The one of Hugi is from 1964, while that of Sándor (Sanyi) Bihari is from 1969. He was Hugi’s first husband, the father of Laci and the grandfather of Jessica. I met Sanyi a couple of times when I went back for the first time in 1976. He died in 2001.



Hugi’s second husband was István (Pityu) Makai, the father of Zsolt and the grandfather of Dani and Marci. Unfortunately, I never met him. He died in 2012.

The photo on the left shows Hugi with Pityu, while the pictures on the next page introduce Kálmán Németh, Hugi’s third husband. I met Kálmán when I was in Hungary in 1995. While Kálmán and Hugi had no children together, it seems Hugi was happiest with him. Unfortunately, he also died (in 2004), and thus my dear cousin was widowed after divorcing her first two husbands. Kálmán was also kind enough to send me an article of his; it was a nice, scholarly piece of work.



And finally, I show on the right an Ungár family photo from 1976, where standing from left to right are Gizike, Hugi, Piri néni and Gaston, while Krisztina and Zsolt are sitting in front along with Gaston's dog.

In closing, I must emphasize that since coming to America, other than my mother and my good friends Pista Molnár and Zsuzsa Odor, Hugi has been my most faithful correspondent. Nowadays I call her just as often as I write to her. At times I also send her photos – mostly of our kids and grandkids, and for one Christmas we even sent her an album thereof. She knows all of them, at least via the photos. Sometimes I also share with her some old photos from our childhood.



**In Summary,**

I am happy to report that all seven cousins of mine survived the historical and political upheavals of our times and succeeded to whatever extent they could. Counting Zolti and myself as well, of the nine of us,

three of us (Kató, Miklós and I) left Hungary

four of us (Márti, Miklós, Zolti and I) managed to attain our educational goals; but only

four of us (Hugi, Márti, Zolti and I) are still around.

Hugi had to settle for self-improvement, since formal schooling was not available to her. Laci's education was 'short-circuited' too, not managing to complete his engineering studies in night-school. Gyuszi had to settle for being an electrician, and even Gaston's degree allowing him to teach mathematics at the high school level was less than what he was capable of. Kató's path to become a medical doctor was blocked by circumstances too.

All of us are leaving behind us a credible legacy!

Your first cousin, Zoli

Our godson was born on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July 1981 to my brother and his wife, Judit in Budapest, Hungary and was given the middle name György in addition to his father's first name. The picture on the right was taken while he was still in the hospital, the next ones below it were taken at his baptism, with my parents standing in for the two of us. Also present in the photos are Judit's brother and sister-in-law, Laci and Ági Czékus, whom I finally got to know a bit better, but only recently on account of my sending some stamps to Laci, an avid stamp collector.



It was not until 1983 that I first saw Zoli, and there will be some pictures here to show him and Daniel together during our visit. I will also show some others sent to me by Judit and my parents. Most of these don't call for any commentary – hence much of this writing is without words. Enjoy the show but check back towards the end of this piece, where there will be some words too.

Please note that Zoli is your only 1<sup>st</sup> cousin on my side of the family. Therefore, if you want more cousins of the first kind, you must look on your maternal side, where you will find 6 more for a total of 7, just like I used to have – four on my father's and 3 on my mother's side of the family. Of my 7 first cousins, only two, Márty and Hugi are still alive.



But let's get back to Zoli, with some more fitting photos.

## Your cousins

## 1st cousin, Zoli

He grew and grew and grew as seen in these photos.



Your cousins

1st cousin, Zoli



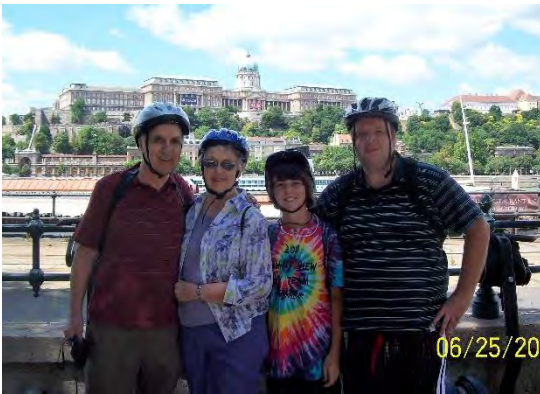
Your cousins

1st cousin, Zoli



## Your cousins

## 1st cousin, Zoli



As it is evident from the last few pictures above, Zoli is finally ‘coming into his elements’, becoming a most valuable and appreciated person with incredible abilities in languages (English, German, Italian), in modern electronic gadgetry, including computers, as well as personal skills needed in his job, working for a cellphone company. Until recently, he was sheltered from much of the ‘outside world’ both by his parents and by his medication, which numbed his senses to some extent. Their effect is probably still a mixed blessing, with extra weight being a problem, but much better control over his emotional outbursts – a positive outcome. Therefore, he is able to hold a job and be energetic enough to relieve my brother of the toils of mowing grass in Nikla, fruit gathering in Martonvásár, etc. Moreover, his interests in family matters grew and he can cope better with the daily struggles of life as well.

In fact, in the summer of 2017 your Mom and Zoli became a lot closer, and I feel the same after talking with him a lot more since we got back. He needs further encouragement to stay in touch via e-mail; we all need to pitch in there.

Zoli was always very sweet and loving towards all of us, respectful towards your mother and me, and thoughtful too. His struggles took their toll, but we are hopeful that he finally overcame them and that he will remain in good health in the future.

## Your second cousins

One's second cousins are the children of his parents' first cousins. Therefore, all you have to do is to visit the section on **My first cousins** and check out the complete descendant trees of my aunts and uncles for their grandchildren. Thereby, you will manage to find the following

### 13 (thirteen) 2<sup>nd</sup> cousins of yours

on my side of your family:

Anna (Ani), Móni and Alex Seleny, Laci Zsoldos, Mártika Birck, and Klárka, Zsuzsi, Edith and Christina Kovács (via my father's side) and

Eszter Köllő, Krisztina Ungár, Laci Bihari and Zsolt Makai (via my mother's side).

In what follows, I will write briefly about each of them, including some photos whenever possible.

### Anna (Ani) Seleny

is by far the most accomplished among your cousins, as far as academics is concerned. She has a Masters' degree in International Relations/International Economics from The Johns Hopkins University and a PhD in Political Science from MIT. She was Professor of the Practice of International Politics at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University; she also taught at Princeton University from 1993-2002. Her research in comparative politics and international political economy focused on Europe, post-socialist states and Latin America. She spent a year at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Princeton and has received awards and fellowships from the German Marshall Foundation, Fulbright-Hayes, the MacArthur Foundation, and the American Council of Learned Societies, among others. In addition to her book, *The political economy of state-society relations in Hungary and Poland*, published by Cambridge University Press, she has several other publications including chapters in various books.



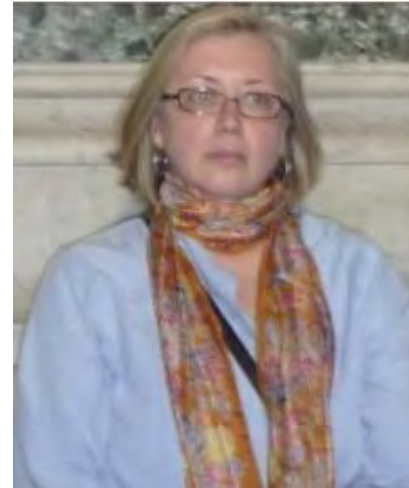
Unfortunately, while we also lived in Ft. Worth, we were too busy to keep up with one another, but I had a couple of lovely visits with her when I attended the USAMO awards ceremonies in Washington, DC, and we also saw her in Boston in 2016, when we attended Vamsi Mootha's wedding. We also exchange messages via e-mail time and again and get along great.

Next, I show two baby pictures of hers. In the first one, she is held by Ili néni, while in the second one she is with her mother.

I saw her for the first time in the spring of 1961 when Laci Papp and I, on our way to Los Angeles, stopped in Ft. Worth to visit my father. By then, Ani was a 6-years old little girl.







Next, I want to remember

**Mona (Móni) Seleny,**

who was my goddaughter, and whose death at age 8 was most tragic not only for her parents and Ani, but for us too. Fortunately, I have several pictures of her, some with Ani, some with her mother, but none with me. I am sorry about that.



Unfortunately, Móni's brain tumor was inoperable, and none of the treatments were effective. She ended up on heavy doses of pain medication in order to lessen her suffering, and hence she was not conscious during the last weeks of her life.



Next comes Kató's third child,

**Alex Seleny,**

a truly wonderful addition to the family. Unfortunately, we saw very little of him as a child, hence we don't have many photos of him either. On the other hand, I must applaud his efforts to make up for lost opportunities for his children's sake even if it is too late for him. You, Adam, and Alex's wife, Kathleen should also be thanked for that.



Getting his degree at the University of Dallas (like your Mom and me), he went on to start a software company with some friends, sold the company and chose to stay on with the company that bought them out. He got married in 2002 to Kathleen McManners; she is in a technological field too. We kept in touch with them, but Adam, you got even more involved and hence, the three of you may succeed in bringing our families closer.

Next, I have a couple of pictures showing Alex's family. The first shows only the young couple. Then comes Kató with her first grandchild, Noah in 2007, and then the two boys 4 years later.

**Your cousins**

**2<sup>nd</sup> cousins**



Finally, I show a picture of Adam and Collin with Kató and Pista and Alex's family at the entrance to the Ft. Worth Zoo in 2013, with Collin holding Annelise Marie, their daughter, who was born in 2012. The photo was taken by AJ.



And now we move to the first-born of my cousin Márti,

**László (Laci) Zsoldos,**

who became a medical doctor but died at an early stage of his life too. He was in his early twenties when we saw him in 1978 a couple of times during our 6 months stay in Hungary but was already married and probably had his medical degree when you saw him, Daniel in 1983 at Márti's place. In the picture on the right, his wife is sitting between him and you.



Your 2<sup>nd</sup> cousin, Ani Seleny spent a year or so in Hungary in the early 1980s and saw Laci regularly. He died much too young sometime in the mid-1980s, but not before making a trip to his aunt, Kató.

Laci has a son, Márk, who got married recently. Márk lives in Austria and has a degree in history, I think. He was brought up mostly by my cousin, Márti, who is also greatly behind his educational accomplishments. He became the father of a healthy boy of 3½ kg yesterday, the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2018, who will be given the name Johannes. Welcome to this world, Jancsi!



Next on your list of 2<sup>nd</sup> cousins is

**Mártika Birck,**

who spent part of a semester with us in 1979 after we got back from my sabbatical leave in Hungary. Her computer-drawn self-portrait shown on the right is from her student-days at Lamar; I also have a couple of other photos from then, but not happy with my efforts in photography. Nevertheless, I display them on the right and below.



Due to her mother's relentless efforts Mártika also became a dentist, but rather than taking over her mother's practice, she moved to Austria. Her twins, Oliver and Barbara are already in their mid-twenties, but don't yet have a degree in hand. Mártika divorced their father, made a poor choice the second time around, and is divorced again. We saw them in 2003, when they lived in a plush new home in Herceghalom; after that they moved back from Bozsók, where her husband had a second restaurant, and from there they ended up in Vienna. Earlier (in 1995) Eric and I were Laci's guests at his first restaurant, which was a very elegant one in Buda.



On the next page I show four pictures. The one with Mártika and Laci and the two little ones was taken in 1995 when Eric joined me for a week in Hungary. The one with Adam, Mártika and Mártika's father, Miklós was taken in 2000, when Adam joined for a week in Hungary. The one with Kay and Márk sitting on the couch is of vintage 2003, while he group picture of Kató's and Márti's family at the Balaton is from Kathleen and was taken in the summer of 2017. Hurray for Alex and Kathleen!





Mártika on Facebook

**Klárika Kovács**

is the older daughter of Gyuszi. She lost her husband right about the same time as Laci Zsoldos died, at the same hospital. Thus, Klárika had to bring up her two sons by herself, and it was only recently that she found an excellent partner in life, Feri (Ferenc) Olasz, who is a celebrated photographer with several books of his pictures to his credit. His themes are religious and patriotic and very much in line with Klárika's beliefs, who has always been passionate about music. After several years of being an enthusiastic chorus conductor and a vocal coach for many in the Keszthely area, she currently works in a music school in Budapest. They are shown on the right with her first grandchild, Bendegúz.

Klárika has two sons, who are both married and live in The Netherlands, though Endre (Bandi), the older one moved back to Hungary. Since he speaks English, sometimes I correspond with him and send him various writings of mine, but the two pictures at the top of the next page were sent by Klárika. They show her as a baby with Gomika, her great-grandmother. These are the best photos I have of my paternal grandmother, Gomika – hence, I truly treasure them.





The next two pictures show Klárka and her younger sister, Zsuzsa some years ago. In the first one they are with their mother and Ili néni, their grandmother, while in the second (taken in 1976) they are with you, Adam.



The 3<sup>rd</sup> one shows Klárka with Egon Svastics and the Svastits traveling trophy created by Jimmy Svastics, while on the right, she is with her mother and sons and you and I, Adam in 2000.

Over the years, time and again I was in touch with Klárka. Once, I sent her the scores of the music of our common ancestor, János Svastits, while at another time I sent her the receipt for renewing the rights to the plot where Gomika and some other Vargha relatives are buried. On the other hand, when it comes to her younger sister

## Your cousins

## 2<sup>nd</sup> cousins

### Zsuzsi Kovács,

the last time I saw her was in 1978. Consequently, I was happy to learn from Bandi, who sent me five of the next six pictures that she continues to live in Nemesbük, though they are away much of the time on account of their business. Bandi also told me that their son, Peter got married, and that the three of them grew up together and are still very close. Starting with a picture of Zsuzsi, Attila, Bandi and Gabriella on the right, I show below a picture of the three of them, Bandi with his bride, Márton (Marci), Zsófia and Bendegúz, and Klári, the proud great-grandmother, who is just a few weeks older than me.



By the way, the -ka and -ke endings diminish in size the nouns upon application, and are often used when a child is named after one of the parents, and hence the son of Laci is Lacika, the daughter of Klári is Kláríka and the daughter of Márti is Mártika. Alternately, at times one attaches 'Kis-' (meaning 'small') as a qualifier and hence my cousin, Kató was called and is by me) 'Kis Kató', or Kiskató.



Moving on to the daughters of my cousin, Miklós, unfortunately I have only one old photo of them. Next to it I displayed Edith's younger son with the first fish caught by him last year.

**Edith Kovács**

is married (to Joe Pereira) and the mother of two teenage boys, Samuel and Daniel (born in 2003 and 2004, respectively). Her husband is from Portugal. While earlier I had no contact with her at all, after her



father's death we exchanged some messages and even attempted to talk a couple of times. She even sent me a picture of one of her sons, but lately I have not heard from her.

**Christina Kovács**

is an architect and not married, but has a serious and nice boyfriend, according to her sister. She worked in Minneapolis for years, but moved back to Winnipeg, Canada, where her parents lived and her sister lives. Earlier, I had contact with her even when she lived in the USA, and we even talked once while her father was still around. But then she got quiet again.

Not succeeding to draw them out, I am turning to you, Adam for help. Please do your best to befriend both of them and like you did with Alex, provide them with an extended family via us. We are their closest relatives on this side of the Ocean; it makes no sense to remain strangers to one another.

Continuing with my maternal 1<sup>st</sup> cousins, next is Laci Köllő's daughter,

**Eszter Köllő**

who lives in Sweden after moving to Ireland, where she married Edward Lynch of Ireland. Her three children are of ages 8, 10 and 12, and Eszter is very proud of them being fluent in Hungarian too. Since Eszter's degrees are in literature, her pride is understandable. The first two pictures of Eszter were taken in Hungary in 1976 and 1978, respectively.





The picture on the right is from 1994, showing Zoli, Eszter and her parents with you, Eric.

The one below was taken in 2005, when I was in Hungary for 10 weeks, spending much of my time at your place, Daniel. In it I am between Zsolt and your Ági, while Laci is between Eszter and you, Daniel.

Below I also show a wedding photo of Eszter and Ed Lynch and a picture of Eszter and her first-born.



I also cherish the memory of Eszter's visit to the USA in 1995; a picture from that visit is shown on the right. In addition to spending time with Adam and AJ, as well as Eric, she went to California to visit with Laci Bihari, and came to see us in Beaumont too, so as to see us and Lydia's family. With both her parents gone, Eszter is very much alone in this world; we must continue to reach out to her to whatever extent she allows it. Unfortunately, she might have inherited her mother's distrust towards the rest of the Berzsenyi family and might even have some grudges of her own. Alternately, it might be just pride that keeps her at a distance. In any case, I don't know how to draw her out. Since all three of you, boys were close to her at one time, keep reassuring her of our love and interest in her affairs, try to befriend her again.

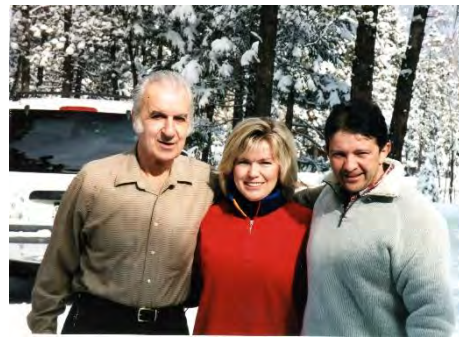
**Krisztina Ungár**

is well-educated in the technical fields, with degrees in engineering and informatics. She is not married, and probably will not marry, but one can never tell. I always had a cordial relationship with Kriszti and was happy to see her come to the various gatherings with her parents. I was happy that she came to the Gellért with her mother, Gizi, Hugi and Dani, Hugi's older grandson. The picture here shows us as we were sitting around.

**László (Laci) Bihari**

was educated in the hospitality and hotel industry in Hungary and was employed in that field (as a waiter in restaurants) some of the time since he left Hungary and settled in the Los Angeles area in the 1980s. Recently, he managed to obtain an associate degree in some area of business, but I think he continues to have difficulties in finding appropriate employment. Thus, his only source of income is from Lyft-taxi-driving. He and his wife, Zsuzsa divorced one another, and when their Hungarian friends, Péter and Ági Schultz followed their example, Laci married Ági and Zsuzsa married Péter. Laci and Zsuzsa visited with us in Terre Haute a couple of times while they were married to one another, and then separately too in Pine Junction – once Laci and Ági, and once Zsuzsa with Jessica, Zsolt and Zsolt's son, Dani, when Zsolt and Dani were visiting with them in Los Angeles. We also saw Zsuzsa and Jessica in 2007 in Hungary, when we took Christopher there, and had a nice visit with Zsuzsa, and separately with Laci and Ági in Los Angeles in January 2016.

The pictures below show Laci with Zuzsa, his fist wife, with Jessica, their daughter, and with Ági, his second wife. The last one was taken during their visit to Colorado.



I am in contact with both Laci and Zsuzsa, but it has been a long time since we saw either of them. They both came to visit with us when your mother and I were in Los Angeles in 2016, but that was 4 years ago. The first picture below was taken at Jessica's graduation, the next one (of Dani between his girlfriend, Timea and his grandmother) at the 2011 Berzsényi gathering, while the last one in Pine Junction when Laci and his second wife, Ági came to visit us there. That was even longer ago.

## Your cousins

## 2<sup>nd</sup> cousins



### Zsolt Makai

and his wife, Gyöngyi live in Budapest, where Zsolt is employed at one of the theaters as a technician (in lighting, I think). They have two sons, Dani and Marci, with Dani doing well as a computer technician, but Marci struggling with some form of autism. Marci cannot hold a job, but he is very much at home on the computer. Dani is working with computers and lives with Timea for close to 10 years by now.



Above I show a picture of Zsolt and Krisztina from 2017; compare it with the one next to it from 1976. Zsolt is extremely hard-working and highly respected in his field. As mentioned above, along with his son, Dani and Zsuzsa and Jessica he visited with us in Colorado; the picture on the right commemorates that visit.



I certainly hope that you will manage to have better relations with your cousins than I managed. All of them are worthy of your attention.

### Your third cousins

In view of the fact that they are the children of **my 2<sup>nd</sup> cousins**,

I will come up with them by revisiting my 2<sup>nd</sup> cousins.

Of the latter, I have

7 (seven) on my father's side of the family: Géza (1924-1985), Ilona (Iluska or Ilka) and Antal (Tóni, 1943-2010) Svastits, László and Pál Kerekes, and Miklós and Károly Péterfia (1942-1967) – of whom the first three are actually closer, 1½ -cousins of mine, as I explained it in **Part 1** of these **Tales**, but I don't bother with that distinction now;

1 (one) on my mother's side of the family: Frederick (Frici) Grafí; and

2 (two) on account of my parents' Svastits relationship, as explained in **Part 1** of my book: Ödön (Sr.) and János Svastits.

My paternal grandmother, Anna Fritsch had three brothers (actually, four, but I assume that her twin died as an infant), but none of them had children, and hence grandchildren.

But my paternal grandfather, Jenő Vargha had a sister, Magdolna and a brother, Károly. Géza, Ilka, Tóni, László and Pál are Magdolna's grandchildren, while Miklós and Károly are Károly's.

My maternal grandmother, Lenke Juhász had only one sibling, her brother, Béla bácsi, whose only child, Márta néni had only one child, Frici.

But none of the four siblings of my maternal grandfather, Sándor Berzsenyi had any children. Hence Frici's unique position in my mother's family.

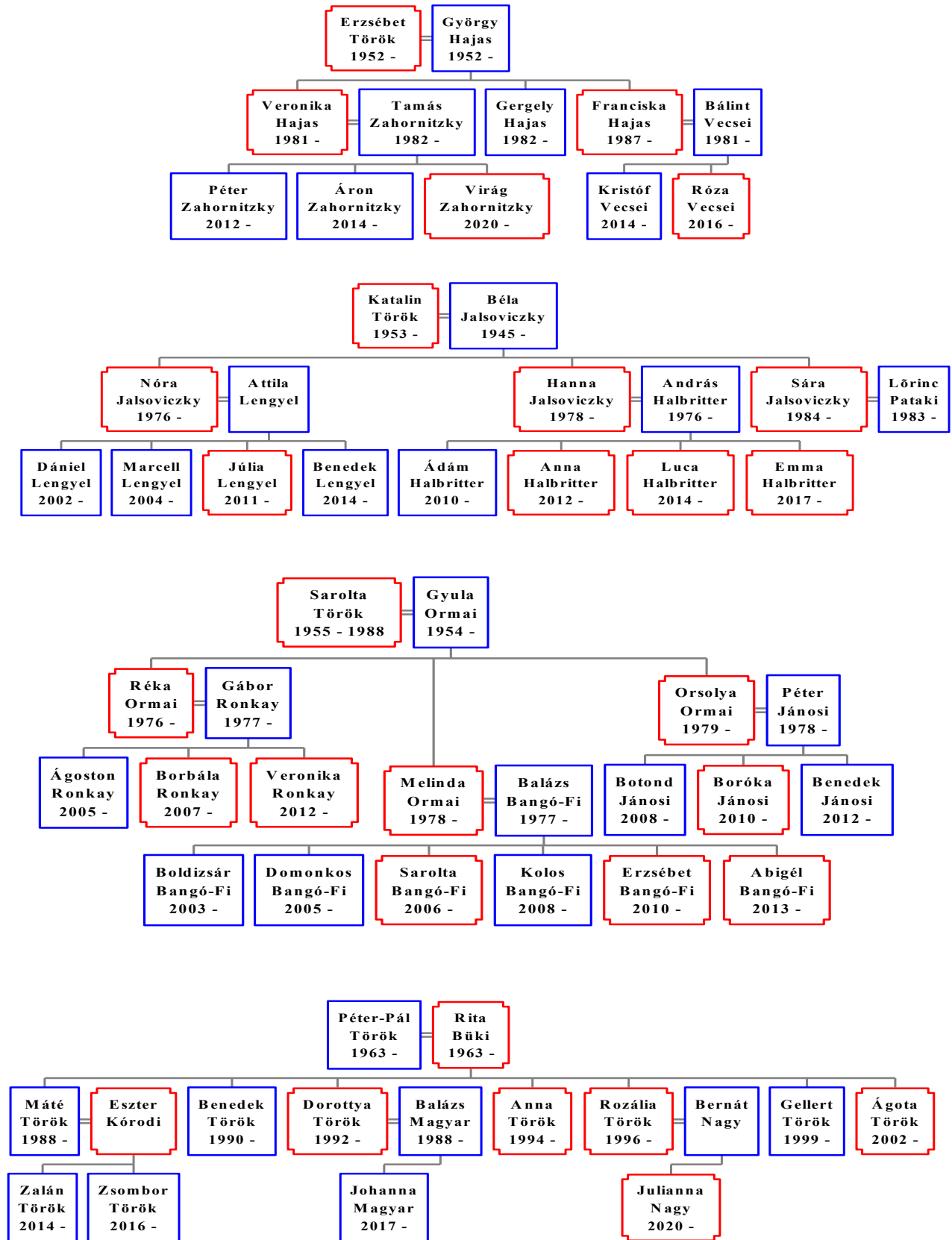
In what follows, I will briefly write about these 2<sup>nd</sup> cousins of mine, as well as about Ödön Sr. and János Svastits, and then switch my attention to their children, if any.

#### Géza Svastits

died before I made my first arrays into genealogy, and hence I have only vague memories of seeing him in the summer of 1951 in Keszthely. He has a son, **Tibor Svastits**, to whom I wrote once or twice to no avail. He was sweet and apologetic when I saw him in 2011 at the Svastits reunion in Balatonboglár. Tibor's twins (Attila and Krisztina) were born in 2004.

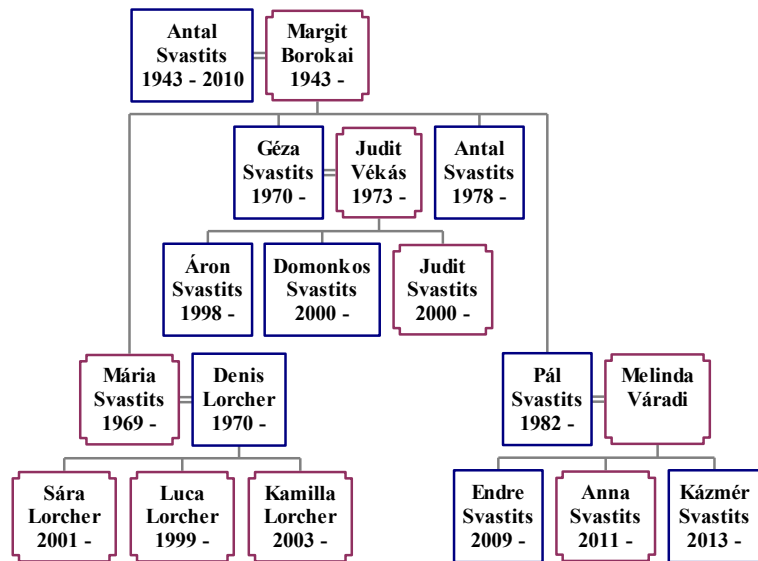
#### Ilona (Iluska or Ilka) Svastits (1926-2021)

was recently (2009) widowed by her husband, Lajos (Lali) Török. We visited with them time and again partially since they also live on Németvölgyi út in Budapest, a couple of hoses from your Uncle Zolti's place. She continues to be one of my favorite relatives. Like us, they have four children, but unlike us, three daughters and one son. Unfortunately, one of the daughters, **Sarolta** died young; her I never met. But I know their other two daughters **Erzsébet** and **Katalin**, as well as their son, **Péter-Pál**, and have been in occasional correspondence with Erzsébet, her husband, Gyuri Hajas, and Péter-Pál. Erzsébet also knows Zoli, since one of her kids was a classmate of his. Below I display their family trees.



**Antal (Tóni) Svastits**

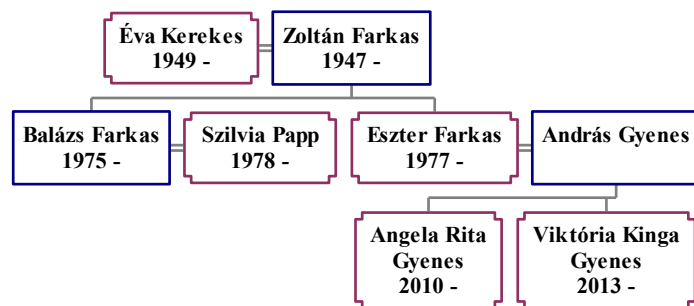
and his wife, Mandi had four children too; three sons (**Géza**, **Antal** and **Pál**) and a daughter (**Mária**), who lives in France. I never met her but know the sons at least a bit. One of them volunteered to correspond with me on behalf of his mother, but I have yet to lean on him more heavily. I will need to do so, since Mandi was the source of most of the Svastits data collected at the archives. She used to write to me but got no letters from her since Tóni's tragic death from lung cancer. Except for Antal, who is not married, each of the others have 3 children as shown on the right.

**Pál (Pali) Kerekes**

died as a young man in World War II, and hence he had no descendants. But his older brother,

**László Kerekes**

was more fortunate, and not only survived the war and serious injuries sustained therein, but later became a lawyer and the father of **Éva Kerekes**, whom you, Adam met in 2000. She is a highly educated historian and social scientist, who is heavily involved in political affairs. Éva's descendants are shown on the right.

**Miklós Péterfia**

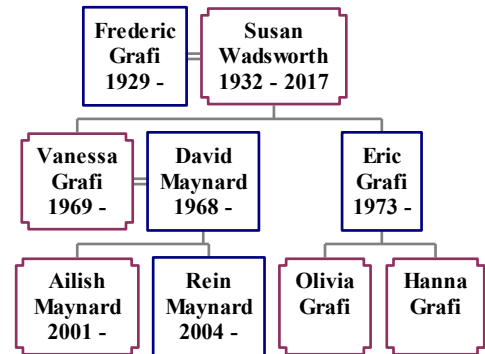
is the lone grandson of Károly Vargha, whose son, Gyuszi bácsi I met once, maybe in 1951, when I visited them with my father. They had no children and neither did Gyuszi bácsi's sister, Erzsébet, whose husband escaped to the West without her sometime after World War II. Miklós and his brother, Károly are the children of the third sibling, Irma, who married Sándor Péterfia of Jewish ancestry. Interestingly, Miklós is strongly anti-Semitic, like many of my other relatives, recognizing that their sufferings under communism were partially due to the fact that many of the communist leaders were Jewish. Miklós is married but has no children, and neither did his brother

**Károly Péterfia,**

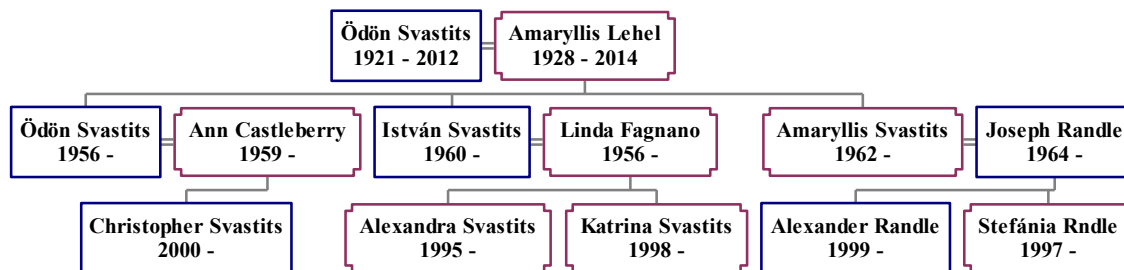
who went to France as a 14-year-old in 1956 and died in an automobile accident there. I never met him.

**Frigyes (Frederick, Frici) Grafi**

lived in Canada and had two children by his wife, Susan: **Eric** and **Vanessa Grafi**. The two of you, Eric and Daniel met them, when we were visiting Frici's parents (as well as Frici and family) in Toronto in 1986. Since then I have been in sporadic contact with Frici, and more recently with Vanessa, who is married to David Julian Maynard and has two children, Alish and Rein. She gave me her brother's e-mail address only recently in order to express my condolences to him on the occasion of their mother's death. Got no response. Their tree is shown on the right. Earlier from his Facebook account I learned that Eric has two little daughters, Olivia and Hanna, but I know nothing more about them. There are some pictures of Vanessa and Eric from 1986, as well as one of their children in Part 1 of my book. I display on the right their family tree.

**Ödön Svastits Sr.**

was a medical doctor like his father, but upon coming to the USA in 1956, he decided to switch fields of employment. We met him and his wife in 1993 on our way back from Australia, when we stopped to visit with them. They came to our hotel room and were very sweet. Later we stayed in touch mostly via phone calls. He is shown in a photo in Part 1 of my book along with his grandchildren, and there are some photos there of his children, **Ödön Jr., István** and **Amaryllis** too. They are 3<sup>rd</sup> cousins of yours.

**János Svastits**

János died in World War II and supposedly, had an illegitimate son too, but on the advice of his late father, Ödön Svastits Sr. chose not to include him on his family tree. Lacking further proof to the contrary, I must abide by their decision.



### In summary,

the number of your 3<sup>rd</sup> cousins is **15** from my side of the family. They are listed below, with their year of birth parenthesized:

Tibor (1958) Svastits via Géza,  
Erzsébet (1952), Katalin (1953), Sarolta (1955) and Péter-Pál (1963) Török via Iluska  
Mária (1969), Géza (1970), Antal (1978) and Pál (1982) Svastits via Tóni  
Éva (1949) Kerekes via László  
Ödön Jr (1956), István (1960) and Amaryllis (1962) Svastits via Ödön Sr.  
Vanessa (1969) and Eric (1973) Grafí, via Frici

They are all alive except for Sarolta Török, who died at the age of 33.

### Picture Gallery

Below I display the ‘mug shots’ of those six 3<sup>rd</sup> cousins of yours, whom I consider most likely to become future contacts of yours – from, left to right, they are Éva Kerekes, Ed Svastits,, Erzsébet Török and Stephen Svastits in the first row and Géza Svastits, Vanessa Grafí, Amaryllis Svastits and Eric Grafí in the second row..



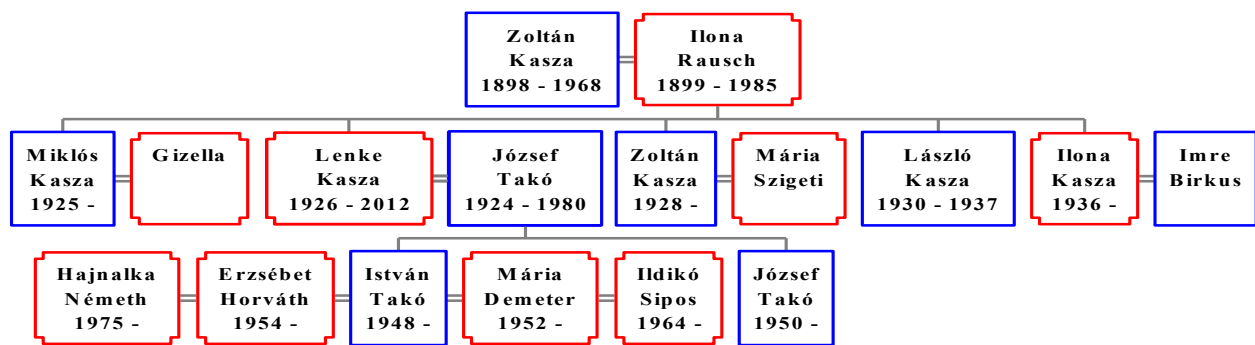
Your fourth cousins

They come from the 3<sup>rd</sup> cousins of mine, who are listed – all 54 of them – on page 109 of **Part 1** of these **Tales**. Please note that I will also demote my 2½ (all 7 of them listed on the same page) to 3<sup>rd</sup> cousins and hence the list consists of 61 cousins of mine.

Starting with the

**Vargha-Etényi line,**

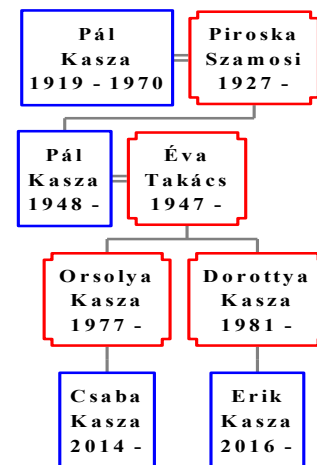
that is, my 3<sup>rd</sup> cousins, Zoltán, Lenke, Jolán, Katalin and Pál Kasza, I will consider one by one their descendant trees in order to facilitate our count.



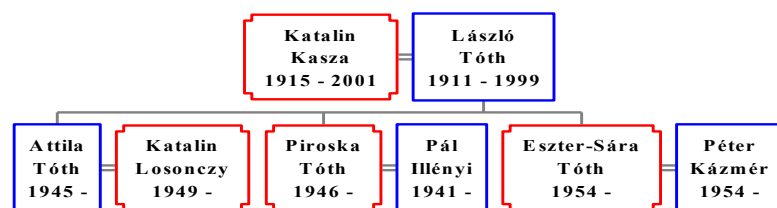
Thereby, the children of my 3<sup>rd</sup> cousin, Zoltán Kasza can be easily identified as the first 5 of your 4<sup>th</sup> cousins; they are **Miklós, Lenke, Zoltán, László** and **Iлона Kasza**.

Please note that I singled out Lenke Kasza above, since she was at our 2005 Vargha reunion bringing some photos (which I scanned) and since her son, István is a regular participant of our reunions. I am not familiar with the other descendants of Zoltán Kasza.

Zoltán’s sister, the first Lenke Kasza died at age 13, while his sister, Jolán Kasza never married. Nevertheless, Jolán was an important person in the family due to her interest in genealogy. Zoltán’s third sister, Katalin was the mother of Attila Tóth, with whom many of you are already familiar. Katalin’s descendants are introduced below, while Pál Kasza’s are shown on the right.



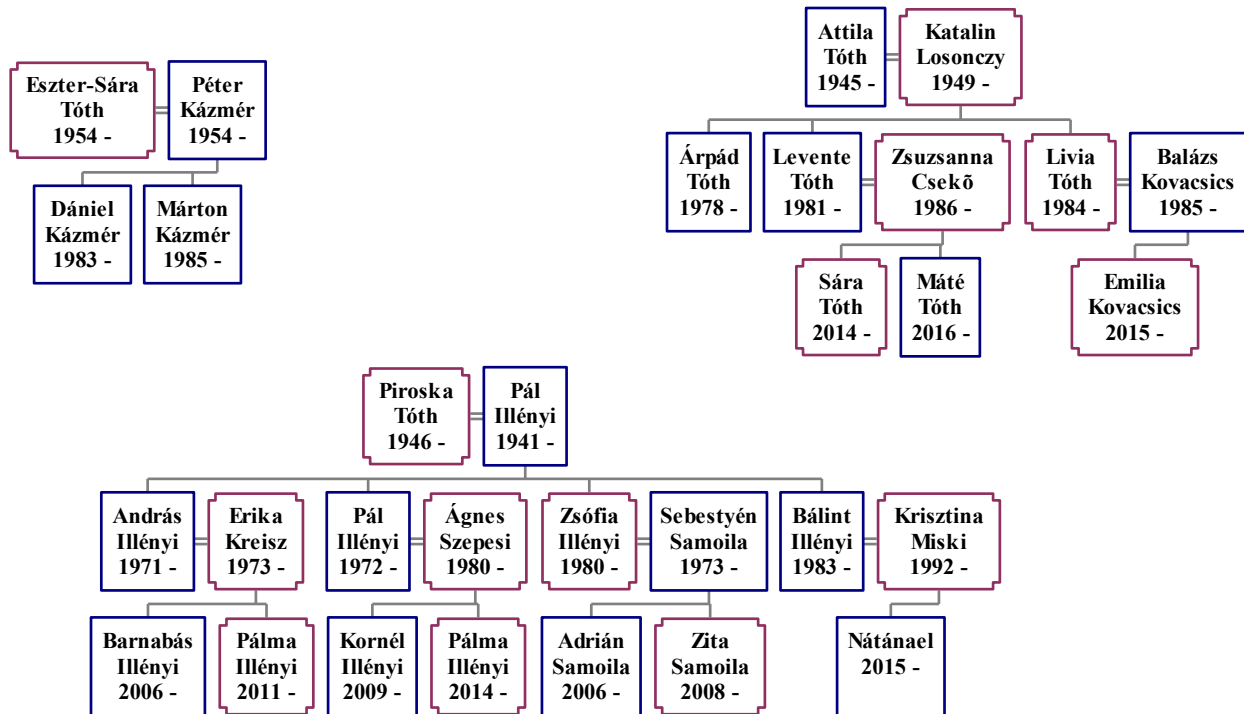
Katalin Kasza’s three children, **Attila, Piroska** and **Eszter-Sára Tóth**, as well as Pál Kasza’s son, also named **Pál Kasza**, featured here, are 4 more 4<sup>th</sup> cousins of yours.



## Your cousins

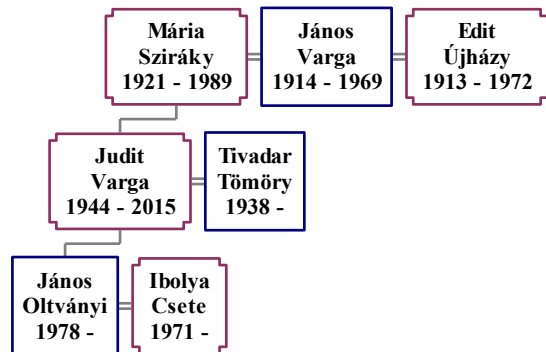
## 4<sup>th</sup> cousins

Next, I will display the descendants of Attila, Piroska and Eszter–Sára Tóth for possible future purposes.



Next, note that János Varga, the next person in my list of 3<sup>rd</sup> cousins had only one daughter, **Judit Varga**, and hence his contribution to the number of 4<sup>th</sup> cousins of yours is 1, for a running total of **10**.

In the sequel, I will keep a running total of your 4<sup>th</sup> cousins, with that number, as well as the names of your 4<sup>th</sup> cousins when they first appear being in **bold lettering**.



Returning to Attila Tóth, not only is he the organizer of the Vargha reunions, but he also takes care of the Vargha graves in Balatonfüred. As you know, I made contributions to the latter, and I sincerely hope that you, my children, will do the same. Therefore, it is extremely important that you stay in contact with Attila and his children too. Attila's English is fairly good, but his sister's, Eszter-Sára's is even better. She lives in Canada.

I must also call to your attention to the fact that since her mother's death, János Oltványi is the keeper of the 1713 sheepskin of the Vargha family. He is not the son of Tivadar Tömöry, whom his mother divorced. However, wanting a child and being a modern woman, Judit turned to a sperm bank and her son, János 'inherited' Judit's grandmother's family name.

By the way, I am also on excellent terms with Pali Kasza, who is a PhD pharmacist. Interestingly, his grandsons, Csaba and Erik stem from a ‘gene/sperm bank’.

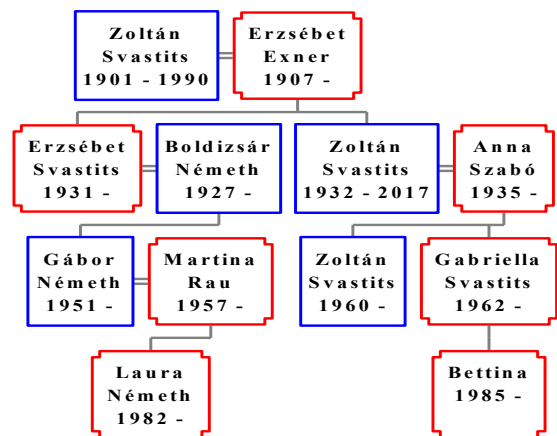
Moving on to the next pair of great-great-grandparents of mine, we will find that the

**Svastits-Csertán line**

yields 18 more 4<sup>th</sup> cousin of yours, for a running total of **28**.

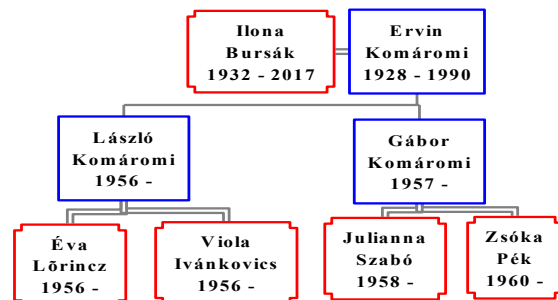
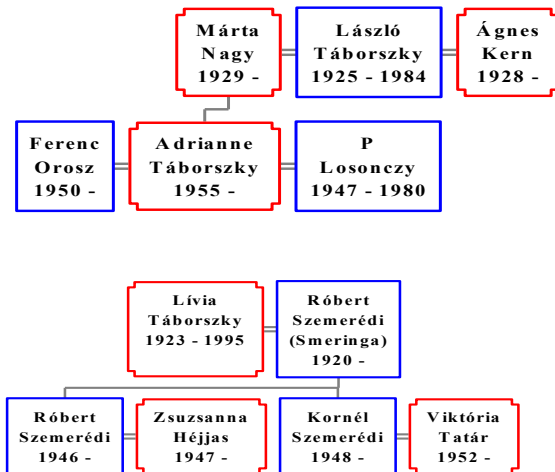
Treating the special case of the children of Ödön Jr., István and Amaryllis Svastits (who were my 2½<sup>th</sup> cousins, to be ‘demoted’ to the level of 3<sup>rd</sup> cousins), I refer you to the descendant tree of Ödön Svastits Sr. in the previous section to find **Christopher**, **Alexander** and **Katrina Svastits**, as well as **Stefánia** and **Alexander Rundle** as 5 more 4<sup>th</sup> cousins of yours.

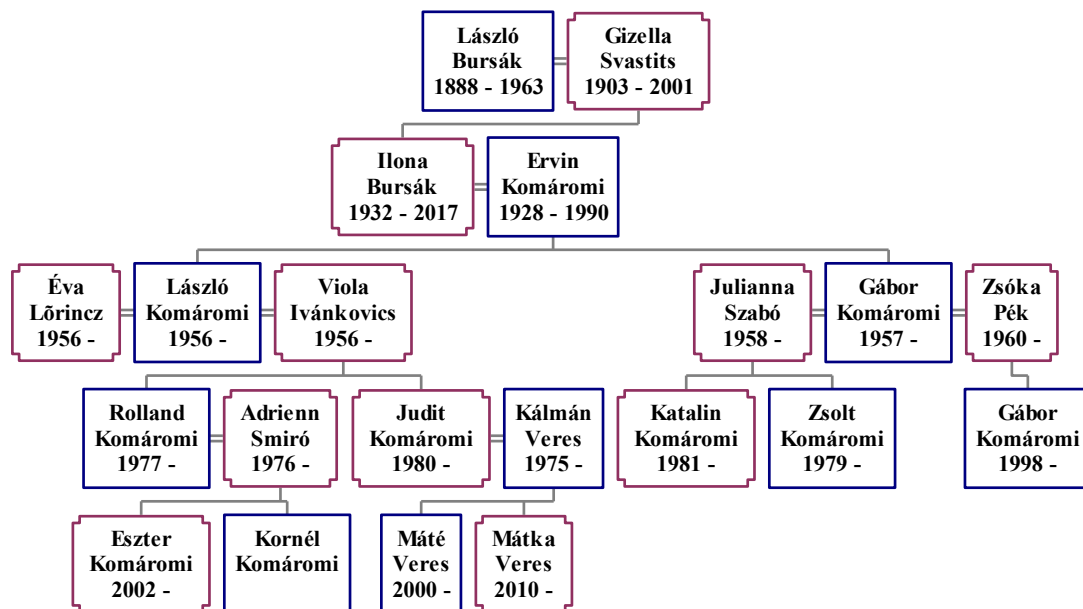
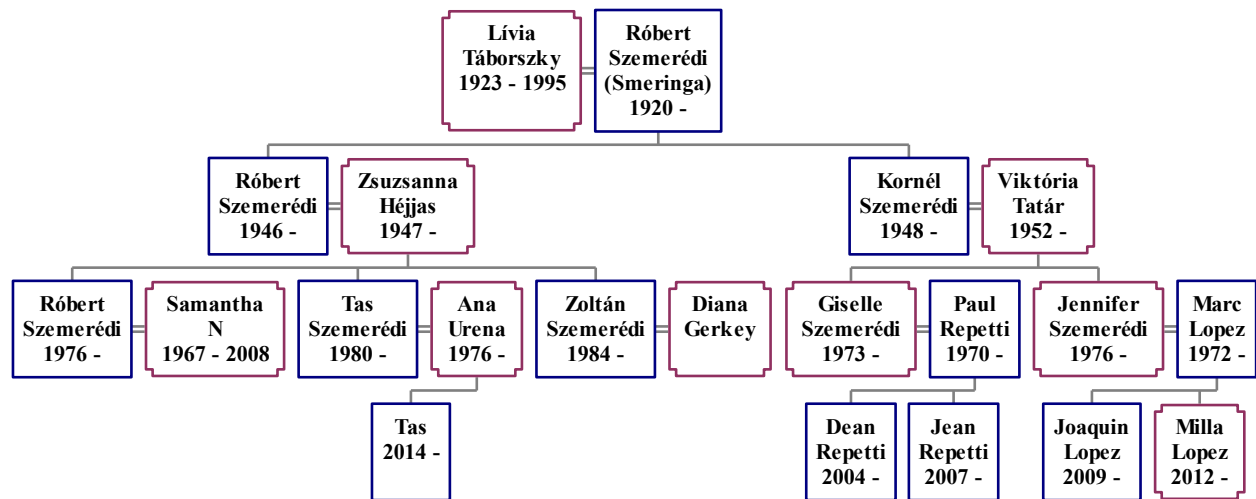
Next, consider the descendant tree of the parents of the siblings, Erzsébet and Zoltán Svastits shown on the right. From that you can see that **Gábor Németh**, as well as **Zoltán** and **Gabriella Svastits** are 3 more 4<sup>th</sup> cousins of yours.



Concerning the next three 3<sup>rd</sup> cousins of mine, Livia Táborszky, László Tábory and Ilona Bursák and their descendant trees below and to the right, we can recognize that the following 5 relatives are also 4<sup>th</sup> cousins of yours: **Róbert** and **Kornél Szemerédi**, **Adrienne Táborszky** and **László** and **Gábor Komáromi**. Their descendants are introduced on the next page.

Unfortunately, I didn’t meet Livia Táborszky though I could have met her in the Los Angeles when I was there (1961-62). She and her family lived there at the time.



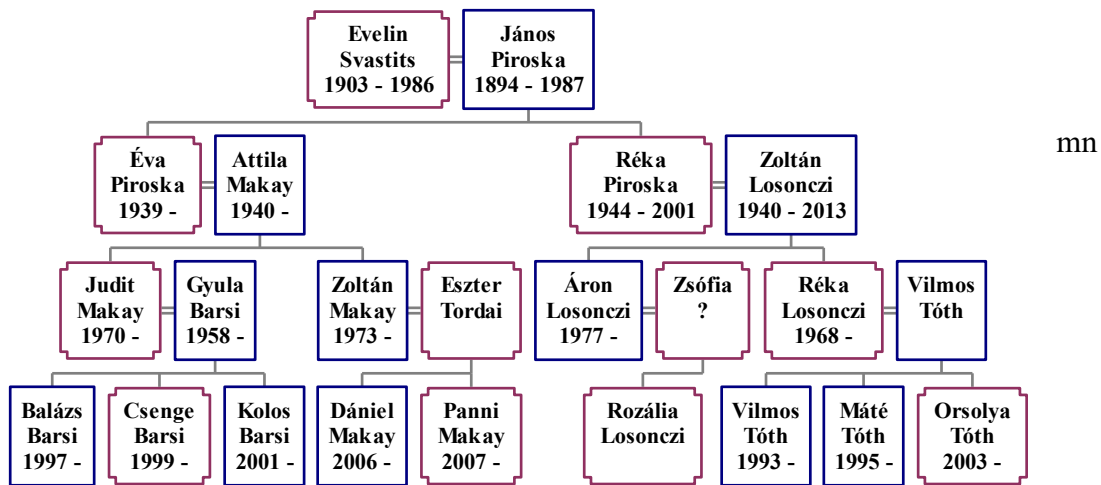


Since my involvement in genealogy, I managed to befriend Livia's sons, Róbert and Kornél Szemerédi. In fact, I met Kornél in January 2016, who is also into genealogy, maintaining two Svastits sites on MyHeritage.com. I am his guest on both; some of his information is in fact due to me. On the other hand, I hope to make use of at least some of his many photos in my writings.

As one can see from the descendant tree above, Baba was a half-sibling of Livia and László. She was also a wonderful correspondent of mine. I met her at the 2005 Svastits gathering and was saddened by her death in 2017.

Next on my list of my 3<sup>rd</sup> cousins is Sándor Szigethy (1935-2006). Unfortunately, I never met him either, but I learned that he was a pastor in the Lutheran Church, who emigrated to Sweden in 1956. To my knowledge, he had no family.

Concerning my 3<sup>rd</sup> cousins Éva and Réka Piroska, in the tree below you will find **Judit and Zoltán Makay** and **Áron and Réka Losonczi** as 4 more of your 4<sup>th</sup> cousins.



Unfortunately, I missed meeting with Réka, who died in 2001, but thoroughly enjoy my friendship with Éva, who is a year younger than me. She is a pharmacist, who owns the pharmacy on Baross tér in Budapest. Adam and I visited there and met her daughter, Judit too, who is also a pharmacist. While it was Réka, who followed her father into politics and was similarly elected mayor of Csongrád, it became Éva's task to assure that their father's memory as an outstanding painter will always be cherished. She located his paintings, which ended up in private collections and gathered them for various exhibitions in different galleries, and even authored a book about him and a calendar illustrated with his paintings.

Adam, in 2005, when we went to the pharmacy of Éva Piroska, I think you met with her daughter, Judit Makay. Later that summer, I visited Éva and her husband, Attila Makay on their 'tanya' near Csongrád. Judit joined us later and I have some photos of her there. ('Near' is a relative concept; after taking a bus from Csongrád, Éva and I had to walk there, which was a loooooong walk. A tanya is like a homestead in Australia.) Éva's son, Zoltán also has two children.

Réka also has a son and a daughter, Áron and Réka Losonczi, who are also your 4<sup>th</sup> cousins, Áron is rightfully famous for his invention of 'üveg-beton', a compound, which is transparent and yet strong as asphalt. Áron has a daughter, while Réka's daughter, also named Réka is a dentist in Szolnok and has three children. I met Réka Piroska's husband at one of the Svastits reunions, but neither Áron nor Réka.

When I inquired about the children of Kálmán Spur, I learned that they changed their names to Bocsáry, the forename of the Svastits family, and went to America. That may be the case with László, but I found that Gabriella married Árpád Soha in 1941 in Hungary, and hence she may have stayed there. Later I also learned that she had a son named **István Soha**, whom I have yet to locate. Nevertheless, he is a 4<sup>th</sup> cousin of yours. I also learned from Gabriella's marriage records that her father already went by the name Bocsáry, though I can't find a record of his name change.

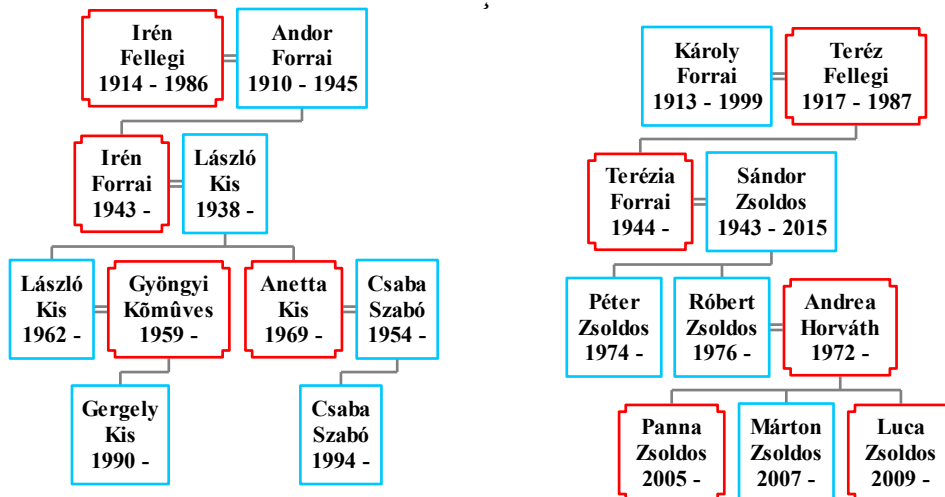
At this point, I strongly suggest further research into the possible families of László and Gabriella Bocsáry, as well as into the possible descendants Gyula Svastits and Mária Sipos via their son Ernő and daughter Mária. They are the only ‘loose ends’ in the Svastits family.

Continuing with the list of 3<sup>rd</sup> cousins of mine, next I call your attention to the

**Fritsch – Mayherr line,**

and there to my 3<sup>rd</sup> cousins, Irén, Andor, Terézia, Gábor and Klára Forrai, whose grandfather changed his name from Fritsch to Forrai as well as to László Fritsch, whom I finally located on my father’s 125<sup>th</sup> birthday. Of them, I missed Andor by a few years, since he died in 2009, but I got to know the others via letters or telecommunication.

Irén’s and Terézia’s family trees are shown below. Interestingly, their mothers were sisters too, and hence their descendants are even closer related to one another. Their children, **Péter** and **Róbert Zsoldos** and **László** and **Anetta Kis** add 4 to the number of your 4<sup>th</sup> cousins.



On the other hand, since the younger Andor was only a half-brother to Irén (and on top of it, an illegitimate son of their father), the contact between Andor and the rest of the family was looser. Nevertheless, he is just as much of a 3<sup>rd</sup> cousin of mine as the others listed above, and hence his daughters, **Gabriella** (Gabi) and **Ágnes Forrai** are to be recognized as your legitimate 4<sup>th</sup> cousins.

## Your cousins

## 4<sup>th</sup> cousins

I have been in close contact with Gabi, but Ágnes wants to honor her father's memory by not 'digging into his past'. Seemingly, he grew up in an orphanage, and had a harder life. His family tree is shown on the right.

Of the Forrai cousins, I left Gábor (and Klára to some extent) last, though it was through Gábor that I got to know them all. As it often turns out, it was a small opening in the flow of time that I found him, and I was most lucky in that.

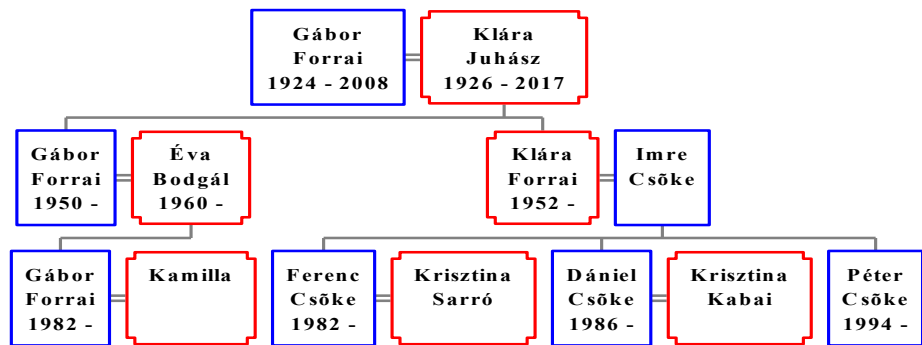
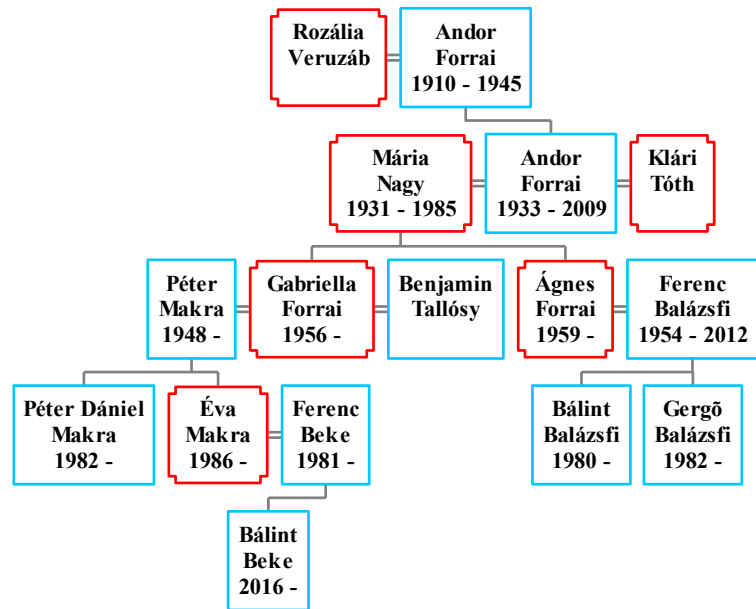
Without going into too many details, I learned that Károly Fritsch, the only surviving son of Teréz Stolba and Carolus Fritsch (a brother of my great-grandfather, Joseph Fritsch), changed his name to Forrai, and lived at the time of his death in 1973 at the address Vaskapu út 25 in

the city of Szeged. Hoping that one of his descendants still lives there, I put in the name Forrai and the above address into the 'search' field of Szeged's virtual city directory and lucked out. His grandson, Gábor still lived there. That was in December 2015. He moved from there recently, barely 18 months later, and since the Forrai name is fairly common, I may not have found him if I started my search later. By the way, I am also in contact with his son, **Gábor Forrai** and have the e-mail address of the three brothers, **Ferenc, Dániel** and **Péter Csőke**. They add 4 more to the count of your 4<sup>th</sup> cousins.

Finally, now that I found my 3<sup>rd</sup> cousin, László Tornyai, who was originally László Fritsch, I also know about his two children, **Emese** and **László Tornyai**, two more 4<sup>th</sup> cousins of yours, about whom I wrote more in Part 1 of this book.

All in all, this line of 3<sup>rd</sup> cousins of mine leads to 14 more 4<sup>th</sup> cousins of yours, for a running total of **40**.

Next, we turn our attention to the

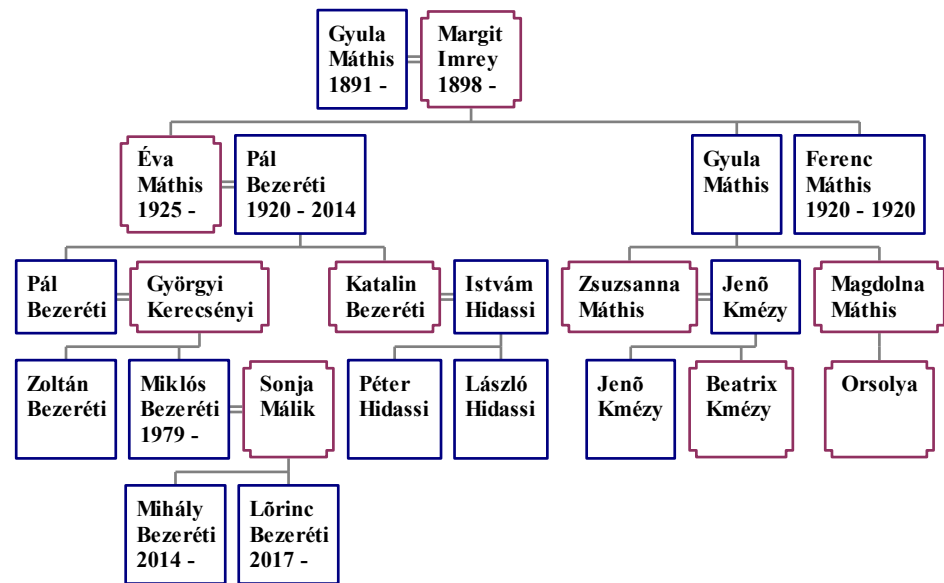




**Gyarmathy–Bárány line.**

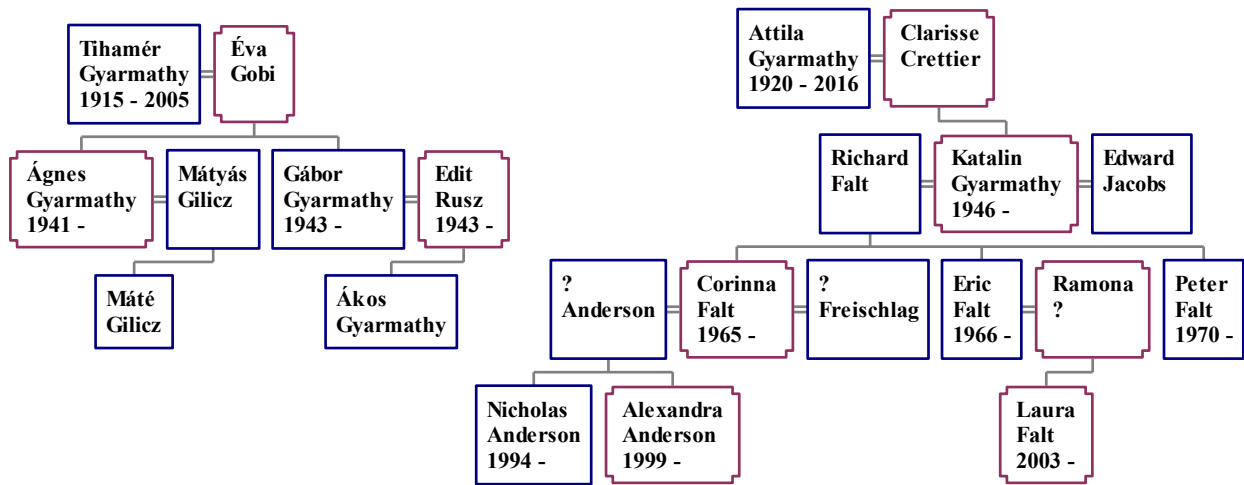
With respect to my 3<sup>rd</sup> cousin Gyula Máthis (who was called Sándor, by mistake on page 209 of **Part 1**), yet another story is in order. Time and again I searched for his descendants, and even went as far as to write to someone named Máthis in Hungary in the hope of finding a relative of his, who could tell me more about him and his family. Hence, in particular, I checked periodically the MACSE database too for possible new information about him. That’s how I came upon the marriage of his daughter, Éva to Pál Bezeréti, which is a fairly unusual last name. Therefore, I turned to the Hungarian ‘Tudakozó’ (a virtual ‘information desk’), which gave me two Bezerétis in Hungary, a Miklós and a Sándor. I called the first, and he turned out to be a grandson of Éva. I wrote about him a bit more in **Part 1** of my book too, but this time I should limit my attention to your 4<sup>th</sup> cousins, **Éva** and **Gyula Máthis**, as seen in the descendant tree below. (As before, I don’t include Ferenc in your list of 4<sup>th</sup> cousins since he died as an infant.) Here I must add that according to Miklós Bezeréti, his father’s uncle, Gyula Mathis had two more daughters from another marriage, but it will take a bit more digging to identify them. Seemingly, his side of the family is not on the best terms with Gyula’s side.

Concerning the next four 3<sup>rd</sup> cousins of mine, we may relax a bit, since none of the Végh sisters or András Noszlopy had any children. On the other hand, both of my late 3<sup>rd</sup> cousins, Tihamér and Attila Gyarmathy ‘contributed to the cause’. Tihamér’s daughter, Ágnes is a well-known stage designer for theatrical productions, while his son, who goes by the name Rádóczy Gyarmathy Gábor (capitalizing the family’s forename and writing it with a ‘y’) is one of the most recognized painters in Hungary today. Their father was widely recognized too, and especially within the family since he painted the picture of Dániel Berzsenyi hanging in the Berzsenyi Museum in Nikla, as well as the only portrait of Farkas Berzsenyi – presumably, from a photograph that was lost during World War II. Though I never met Ágnes (I wrote to her twice, but got no response), I visited Gábor in 2000 and had a nice time with him and his wife, who is a clinical psychiatrist. Later he sent me a nice little booklet written in English and in Hungarian, celebrating him and his art, which is indeed impressive. Later I obtained a couple of booklets on their father’s works too; they are among the many other books written either by or about members of our family.



As you all know, Tihamér’s younger brother, Attila came to the United States in 1956, and after a short stay in Cleveland, settled in Colorado. He was a born businessman, who created a wealth via a variety of enterprises. They included a successful restaurant in Breckenridge, a curtain factory in Colorado Springs (which supplied curtains to a number of hotels), and work as manager of the well-known Broadmoor Inn there. We became close friends with him and his wife, Clarisse, but met their daughter, Kati only a couple of times in spite of the fact that she lived next door to her parents. With **Ágnes, Gábor** and **Kati Gyarmathy**, added to your list of 4<sup>th</sup> cousins, the total contribution of the Gyarmathy – Bárány line 5 for a total of **45**.

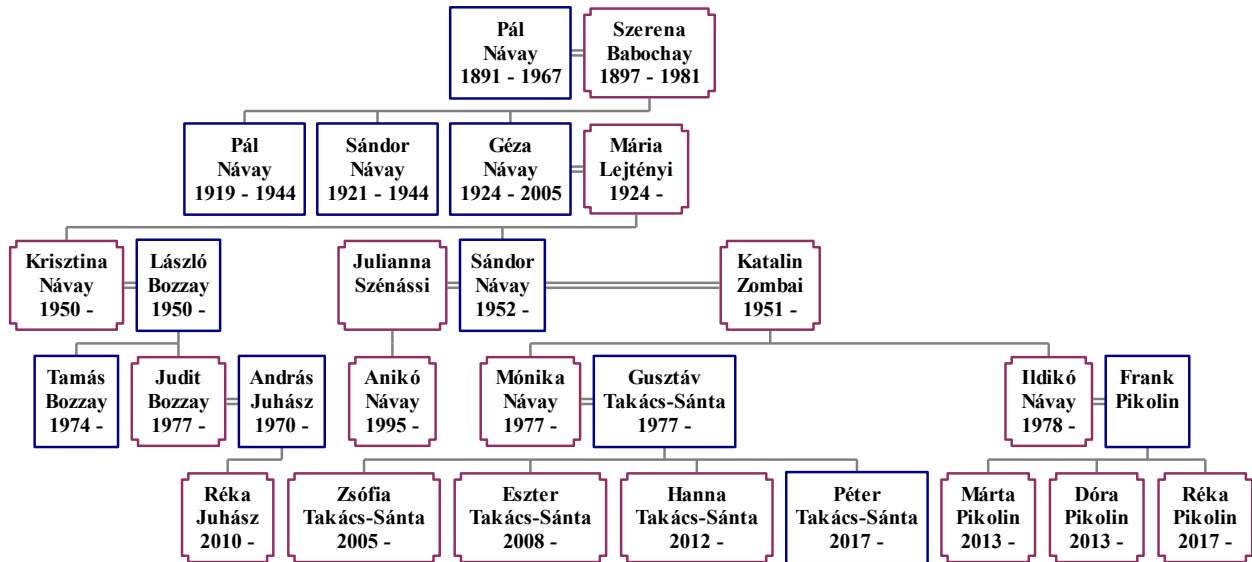
Below I show the descendants of Tihamér, as well as those of Attila – separately, so as to make sure that they are legible.



And penultimately, we turn our attention to the

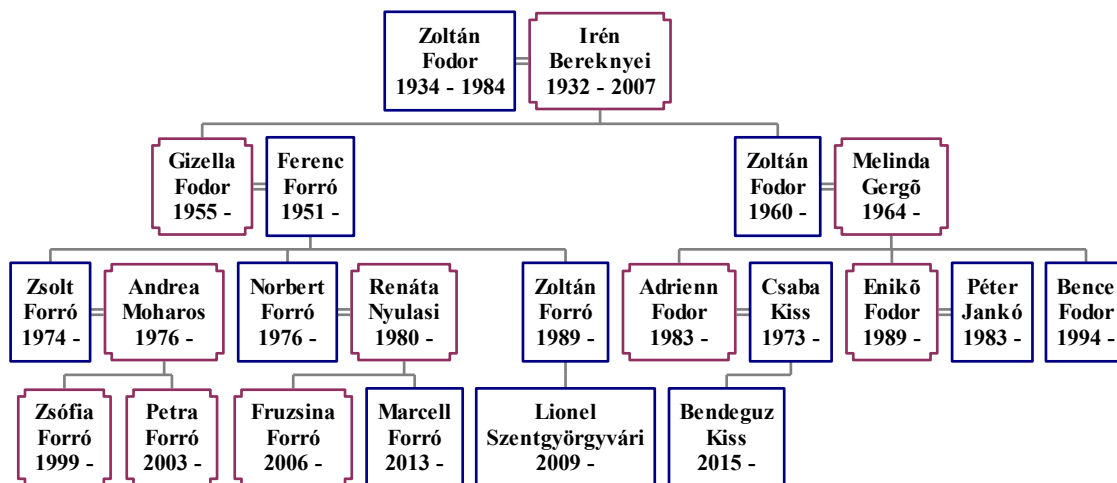
**Juhász–Pretsinszky line,**

Where the first one in my list of 3<sup>rd</sup> cousins is Patricia de Babochay, the daughter of Géza Babóchay (1884-1958, sharing his birthday, August 17 with me)), who came to America with his first wife back in 1929, divorced her (or the other way around), and after she left, remarried to a daughter of Hungarian emigrants. Patricia was born of that fridge, and in turn, she gave birth to two daughters, **Holley** and **Heidi Hart**, who were born in the 1950s. It was a near-miracle that we managed to locate them, a story I will leave till later. What is important is that they are your 4<sup>th</sup> cousins and that Holley was a participant of the Juhász family reunion in 2017. This was her first time there, and not only her, but her mother and maternal grandmother were never in Hungary either. Apart from e-mail correspondence, she knew not a soul there, and yet had a wonderful time. Hopefully, her sister will also be there at the next Juhász reunion.



Unfortunately, I never met Pál and Sándor Návay, both of whom died in World War II as young men without leaving a family. And I missed meeting their brother, Géza Návay too, since my correspondence with his granddaughter, Judit started only in 2007. Since then, I thoroughly enjoyed my contact and many exchanges of pictures and data with Judit, as well as her mother, **Krisztina Návay**. She and her brother, **Sándor Návay** are your 4<sup>th</sup> cousins. Their descendants are shown above.

Continuing with my Juhász-Pretsinszky 3<sup>rd</sup> cousins, the next in line is Zoltán Fodor, whose descendants are shown below.

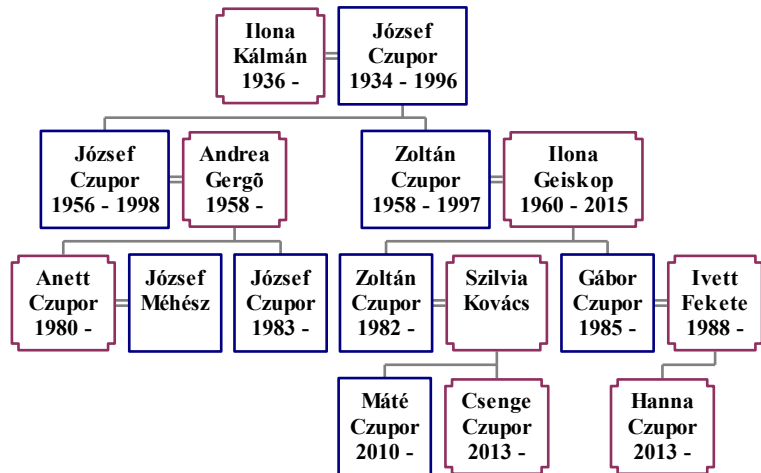


## Your cousins

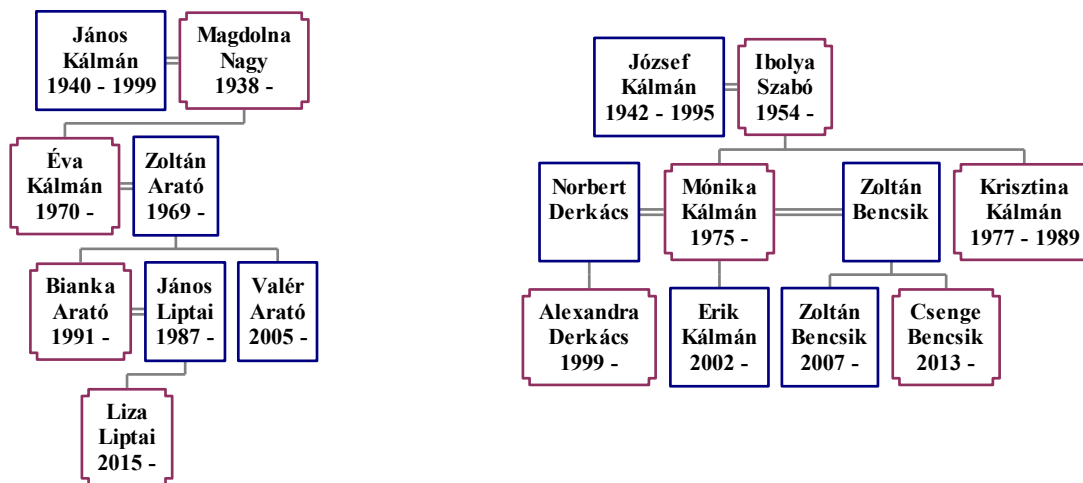
## 4<sup>th</sup> cousins

Recall that he was born to Ilona Fodor before she married his father, János Kálmán. Hence the last name of Fodor. His daughter, **Gizella** (Gizike) and her family hosted our first pannfalvi Juhász reunion on May 20-21, 2017 in Dióspuszta. Along with her brother, **Zoltán Fodor**, they add two more to your list of 4<sup>th</sup> cousins.

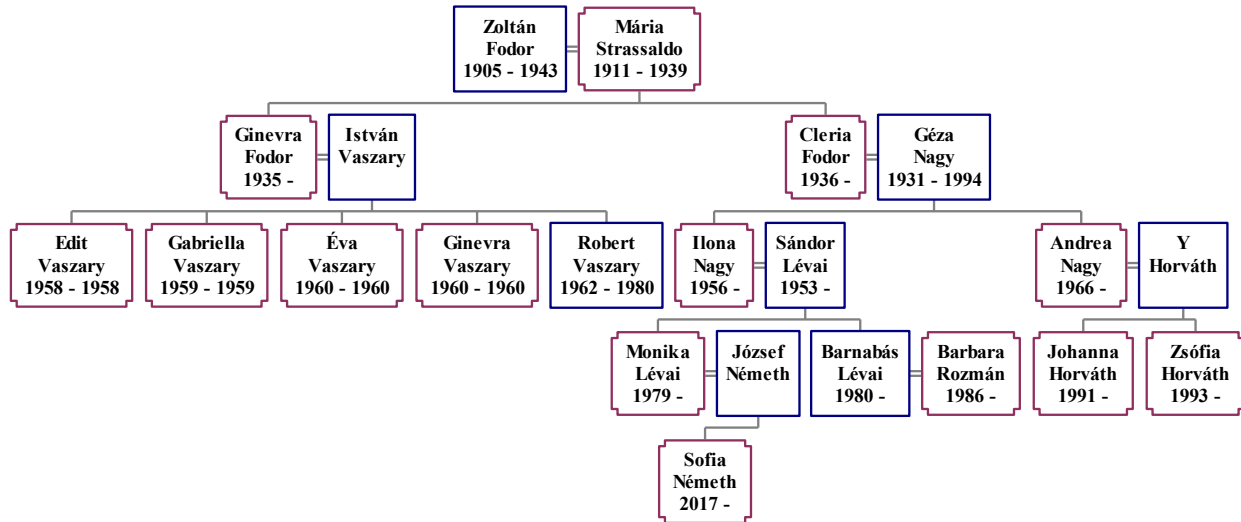
Continuing the list with the children of Ilona Fodor, the next in line is Ilona Kálmán, whose descendants are shown on the right. Her sons, **József** and **Zoltán Czupor** are 4<sup>th</sup> cousins of yours. Their families were not represented at the Juhász gathering, and hence I don't know them personally. Neither was the family of János or József Kálmán represented; nevertheless, they bring in three more 4<sup>th</sup> cousin into your list:



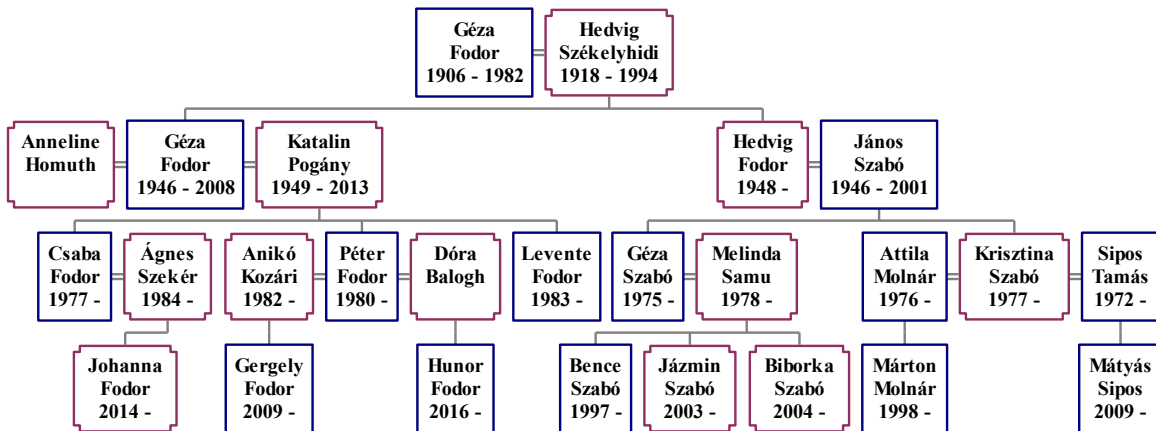
## Éva, Mónika and Krisztina Kálmán



Next on my list is Gini, the older daughter of my godparents, and one of my favorites in the family. Unfortunately, she lost several children as babies, and her only child to survive into adulthood died in an industrial accident. Therefore, the next family tree of the descendants of Generva and Cléria Fodor is very one-sided. Nevertheless, it should suffice in showing **Róbert Vaszary** and **Ilona** and **Andrea Nagy** as your 4<sup>th</sup> cousins.

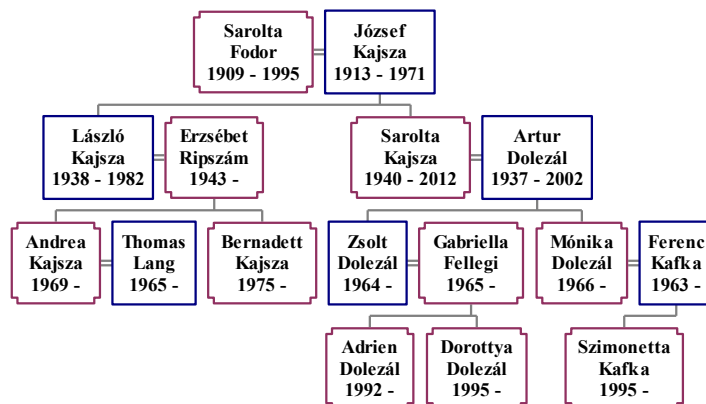


The families of Géza and Hedvig (Hédi) Fodor also contribute 5 more 4<sup>th</sup> cousins of yours, **Csaba**, **Péter** and **Levente Fodor** and **Géza** and **Krisztina Szabó**, as you can see from the descendant tree shown below.



We met Hédi and Jancsi (János), as well as Melinda and Krisztina and their older boys in 2000, when Adam and I visited around, but I never managed to meet Hédi's brother.

Next, we come to the Kajsza family and the contribution of László and Sarolta Kajsza to 'the count'. They are **Andrea** and **Bernadett Kajsza** and **Zsolt** and **Mónika Dolezál**. I met the Dolezals at the Juhász gathering in 2017.



## Your cousins

## 4<sup>th</sup> cousins

The contributions of the Tevely family are next, starting with **Márió Plank**, the son of Thyra shown in the descendant tree on the right.

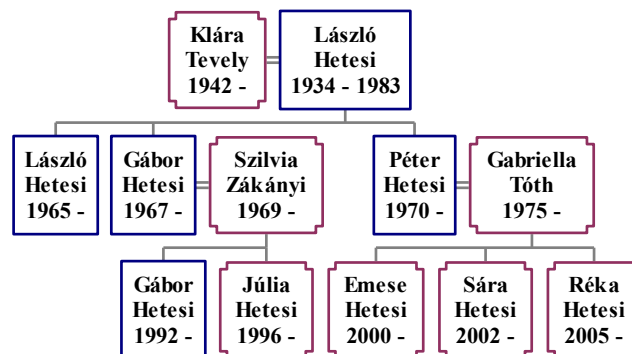
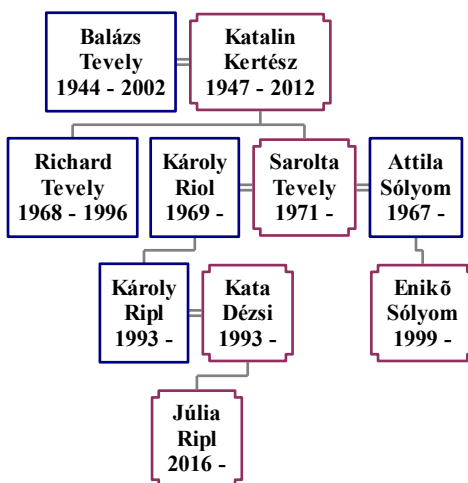
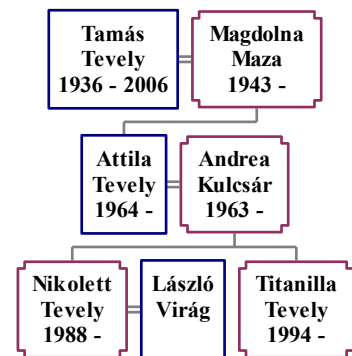
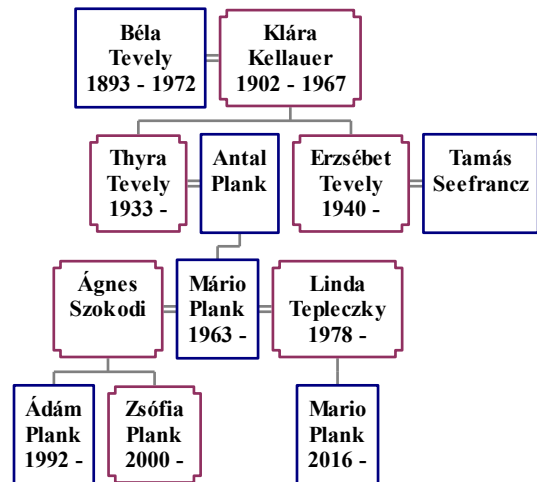
He is an avid hunter and a regular on Facebook, showing off with his son time and again. We also enjoyed the fact that both him and his mother spoke English well. We met them at the 2017 Juhász family reunion.

The next tree introduces **Attila Tevely**, the son of Tamás, whom we met in 2003. Even though he didn't come to the Juhász gathering, Attila and his wife, whose book on Dührer was a wonderful gift, came to our gathering at the Gellért. In fact, their daughter, Nikolett dropped in with her husband too on their way to a photo shot.

Attila is a mechanical engineer, who gave me some books by Béla Király, who played a controversial role in the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and was a relative of his via his mother's family.

Next, I display below the descendants of Klára Tevely, the sister of Tamás, whose contributions are **László, Gábor** and **Péter Hetesi** to your list of 4<sup>th</sup> cousins, along with the descendants of their late brother, Balázs Tevely, whose descendants, **Richard** and **Sarolta Tevely** are also 4<sup>th</sup> cousins of yours.

Klára came to the Juhász reunion with her son, László.

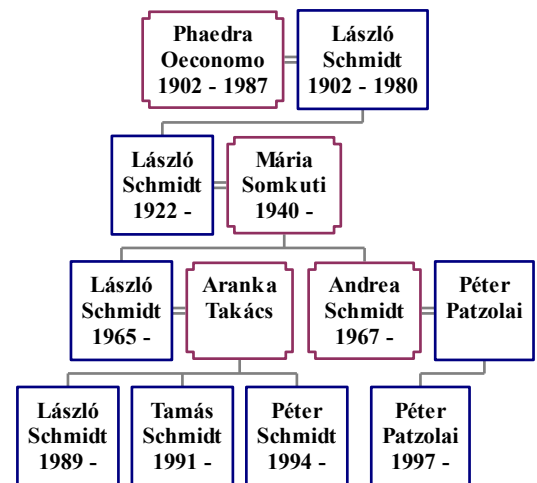
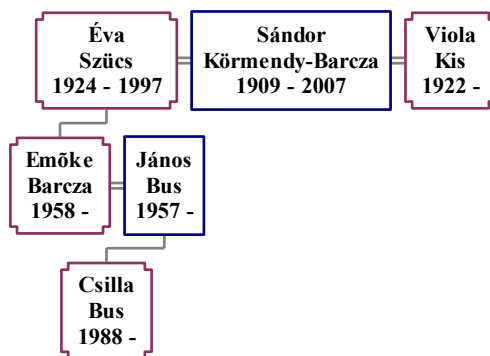
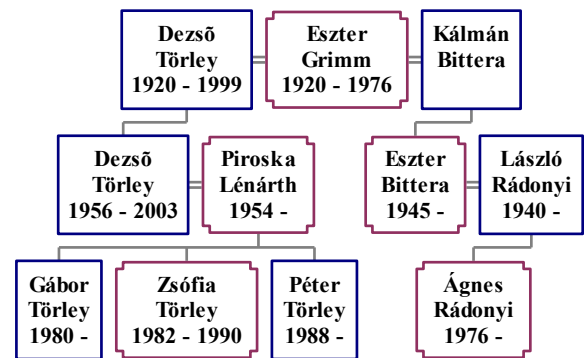


## Your cousins

## 4<sup>th</sup> cousins

The next 3<sup>rd</sup> cousin of mine is Eszter Grimm, and hence your next 4<sup>th</sup> cousins are **Dezső Törley** and **Eszter Bittera**.

Next, I call your attention to **Csilla Bús**, the granddaughter of Sándor Barcza, whom I managed to meet in 2005. I display below his family tree, along with the family tree of László Schmidt Sr., whose children, **László** and **Andrea Schmidt** are also 4<sup>th</sup> cousins of yours. Adam and I met László Jr. in 2000; your mother and I visited with his parents at the pharmacy in Balatonmária in 2003.



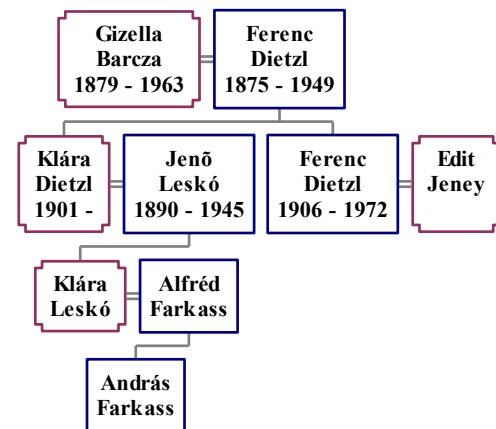
The last tree to be included is that of Klára Dietzl, shown on the right. Klára's son, **András Farkass** is a recent addition to my family tree. I learned about him from a common relative of ours and about his two daughters and a grandchild of his only via his wife's Facebook page – hence, I don't display them, hoping that he will fill me in on the details more directly.

At this point, a careful count will reveal that the Juhász–Pretsinszky like contributed the most 4<sup>th</sup> cousins, namely 36 to your count, bringing the total up to **81**.

And finally. via the

### Csertán–Vargha line,

Ferenc Csertán brings us his two sons, **Ferenc** and **Károly Csertán** as your 4<sup>th</sup> cousins, thereby rounding their number to a whopping **83**.



A very few of them are shown in the photos on the next 3 pages.

**Your cousins**

**4<sup>th</sup> cousins**



**Attila Tóth** at the gravestone of Josefa Etényi



Daniel, **Gizike Fodor**, me and Norbert



**Judit Makay** with her parents and kids



**Gábris Gyarmathy** with a creation of his



**Attila Tevely** with his wife and daughters



**Andi and Süni Nagy** with their mother, Cléli



**Your cousins**

**4<sup>th</sup> cousins**



**LEGEND:**

**Heidi Heart**

**Krisztina Szabó**

**Andrea Schmidt**

**Krisztina Návay**

**Mario Plank**

**Zsolt Dolezál**

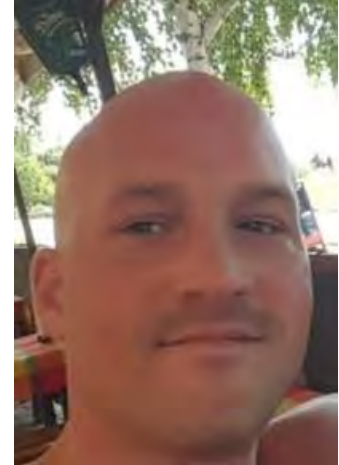
**Ferenc Csertán**

**Csilla Bús**

**Mónika Kálmán**

**Your cousins**

**4<sup>th</sup> cousins**



**LEGEND:**

**Ed Svastits**

**Dani Csóke**

**Robert Szemerédi**

**Gabi Forrai**

**Éva Kerekes**

**Kornel Szemerédi**

**Laci Tornyai**

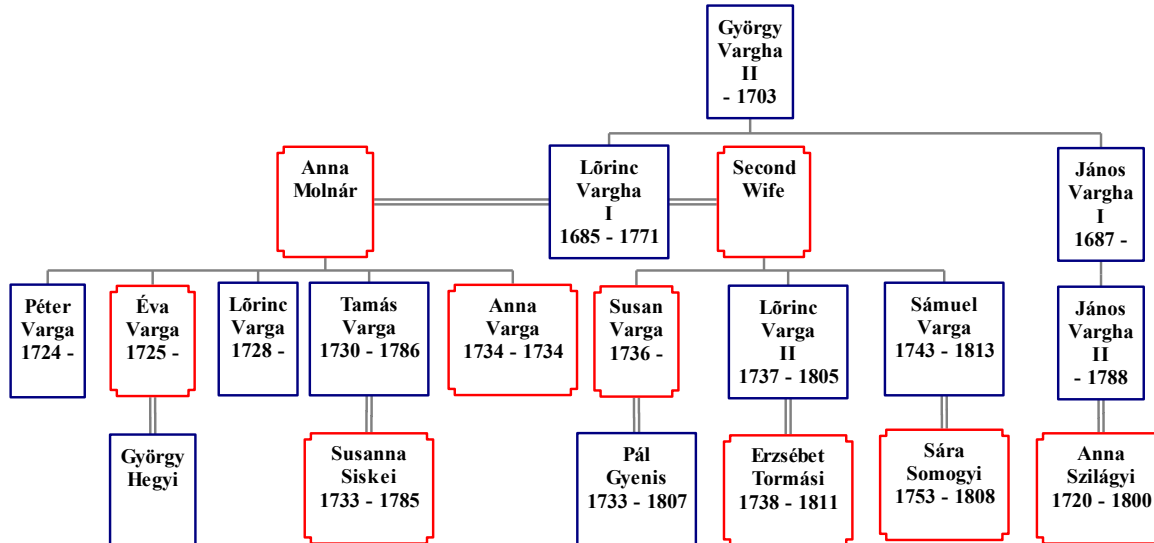
**Adrienne Tábornszky**

**Pali Kasza**

## Other Vargha Relatives

After settling in Balatonfüred, György Vargha II died there in 1703. The tombstone erected by his sons is the oldest one in the old Lutheran cemetery of Balatonfüred, and yet one can still make out the Hungarian equivalent of ‘erected by his sons János and Lőrincz’. They grew up there and might have even been born there. Lőrincz was in fact baptized there, as he recorded it in the church records, which were kept by him throughout his life. We don’t know the name of their mother either; unfortunately, in those days the wife’s name was rarely recorded. Neither do we know the name of the second wife of Lőrincz I in spite of the fact that we have a copy of his last will, in which he names his first wife. Nor do we know the name of the wife of János Vargha I, and we have no idea why György Vargha II went to Balatonfüred in the first place.

Closer to ‘home’, we don’t know anything about the possible descendants of his children from his first wife. I suspect that his son named Lőrinc must have died young since he named one of his sons (in fact, my forefather!) from his second marriage Lőrinc also. In any case, his will, written in 1768 mentions only Péter, Éva and Tamás. I found some possible descendants of Péter in Balatonszőlős, where he shared with Tamás their mother’s inheritance, and find it possible that Péter’s wife died before 1768 and that’s why she was not mentioned in the will. Moreover, we know nothing about the descendants of Susan Varga either in spite of the fact that the Gyenis family, just like the Siskei was (and is) prominent in the area.

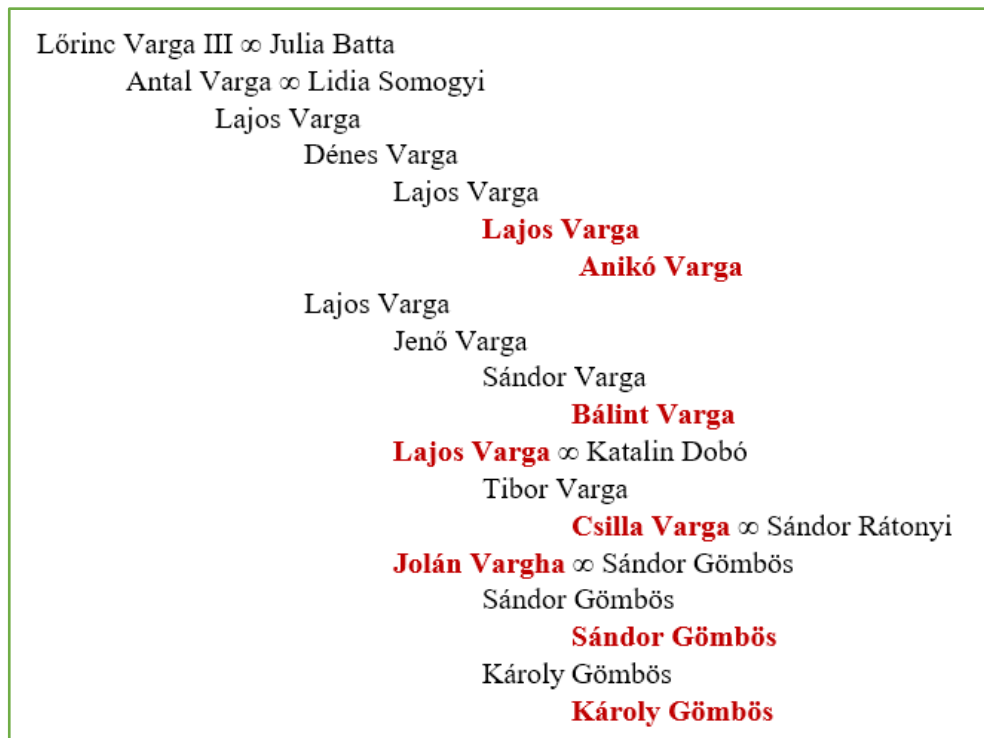


Consequently, in the sequel we will concentrate on Lőrinc Varga II and Sámuel Varga and later on János Vargha II, where I kept the ‘h’ in Varga since the descendants in his branch wrote their name more consistently that way.

Next, I display below the descendant tree of Lőrinc Varga II, calling attention to the fact that Ádám Varga was the father of my great-great-grandfather Lajos Varga, whose family was already scrutinized in **Part 1** of these **Tales**.



Next, I introduce at least some of the descendants of Lőrinc Varga III from one of his marriages, this time via a traditional outline of descendants, where I wrote the names of several of them in **red**, calling attention to them



First, I want to call attention to the father of Anikó Varga, **Lajos Varga**, who distinguished himself by locating the graves of our ancestors, György Vargha I, Lőrinc Vargha I and Lőrinc Vargha II, as well as others in the old Lutheran Cemetery of Balatonfüred. He was also a wonderful correspondent of mine, whom we honored at the first and second Vargha reunions held at his former homestead. Being older than me, I refer to him as Lajos bácsi.

Below the first photo shows Lajos bácsi and his wife, Aranka Tolnay with me when I first visited them in 2005. The next photo shows him, when we visited him with our grandson Chris in 2007; by then Aranka had died. Soon afterwards he had to move in with his daughter, Anikó, where he celebrated his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday with Anikó and his son, Zoltán. I surprised him with an album of photos from the first and second Vargha reunions. He was a highly respected elder of Balatonfüred, whose advice was often sought by those in horticulture as well. As many other members of the Varga family, he too was writing poems in his youth.

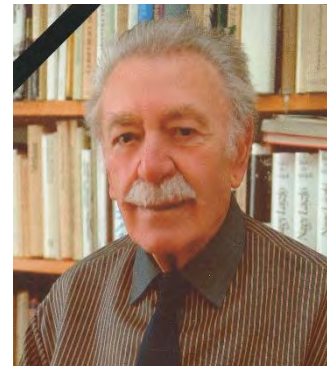


Anikó Varga is married to János Szenfner and lives next door to her brother on the lot which used to house Lajos bácsi’s old mansion. She was a teacher, served as assistant principal and as the president of the local historical society, and wrote a chapter about our Vargha family in a nice book about Balatonfüred. She gave me a copy thereof.

To understand the importance of Lajos bácsi’s branch of the Vargha family, note that his manor house was 121 ft long, while Zolti’s house in Nikla is only 95 feet long. That fact was revealed by Anikó in her farewell note about her father in Issue 38 (2014) of the *Füredi História*, which also featured the picture of his shown on the right.

The next ‘person of interest’ is **Bálint Varga**, who is shown in the picture on the right. Bálint’s technical background allows him to make good use of the FTM software I shared with him, and he is particularly good in gathering and selecting representative pictures of all members of our family. He was also kind enough to share with me writings of his father and grandfather and convince me that there is a definite leaning toward literary activities by many of the Varg(h)as.

**Lajos Varga**, the grandfather of **Csilla Rátonyi neè Varga** is shown along with Csilla on the next page. He was a poet, songwriter and teacher, whose plays were performed regularly in Pécs. Csilla sent me a copy of one of his books of poetry (“Sötét ablakok”),



meaning, dark windows) and shared with me the family tree of her grandmother, who was not only a namesake of the famous defender of the Fort of Eger against the Turks, but she was from the same family. Thus, it was no surprise for me to see many of the most important family names on that chart (Balassi, Bornemissa, Rákóczy, Zrinyi, etc.). Though I have yet to meet Csilla, we keep up via e-mail and occasional calls by me. We are friends on Facebook too, and I enjoyed reading an article recounting her memories about her grandfather.



Next, I need to say a few words about **Jolán Vargha**, who went back to the use of ‘h’ in spelling her name and married a Gömbös of Jákfa, thereby making her offsprings not just Vargha and Gömbös, but Berzsenyi descendants too. Therefore, I will revisit my Gömbös relatives in **Part 2B** of these **Tattered Tales** too, where I will write about my Berzsenyi relatives.

Seemingly, Jolán Vargha was also interested in learning about our Vargha ancestors, and there was even a story she wrote about a Prussian countess, who married into the Vargha family. Attila Tóth related that story in his article about the Vargha family in the 2<sup>nd</sup> issue of the *Füredi História*, an excellent publication of local history.

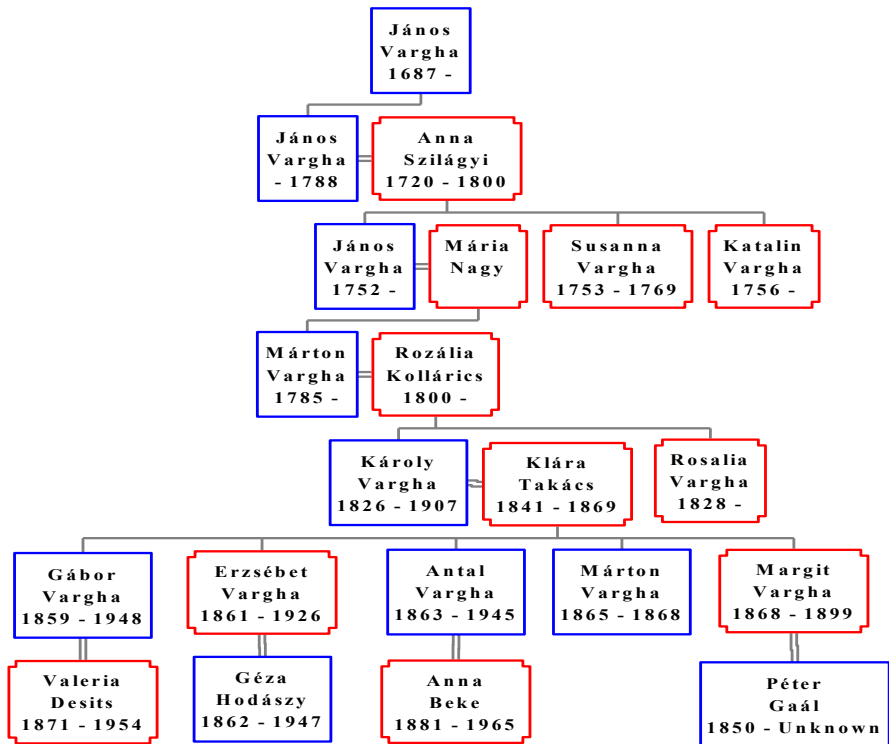
In 2011, Attila and I visited Jolán Vargha’s grandson, Károly Gömbös; he was a musician who passed away recently; while in 2017 Kay and I spent some time with Sándor (Sanyi) Gömbös, who is a retired detective. Sanyi shared with me a wonderful genealogical tribute he prepared some years earlier for his parents. The picture on the right shows the three of us facing the Lutheran Church of Vése, which was built partially with funds pledged by my Great-grandfather Farkas Berzsenyi.



By the way, our connection to the Gömbös family made Gyula Gömbös a member of the family too; he is a 6<sup>th</sup> cousin of my mother and hence a [7,6]-cousin of mine. Gömbös served as Hungary’s Prime Minister from 1932 to 1936.

At this point, I should mention that Sámuel, the younger son of Lőrinc Vargha I made a voyage back to Erdély (Transylvania) in search of the old Vargha holdings there. While we have a copy of a ‘Letter of Introduction’ affirming his nobility (it must have served as a passport in those days), unfortunately, we know nothing of his findings. His marriage to Sára Somogyi was the first of many marriages between the two noble families. The second marriage of Lőrinc IVargha I (to Krisztina Bereczky) led to some more such marriages, as well as yet another marriage into our ancestral Hertelendy family.

With respect to Sámuel, I must also mention that his grandson, Sándor Varga married Jakobina Varga, the daughter of his 2<sup>nd</sup> cousin, yet another Lajos Varga, who happens to be my great-great-grandfather. Unfortunately, I know nothing about other descendant of Sámuel; hence I don't even display them here. Instead, I will switch to the descendants of János Vargha, but first let me point out that Lajos bácsi was a 5<sup>th</sup> cousin of mine, while Anikó, Bálint, Csilla,



Sándor and Károly are ‘5<sup>th</sup> cousins once removed’ or (in my terminology) [5,6]-cousins of mine. Similarly, my great-grandfather Imre’s sister, Jakobina married her [3,2]-cousin.

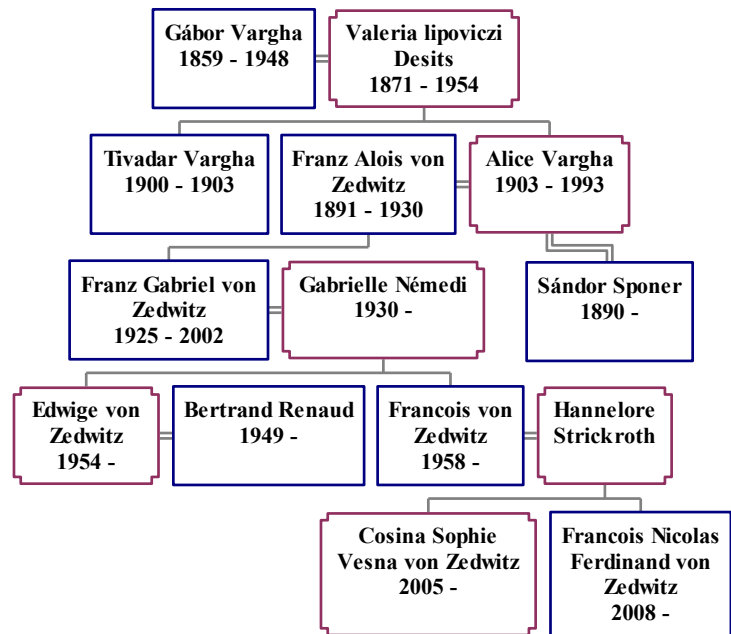
Next, I will introduce the branch of János Vargha via the family tree shown above. Please note that I introduced a third János in the ‘line-up’ and that I also introduced three sisters along the way – two as the sisters of the third János and one as the sister of Károly, based on my own research, which I hope to continue with the help of the **Őskereső** program of the Lutheran Church sometime soon.

**Gábor Vargha** was my father’s guardian and remained close to our family throughout his life. Thus, for example, he also served as my father’s witness, when my parents got married. The picture on the right was taken in 1900; as often, he was in traditional Hungarian dress uniform.



Gábor bácsi was a lawyer and politician, who did an incredible amount of good for Szentgotthárd. In 2017, I was pleased to be influential in reawakening interest in honoring Gábor bácsi by the people of Szentgotthárd, and hence a book was published, and an exhibit was staged on the 20<sup>th</sup> of August 2018 about his life and accomplishments. I report on that and have a lot more about Gábor bácsi in a separate writing entitled **More about Gábor bácsi**.

Concerning Gábor bácsi's descendants, I hereby introduce them, beginning with his daughter, **Alice Vargha**, who was Alice néni to me and a 6<sup>th</sup> cousin of my father. I remember her from 1950, when she used to play bridge at Kató néni's place in Budapest. It seems, Gábor bácsi would have liked my father to marry her but was most understanding when my father thought otherwise. On the other hand, Alice néni was more stubborn, and thus was eager for my father and me to join her in New York when she learned that we came to America in 1957 too. She promised to get me into Fordham University, and hence I went to see her in New York, where I learned very soon that without my father, she had no interest in doing anything with me.



Below I also show Alice néni's wedding photo from 1924, where I recognize my father on the right in uniform. Gábor bácsi is in 'diszmagyar', the traditional festive dress uniform of the Hungarian nobility. He was dressed the same way at my parents' wedding more than 11 years later as my father's best man and witness to the wedding.





Next, I will have a couple of pictures of Gábor bácsi and his family, to be followed by some pictures of his grandson, Ferenc / Franz Zedtwitz.



In the first picture, Ferenc is with Alice Boeck and with lifelong friend, Feri Lipp, in the second one he is by himself, while the third picture on the right shows him when he was a university student. I saw his grades; he was truly outstanding all-around.



I could have looked up Alice néni on one of my visits to New York many years later, but I didn't remember the name her second husband. When I saw it on a postcard of hers among my parents' papers, it was too late. By then I already found her only granddaughter, **Edwige von Zedtwitz** and learned that Alice néni was gone. On the right I show a couple of pictures of hers – one from the time of her wedding and one from 1987. Soon afterwards she died from Alzheimer's disease in a retirement home in New York.



In a separate piece, I tell the story of how I found Edwige, but it can't hurt to introduce her via a photo in the meantime. It was taken in 2005 following the Vargha reunion as we were sitting around and discussing family matters at the house of Attila Tóth. Bertrand is on the left with Edwige next to him, accompanied by **Judit Varga** and her son, **János Oltványi**. Judit is a [3,4]-cousin of mine, just like Attila. She was the 'holder' of the 1713 sheepskin of the Vargha family, but she died a couple of years ago. Thus, it is János who keeps it now.



Later I exchanged some messages with Edwige's brother, **Francois von Zedtwitz** too, but found him not very communicative. Unfortunately, the siblings Edwige and Francois don't get along. Seemingly, their mother is still around and lives with Francois and his family in Switzerland; Edwige doesn't get along with her either.



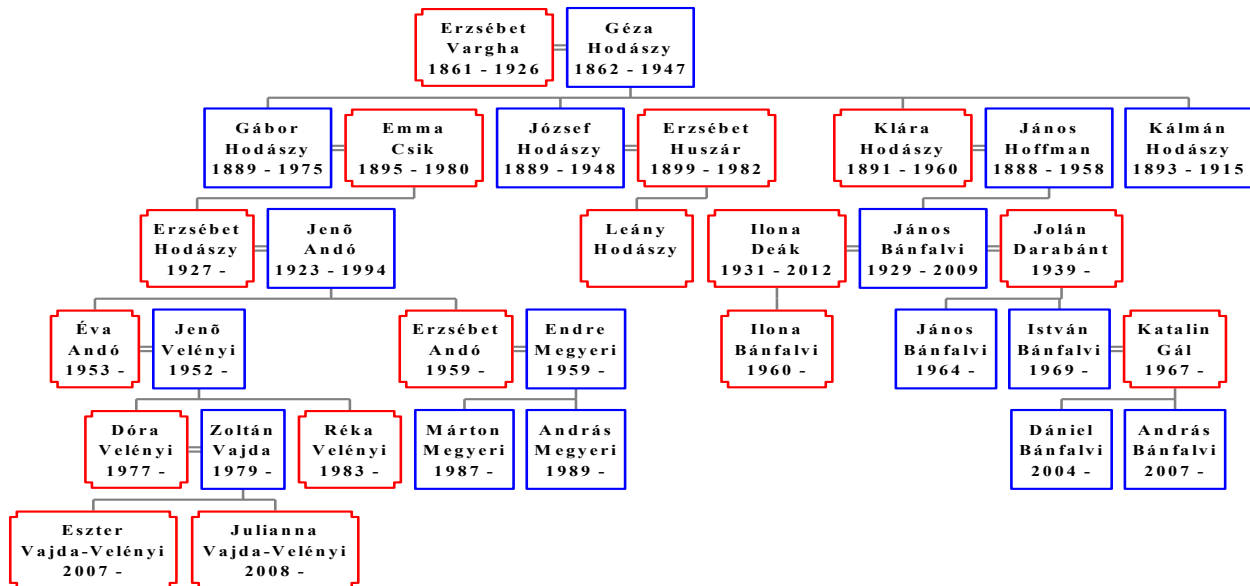
Next, I show a picture from the wedding of Edwige and Bertrand, showing Francois with his father, Ferenc / Franz Zedtwitz who died shortly after the wedding.

And finally, I show a picture of Ferenc/Franz, my 7<sup>th</sup> cousin, whom, unfortunately, I never met. Edwige and Francois are your 8<sup>th</sup> cousins, my dear children, while the children of Francis are your 9<sup>th</sup> cousins, my dear grandchildren.

In Edwige and her brother I was hugely disappointed. Possibly, under the influence of her mother, Francois showed only minimal interest, claiming preoccupation with his job, and then failed to respond to my messages, inquiries. Edwige was similarly preoccupied with her own affairs so much so that she ignored all of the information I sent her about the upcoming celebrations of her great-grandfather in 2018. Then she claimed that she was not informed and forced her way into the program at the last moment. She also ignored my request for family photos and documents for the exhibit and the book, showing off with some such materials only at the luncheon at the end.

And now it is time to move on to discuss the families of Gábor bácsi's siblings, concentrating only on a few key people among them.

Erzsébet's descendants are shown in the family tree below,



Among them, I want to call attention to **János Bánfalvi Sr.**, with whom I corresponded for several years. Along with his father, he was named Hoffman until 11-6-1937, when they changed their name officially to Bánfalvi. He was a lawyer, who dabbled in politics, as well in social affairs without joining any party. He also inherited the literary vein of the Varghas, which he utilized for the writing of two novels<sup>1</sup>.



After he sent them to me with the very kind inscription shown on his bookmark on the next page, I read both of them with interest. Unfortunately, we never met, but I finally met with his son, **János Bánfalvi Jr.** in 2015 at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Vargha reunion in Balatonfüred. He is also a lawyer and a former partner of his father, but now he practices in Budapest.

Most important, at least for the present writing is that János Jr. is a devoted researcher of genealogical data. Much of the information concerning the descendants of Károly Vargha I and Klára Takács is due to him, for which I am most appreciative. Later I also learned that in April of 2006, when Attila and Edwige visited them, they visited the old Vargha house in Szentgotthárd, where the head of the local police department, Major János Végvári showed them around, treated

<sup>1</sup> *Féltestvérek* and *Bányászbecsület* (in English, Half-siblings and Honor among miners), Zalaegerszeg, 2000

them to refreshments and gave Edwige a brochure about the town. Concerning the ownership of the building, they made an inquiry in Körmend at the 'Körzeti Földhivatal' (regional center for land records), where they were told that those records were lost. How convenient!

In the descendant tree of **Antal Vargha**, the brother of Gábor bácsi, displayed on the next page, I want to call special attention to **Ágota (Ági) Gombás**, shown with her second husband, Zsolt Csiszár below on the right. Her mother, Valerie was a 7<sup>th</sup> cousin of mine. Unfortunately, Valerie died shortly after I called her and introduced myself, but I am happy to report that my friendship with Ágota is excellent. In fact, she is one of my absolute favorites, and the same goes for all members of her family. Both Ágota and Zsolt were teachers. Zsolt tragically died a day before his 53<sup>rd</sup> birthday in 2018.



Ágota and I correspond regularly and see one another whenever we can. She and Zsolt came to visit us at the hotel in Keszthely when we were there with Collin in 2011, I saw them again in 2015, as well as in 2017.

Ágota was also here in Shorewood, WI to visit us in January 2019, evidenced by the picture below, showing her with Dani and us. She was in Las Vegas, visiting her eldest, Tamás Horváth and I invited her to spend some time with us too.

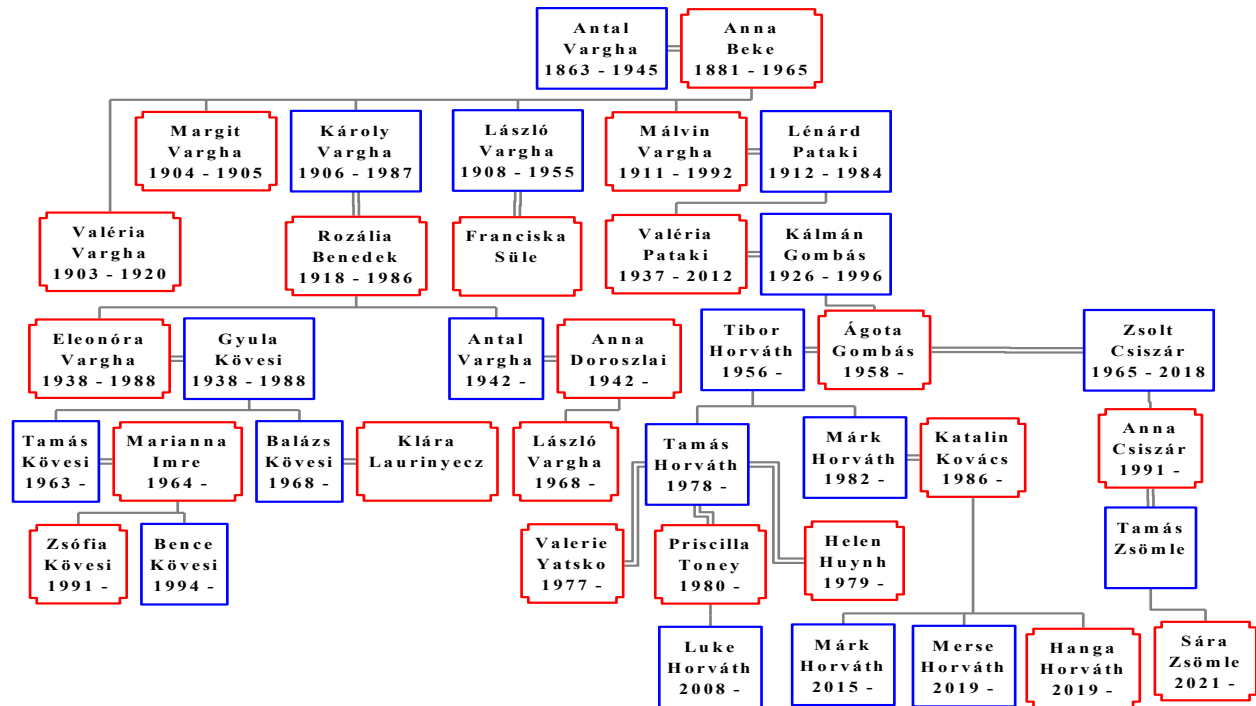


Below, I also show a picture of her older son, Tamás Horváth and his 3<sup>rd</sup> wife, Helen Huynh, who was born in Vietnam. Both of them have their PhDs, and will probably alternate living between Hungary and California, accepting teaching positions at times. Tamás recently retired from the Army.

Further to the right, I also show a picture of Adam and Tamás, whom Adam visited in Las Vegas in 2014.



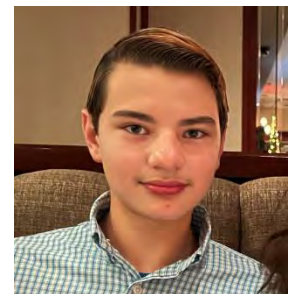
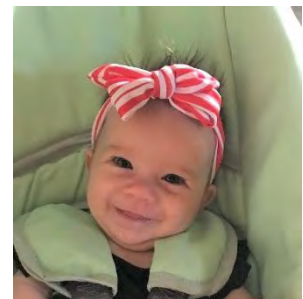
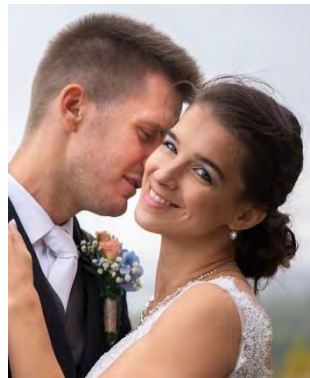
Finally, I display below the descendants of **Antal Vargha**,



Above, the first photo shows Márk and Katalin Kovács with their son, Márk Noel in May 2017 at the Gellért, where they and Ágota visited us. The second one shows Valerie with her grandson Tamás and her great-grandson Luke in 2009. The third photo was taken in 2011 in Keszthely; it shows Anna and Márk in addition to Ágota and me. Márk is Ágota's second son from her marriage to Tibor Horváth, who left her and settled in the United States.

Anna was born from Ágota's second marriage. She is a former member of Hungary's gymnastic team, and then of the Danish one, since she spent there a year prior to completing her high school studies. Then she returned to Hungary, finished high school there, and completed medical school in Szeged. Márk has a PhD in Chemistry and does teaching and research at the Agricultural Academy in Gödöllő. Tamás followed his father to the United States and joined the Army here. While still in the Army, he furthered his education and obtained a PhD too.

Next, I have a few more photos of Ágota's children and grandchildren, starting with Anna getting her doctoral degree in medicine on July 2, 2017, and followed by her wedding photo and a picture of Anna's Sára, born in 2021 and Tamás' Luke.



Finally, I have a couple of 'historical pictures' showing Ágota's maternal grandparents with her mother, when she was a child and a picture of Valerie, when she was a young girl.



With respect to my other Vargha relatives in the tree above, I know a bit about each of them, but have never met them. It turns out that **Eleonóra Vargha** and her husband were the victims of a tragic bus accident on their way to Austria; it was expected that upon their return, both of them will be named professors at the University of Pécs, where they both worked and distinguished themselves. I wrote to their son, Tamás, as well as to Tamás' uncle, Antal more than once, but got no response. None of them came to the Vargha reunions either. Neither was Ágota successful in reestablishing contact with them in spite of the fact that they were close as children. We both know that either Tamás or Antal have the original 1635 sheepskin and we are not at all pleased with their refusal to reveal it or at least share a picture of it with the rest of the family.

My knowledge is based on the fact that in 1903 or so, when my grandfather (and his brother), János Varga (1857-1924) of Balatonfüred and Károly Vargha (1826-1907) of Andrásfa jointly petitioned the Ministry of Interior for the recognition of their first decree of nobility of 1635, it was Károly Vargha, who exhibited the sheepskin there. That is stated clearly in the document I got from the National Archives in 2005, which also has a copy of the description of the coat of arms given to the Vargha family. It is in Latin and was translated for me into Hungarian by Pali Kasza. Ágota's conviction stems from remembering her father's anger, when he was denied access to that document in spite the fact that he was the one telling the Vargha relatives in question about the location of the sheepskin. It was shown to someone else at a funeral, but not to him; hence he departed speedily and in justifiable anger.

By the way, Antal Vargha and his wife, Anna Beke were both born in Andrásfa, Province of Vas, and in fact they were married and died there too. Andrásfa was the home village of Klára Takács too; hence it was natural that one of her children would end up there also. According to the excellent research done by János Bánfalvi, there is a Takács crypt in the cemetery of Andrásfa, and that's where Károly Vargha is buried too.

Returning to the siblings of Gábor bácsi, Márton Vargha died as a child, while the youngest child of Károly Vargha, **Margit Vargha** 'distinguished herself' by giving birth to an illegitimate son. That son, named József Varga until 1921 became the fourth child of Erzsébet Vargha and Géza Hodászy. In the tree, I called his adopted daughter 'Leány', which means 'girl' in Hungarian. In view of the fact that she was legally adopted, I am counting her among the descendants, but not as a blood relative.

Interestingly, the Hodászy family was also of old nobility (16<sup>th</sup> Century) in the Province of Vas and we also have a Hodászy in my ancestral Csertán family. Moreover, when it comes to the parents of Géza, the husband of Erzsébet, his mother was named Borbála Jánosy, and hence possibly, a Berzsényi relative. These connections will need to be investigated later.



### The Jády- Quirico Branch of the Vargha family

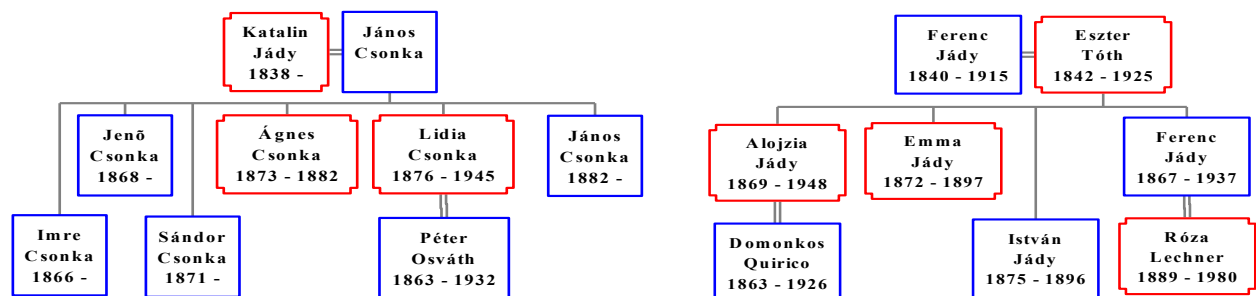
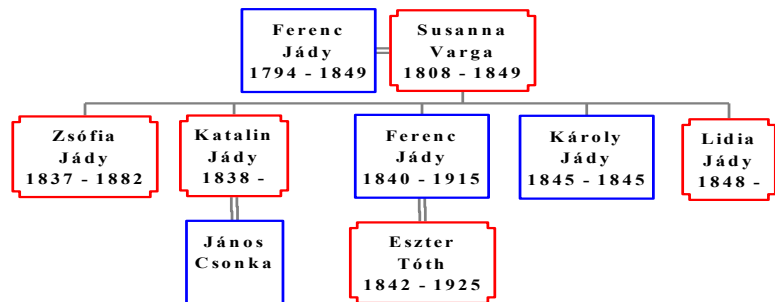
My search in the Vargha family tree started with Ferenc Jády, the husband of Susanna Varga, about whom I knew nothing whatsoever. My choice was somewhat random; I wanted to explore the possibility of Vargha - descendants via the female line, recognizing that Attila Tóth was more interested in the male line. In my opinion, they are both equally important.

I learned from his marriage certificate that he was a boot maker (in Hungarian, csizmadia), but it was only later that it dawned on me that the creation of fancy Hungarian outfits probably started with him. By that I mean that in addition to ordinary boots, he probably also made some beautifully decorated ones, like the two shown here.



Using MACSE’s database, as well as that of the Mormon Church, I managed to locate their children and their spouses (if any), who are shown in the family tree on the right.

Unfortunately, the branch of Katalin, shown below, seemingly died out, or at least I found no further members thereof, but the branch of Ferenc, shown next to hers, flourished, as we will see.



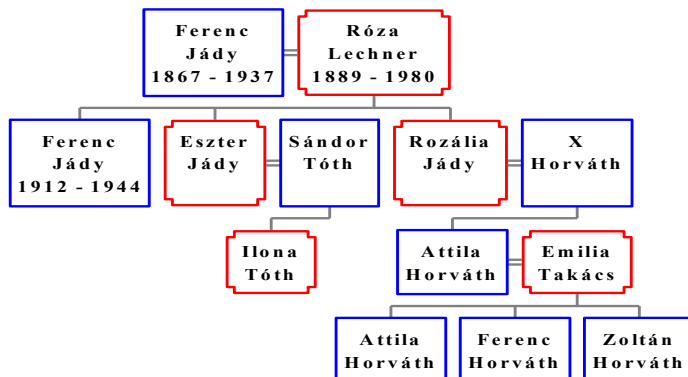
First, I need to say a few words about Ferenc Jády (1840-1915), who followed in his father’s footsteps in becoming a tradesman, but he switched from boots to beautifully decorated and festive garments, which were regarded as the traditional Hungarian cloaks, worn by the swineherds, shepherds and the Hungarian cowboys, who herd the horses on the Hortobágy and elsewhere. (Nowadays, the latter put on exhibitions of their horsemanship, and they wear less cumbersome clothing.)



In 1896, during the celebration of Hungary’s millennium, one of the exhibits was a carefully selected collection of such garments. Ferenc Jády, who became a well-known tailor of such outfits was one of the contributors, who made a gift of his creation to the National Museum of Folk Art of Hungary. I recently downloaded an article about it by Edit Katona, and I show below Jády’s work both from the front and from the back. It is still on exhibit in the above-mentioned museum.



His daughter, Aloyzia married yet a different tradesman in Domonkos Quirico, who was a goldsmith, born in Turin, Italy. I was fortunate in tracking down their descendants, whom I will introduce shortly, but first I want to show the descendants of the third Ferenc Jády along with a picture of the Jády tombstone from the cemetery in Veszprém. It was sent to me by the fourth Domonkos Quirico, who also sent me a picture of the Quirico gravestone and lots of other documentation concerning the Quirico branch of the family to be introduced next. The descendants of the third Ferenc Jády were identified via the death notice of Róza Lechner. Hence my only information about them is that they were all born before 1980 and that Ilona, Attila and Emilia are of my generation, while the Horváth boys are of my children’s generation. Since both the Tóth and the Horváth names are very common in Hungary, I doubt that I can find any of them.

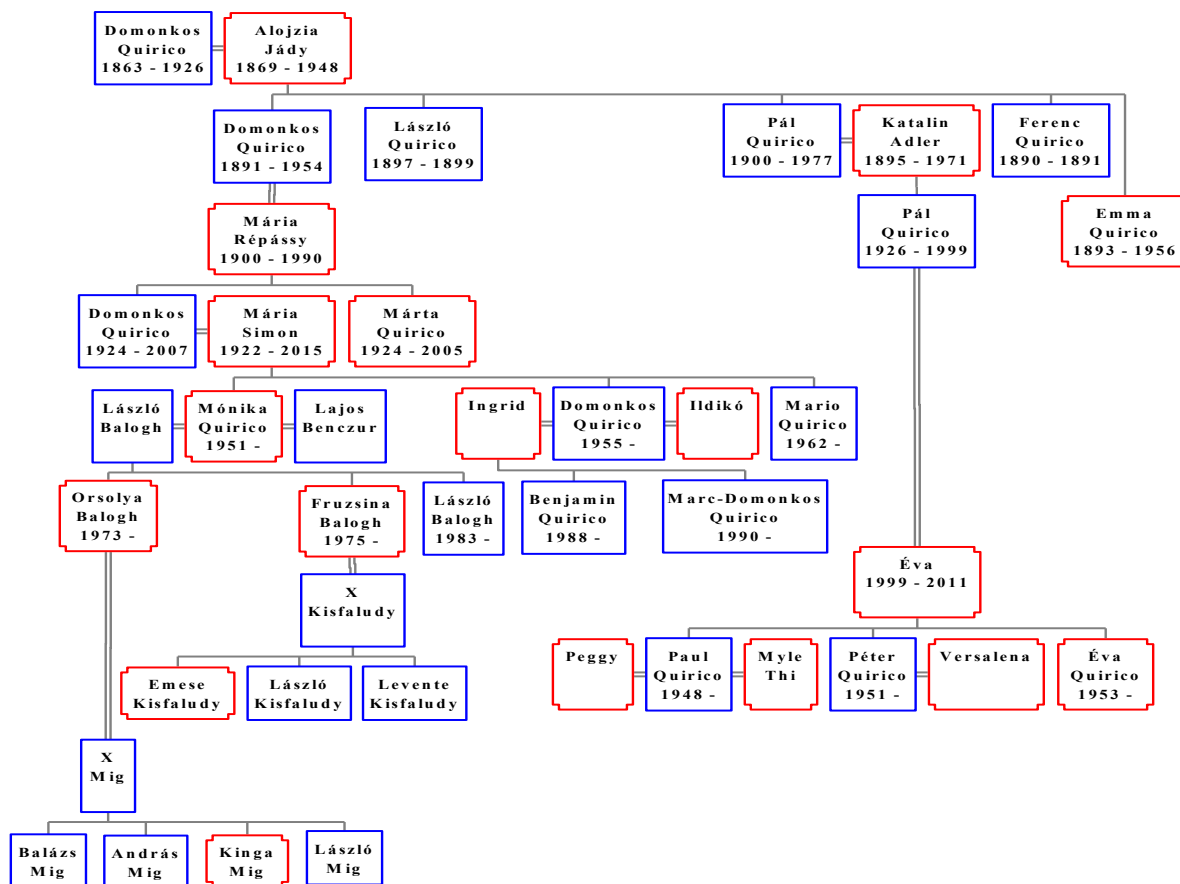




With respect to the Quirico descendants, I am in a much better situation. They are tabulated below, but first I want to show on the left a picture of Aloyzia, or Lujza néni, as she was referred to by everyone in her family. On the right, I show a photo of her grandson, Pál, who came to the United States in 1958 following his leaving Hungary in 1956 after the crushing of our revolution by the Russians. Pál brought his whole family and settled eventually in Jacksonville, Florida. His



older son, Pál and daughter, Éva still live there, while his younger son, Péter seemingly lives in Keystone Heights, Florida. I don't have a picture of Péter, but I have high school photos of Pál and Éva; they are shown on the right. By the way, their grandfather, Pál (1900-1977) was a highly regarded lawyer, who received his golden diploma from ELTE in Budapest in 1975.



I learned that the youngest Pál had a landscaping business in Jacksonville, Florida, but in spite of several attempts, I have not yet managed to establish contact with him or his siblings.

On the other hand, my communications with Mónica and the youngest Domonkos were very fruitful as evidenced by the photos below. The first one on the left shows Domonkos and his first wife celebrating their silver anniversary, the second one shows him with his second wife, and the one below it shows Mónica with her second husband, while the first picture on the right shows Domonkos with his son Marc-Domonkos and Marc's girlfriend, and the one below it shows Mónica and her family.



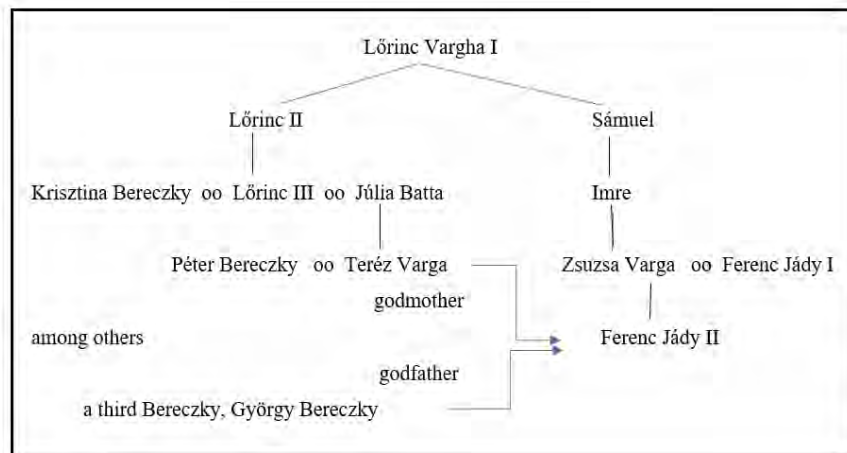
Next, I show the front and the back of the Quirico gravestone – also from Veszprém – and will have a few more words about Domonkos and Mónika, who became very dear relatives of mine.



Domonkos is a mechanical engineer, who met his first wife in Germany, where he was a student. They got married in 1977 and stayed together until 2016. Their older son lives in Switzerland, while the younger one lives in Austria. Domonkos works both in Austria and in Hungary as a construction engineer but hopes to retire near the Balaton. He is a many-sided sportsman, who excelled in orienteering competitions as well as in sailing.

Mónika was a teacher of mathematics; her first husband was a medical doctor. They got married in 1971 and had two daughters, of whom the older one is a mathematics/informatics teacher. After her husband died, Mónika married for the second time in 2001. Presently, she is retired.

In closing this section, I displayed below the close relationship of the ‘Bereczky Branch’ of the Vargha family – to be introduced next – to the ‘Jády Branch’ thereof. In spite of the fact that Zsuzsa and Teréz Varga (they spelled their name without an ‘h’) were only 2<sup>nd</sup> cousins, via the baptism of Ferenc Jády II they became ‘koma-asszonyok’ (baptism-related – a unique and valued relationship).

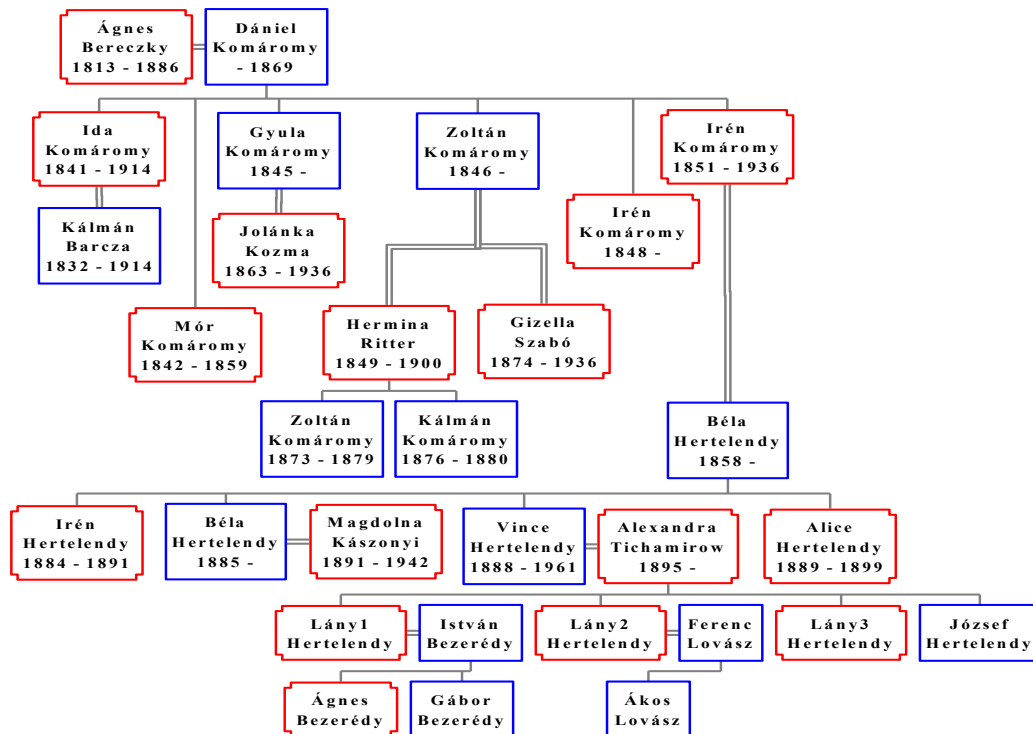


## The Bereczky Branch of the Vargha family

### Komáromi

In my research of this branch, I was prompted by the findings (shown on the right) of my best genealogical friend, Imre Gyimesi, who found several children and grandchildren of Teréz Varga and Péter Bereczky and shared his information with me. In turn, I shared it with Attila Tóth, as well as with Bálint Varga, who is also involved with the Vargha research, hoping to kindle their interest, but that didn't happen. Hence, I did my best to verify Imre's findings as well as to go further if I can.

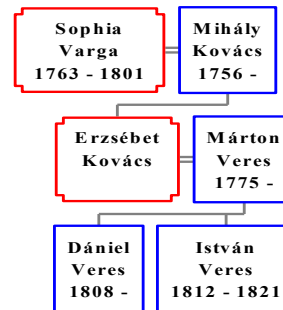
My success was limited as the family tree shows below, but I managed to verify all of the findings of Imre, including the fact that the sisters of Ágnes had no families of their own. But unfortunately, I have yet to find any living descendants of Ágnes. Nevertheless, since both the Hertelendy and the Bezerédy families are well-known, I fully expect a breakthrough soon, even if not soon enough for the present publication.



Here I should mention that the three Hertelendy girls (Lány 1, 2 and 3) were named Magdolna, Cecilia and Veronika, but I can't identify them.

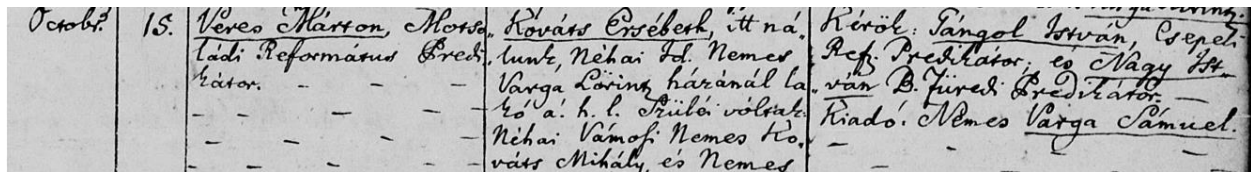
## The Veress Branch of the Vargha family

In Attila's family tree, Sophia Varga, the daughter of Lőrinc Varga II and Erzsébet Tormási married Mihály Kovács, but they had no descendants. Knowing that Attila didn't believe in researching the 'side-branches' as if there was a central branch more important than the others, I thought I should investigate a bit more. Hence, I found that they had a daughter, Erzsébet, who had two children.

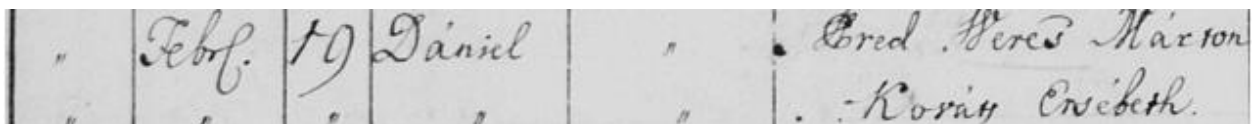


Clearly, not much of a progress, but it is a beginning of some interest in view of the fact that Márton Veres became well-known for his 1803 publication of the book *Elisa*, shown above. It was a woman's guide for behavior, and several reprintings of it were needed to satisfy the public.

Márton Veres was a Calvinist (Protestant) pastor, who studied in Debrecen and Pápa, and then in Jéna and Erlanger, Germany before serving first in Lepsény (Province of Veszprém), and then in Mocsolád and Büssü (Province of Somogy). He married Erzsébet Kovács in 1804 in Balatonfüred,



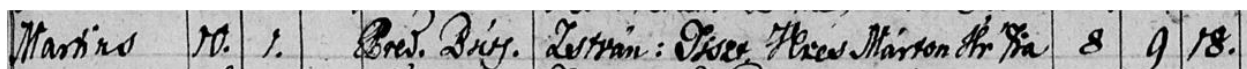
and she followed him to Mocsolád. Their first son was born in Felső-Mocsolád, as seen below,



but I don't know anything more about him. Their second son was born in Büssü, as shown here.



Unfortunately, he also died there at a very young age.

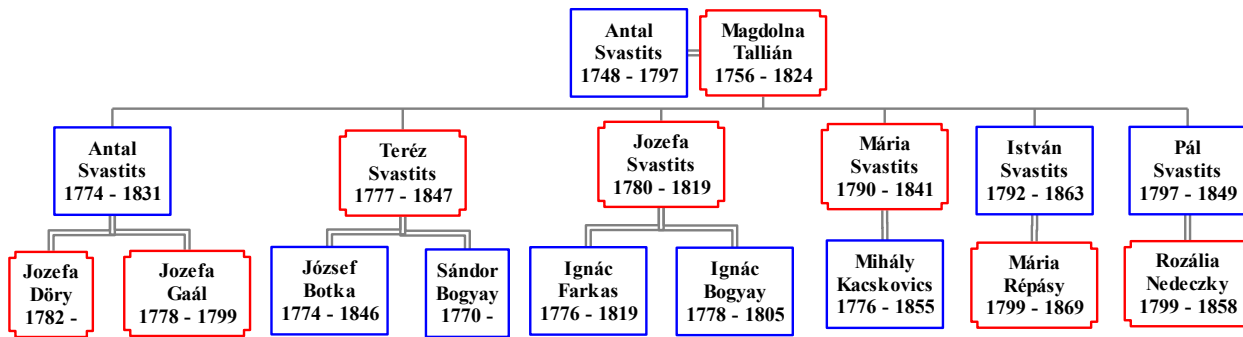


In closing, I should mention that Veres was sometime written as Vörös (as in the baptismal recording above) and that Márton and his wife were still in Büssü in 1820 since they are listed as the godparents of a child who was born then.

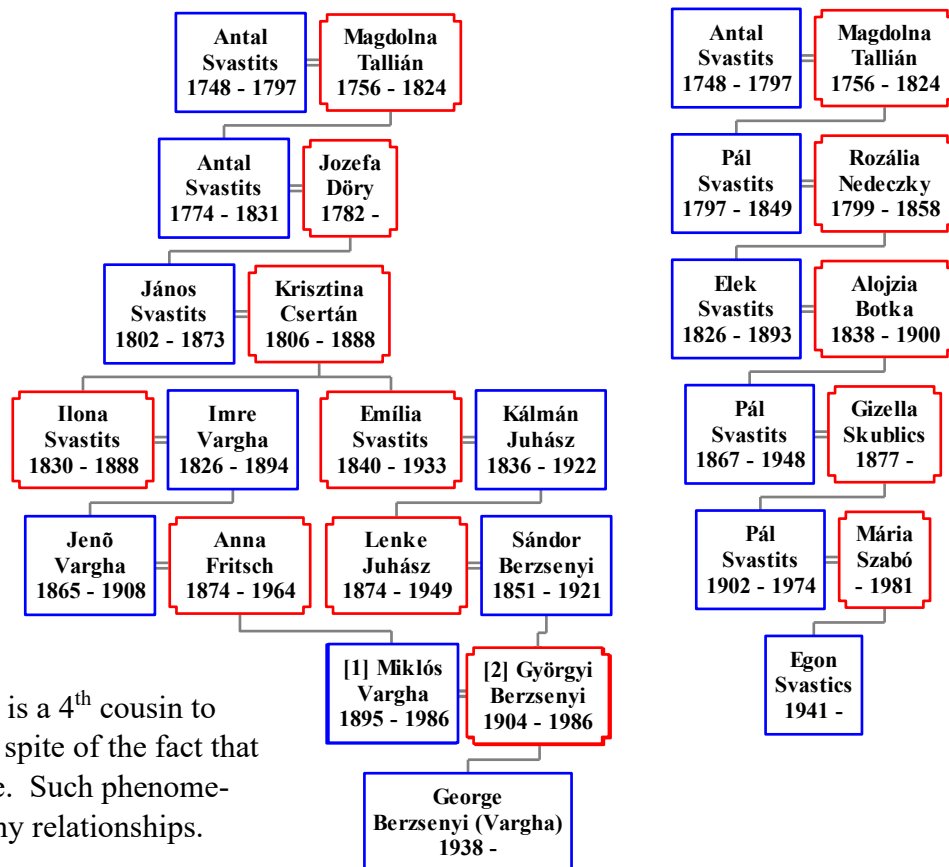
There are several other feminine lines of descentance that need to be explored; hopefully, some of our researchers will do so. With my writing about the Jády-Quirico, the Bereczky and the Veres branches I only wanted to set some examples.

### Other Svastits relatives

Interestingly, apart from my 3<sup>rd</sup> cousins on the Svastits side of my family, I am closest to several 5<sup>th</sup> cousins of mine, sharing with them Antal Svastits and Magdolna Tallián as our common ancestors. In the descendant tree below, I show them along with their children, reminding you that we descend from their son, Antal and his first wife, Jozefa Döry.

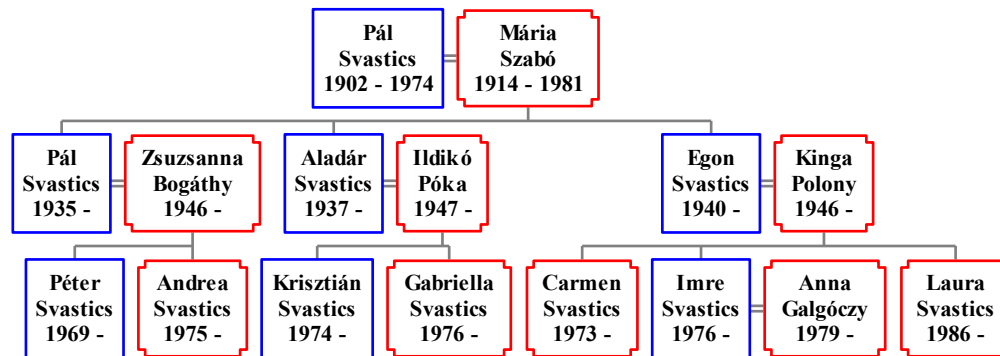


More specifically, I show on the right my descentance from Antal Svastits and Magdolna Tallián, reminding you that I am their descendant both via my father and my mother. Next to my descentance, I also show the descentance of my dearest Svastits relative, Egon Svastits, whom I will introduce to you first.



As you can see, Egon is a 4<sup>th</sup> cousin to both of my parents in spite of the fact that he is younger than me. Such phenomena often show up in my relationships.

To introduce Egon more properly, I display below the descendants of his parents – thereby introducing Egon’s siblings as well.



As it turns out, my mother used to correspond with their mother, and while I don’t know Pál and Aladár that well, I met and chatted several times with both of them at the three Svastits reunions I managed to attend thus far. But it is Egon, whom I got to know well and to whom I feel closest not only as a relative, but as a friend as well. In fact, both your Mom and I enjoy the company of Kinga and Egon very much.

Egon is a surgeon, specializing in heart surgery and a candidate of the science of medicine, an academic rank bestowed on him by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Hi wife, Kinga used to work for the American Embassy in Budapest, and hence had opportunities to visit the Unites States for longer periods of time. Since Egon also speaks English fluently, time and again he would accompany her on such occasions in order to travel around a bit. And fortunately, for them, as well as for us, he was not hesitant to announce himself as a visitor. He did so in 2003 for the first time and then again, a few years later – thereby giving us an opportunity to get to know them. We also enjoyed visiting with them whenever we went to Hungary since then.



The picture above was taken during their first visit with us in 2002 in Pine Junction, Colorado.



We also enjoyed a lot their kindness in showing ‘Budapest at night’ to Christopher and Collin when we took them to Hungary; of course, we were extremely fortunate in being there when visibility was at its best from the Citadel. And I thoroughly enjoyed over the years everything I read by István Nemeskürty, the patriotic historian whose books Egon called to my attention via his gift of a book by him. He became my favorite author.

Next, I show a few pictures of Egon and Kinga and their family, with us in the photos here and there. The one on the right is from 2009 with Egon, Anna and Imre sitting with Imre’s three sons, named (from oldest to youngest) Marci, Totó and Balázs; standing from left to right are Laura, Kinga and Carmen – along with a young man who was Carmen’s boyfriend for several years. Imre followed his father into medicine just like Egon followed his dad.



The next two were taken in 2002 also.



I must also credit Egon with initiating the Svastics reunions – along with Jimmy Svastics of Los Angeles, California – in 1997. Jimmy (more properly, James, though his original name was ‘Imre’) is from the ‘csécsényi’ branch of the family, since his ancestor, István settled in Rábacsécsény, while we use the forename ‘bocsári’ in view of the fact that the family seemed to have some holdings in the village of Bocsár in the Province of Torontál.

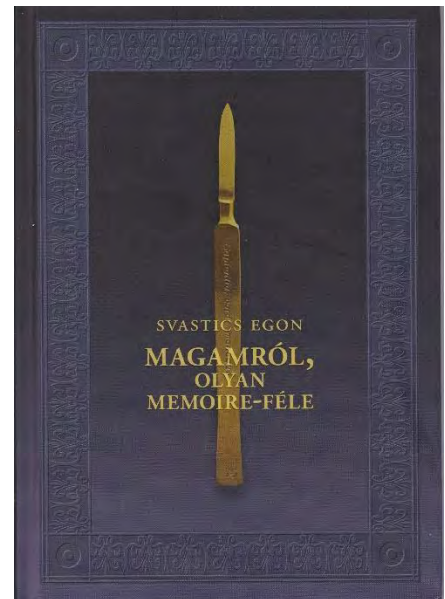
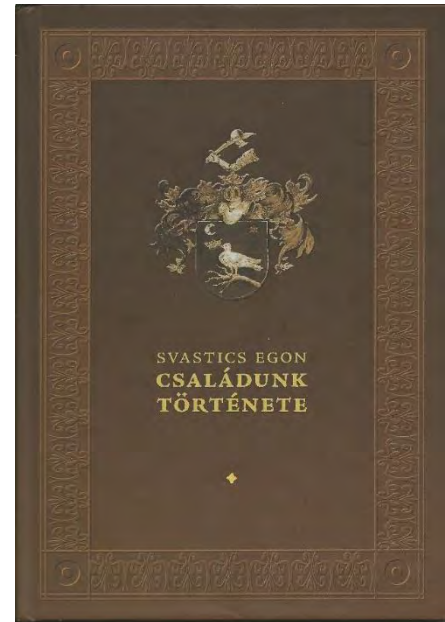
Egon deserves high praise and credit for his beautiful monograph on the Svastics family too; he published it in 2017 and we were there just in time to receive a copy of it. I show the cover of his book on the right; its title translates to ‘The history of our family’. It is a thin little book of 47 pages, covering close to 1000 years of history with as much accuracy as possible. I thoroughly enjoyed reading it and was happy to learn that after the completion of it, he went on to write a similar volume about his maternal ancestors. I didn’t see that but was happy to receive from him his third book, whose cover is shown below. Its title can be translated roughly into English as ‘About myself, a kind of memoir’ with a surgeon’s scalpel illustrating it in place of the Svastics coat of arms.

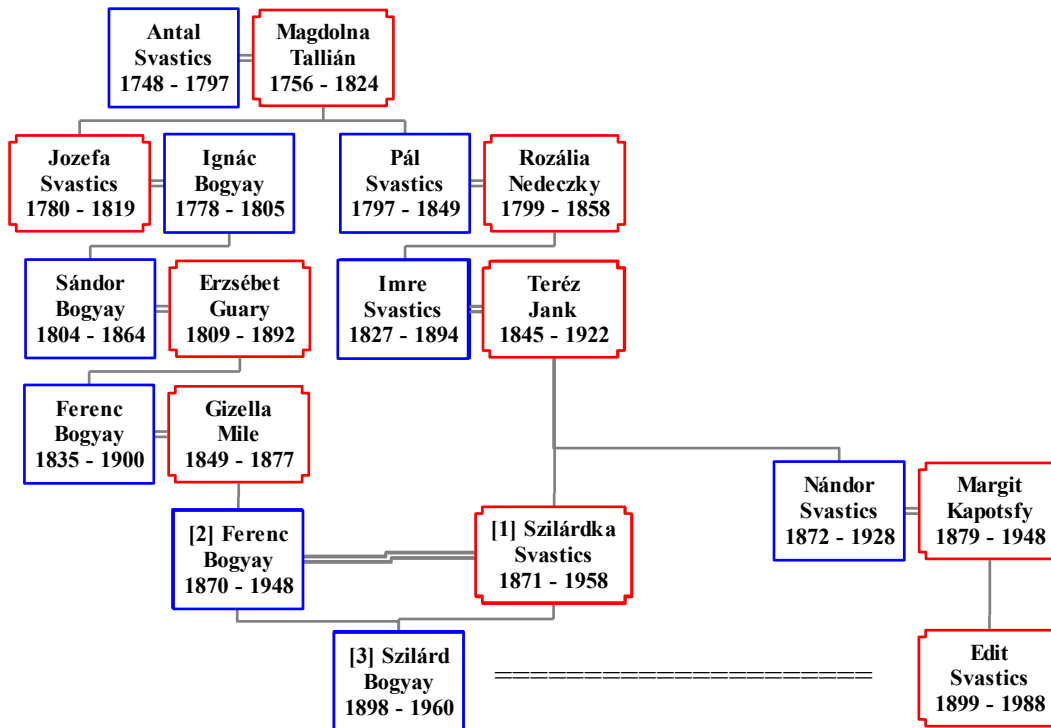
While I was aware of Egon’s excellent reputation as a surgeon, I was not aware of the huge variety of surgeries he mastered in his fifty-some years of practicing medicine. Neither was I aware of the credible amount of scientific work he managed to perform ‘on the side’ – including over 100 publications and around 150 presentations at medical meetings not only in Hungarian, but in English, French, German and Italian too. I was also impressed by his extensive travels and call myself fortunate that on two of those trips we could host him and his lovely wife, Kinga.

Egon’s most recent gift to me was sharing with me his most recent writing entitled ‘Tények és Gondolatok’ (Facts and Thoughts), an extensive study of history with emphasis on the origin of the Hungarians and of the Hungarian language. I learned a lot from it, and if I decide to upgrade the historical part of my own treatise in **Part 1** of *Tata’s Tattered Tales*, I will make good use of it.

By the way, I found it interesting that Egon, as well as Jimmy spell their name with ‘cs’ rather than ‘ts’. As it turns out, the name can also be spelled with ‘ch’; Egon’s namesake, i.e., the Egon Svastits after whom he was named switched to that spelling when he arrived in America following World War II in order to distance his name from ‘swastika’, the hated symbol of the Nazis. His son, Peter Svastich of New York is doing the same. I will write about him too, but first I want to comment on our Bogyay relatives, who lived in Pusztakovácsi, close to Nikla. As a small child, I remember visiting with them and for some of them coming over to see us and many years later I enjoyed getting to know some of them as an adult.

To introduce them, I have another family tree below.





As it is evident from the tree shown here, Szilárd Bogyay, whom I knew as Pipet bácsi was a descendant of Antal Svastits and Magdolna Tallián via both of his parents and married Edit Svastics, whom I knew as Manyi néni, a 1<sup>st</sup> cousin of his (via his mother) and a 3<sup>rd</sup> cousin of his father.

To complicate matters a bit more, Pipet bácsi came to America some years after World War II not only with his family, but brought along his mistress, Magda Széchényi, and as soon as he was able to do so, he opened a washeteria (operated and probably financed by Magda) and a cleaners, which was run by his son, Peter after he finished his years of service in the Army, where he was a cook. I liked Peter and we chatted time and again, but didn't have much to do with his sister, Judith. More to the point, being 4 years older, she didn't bother with me at all. She had some kind of office job while her mother worked in a factory, I think. My father and I lived at their house in St. Louis, Missouri on the third floor for close to 2 years, but we both worked and kept mostly to ourselves. Greeting them as we went up the stairs, watching TV when they invited us to do so, getting along well. After the death of Pipet bácsi, they moved to California and I caught up with Peter only in 1982 right before our first trip to Australia. I got his phone number from his cousin in Australia and called him. We had a nice chat, I learned about his heart problems, him having horses, and got his address too, so I wrote to him. I wrote a long 3-page letter, telling him about my parents, our life, just about everything, even inviting them to visit us. Got nothing in response. In the meantime, life caught up with me and it was only some years later when I thought to call on them again. By then, it was too late. Both him and his mother and even his wife were gone, and not knowing Judith's married name, I had no idea how to locate her.

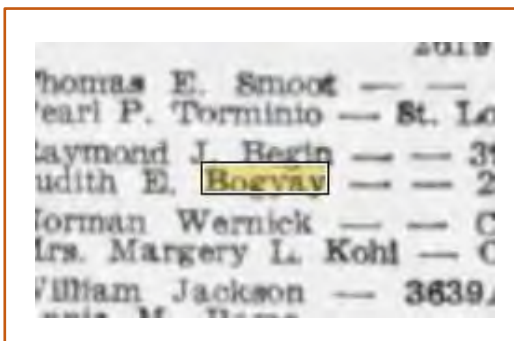


In the meantime, Kay and I made our trip to Australia, and we managed to visit with the family of Pipet bácsi's brother too. His widow, Mária Felice (Lici néni) Márffy was still around, and we got to know her son, Pál (Pali) and daughter, Elizabeth too, along with Liz Burton, Erzsébet's daughter. The first picture below was taken at that time, while the second one some years later (in 1987) when Lydia joined me Down Under for a couple of weeks. I also have a more recent photo of Liz, shown at the bottom of the previous page. Nowadays, she is my contact in Australia.



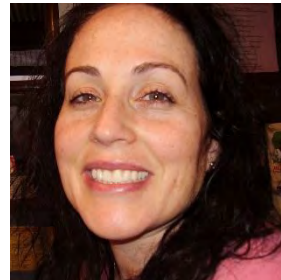
In fact, it was Liz, who found a wedding photo of her mother's cousin, Judith, along with the name of her husband, and hence we renewed our search for Judith and her family a couple of years ago.

On the right, I show Judith's wedding photo, where her brother, Peter is on the left, while her mother, Manyi néni is on the right. Below is the clipping from the June 14, 1963 issue of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch (page 28) that gave her husband's name.



Knowing that they probably settled in the San Diego area of California, it took some serious detective work for Liz, as well as your Mom, who utilized [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) to locate their son, Randy.

Next, I show a picture of Judith from her youth, along with a photo of Randolph (Randy) Begin, her son. According to Randy, who responded most enthusiastically to my initial inquiries, Judith (who divorced her husband in 1983) has no interest in her family and lives in total seclusion. Below I show some pictures of Randy's family; some were sent by him, while others are from the internet. Unfortunately, he totally clammed up not only towards me, but to Liz too, as well as to a number of other common relatives of ours to whom I introduced him.



The first two photos show him and his wife, Susan with their first grandchild, while below I have a picture of them and their daughters.



The first one shows Morgan (born 1999), Alexis ('95), Susan and Samantha ('89), while the second one shows Taylor ('97), Alexis and Randy at Samantha's wedding.



Randy also sent me a picture to which he referred as an old family photo but gave no further explanations. I show it on the right, with the following guesses:

Standing in the back is Randy's sister and her husband, Randy is in the center, his mother and his wife are to his right, the little boy may be his sister's son, while the girl on the left may be Samantha, and the one on the right may be Alexis or possibly his sister's daughter. Unfortunately, Randy never responded to our inquiries about his



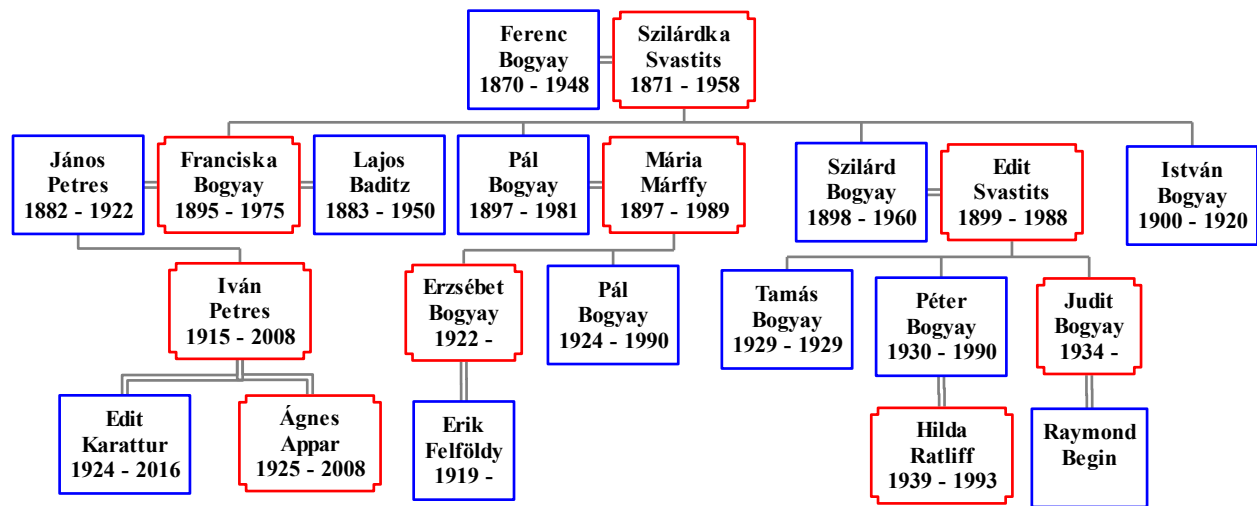
sister, and hence I don't even know whether he had a sister. There were some references to her existence but can't relocate the source. The only reference I found is to the birth of a girl in San Diego, California on March 19, 1992, who was named Michelle Suzanne Major and whose mother's maiden name was Begin.

Before going further, it is time for another family tree – that of the children of Ferenc Bogyay and his wife, Szilárdka Svastics. Thus far I wrote mostly about their son, Szilárd, i.e., Pipet bácsi and his family and his brother, Pál (Pali bácsi), who died a year before I made my first trip to Australia. As you will see, there was also a third brother, who died young. My mother liked him a lot, but it was Pipet bácsi, who taught her to ride. Moreover, just like in our family, the three 'Bogyay boys' had a sister too, Franciska (Fenci néni) with whom my mother corresponded a lot. Following in their footsteps, her son, Iván Petres and I kept up a lively correspondence too. It always amused me that not only did I know Iván's grandfather, but I also know two of his granddaughters as well.

In fact, I keep up with them and have pictures of the children of one of them. Six generation of Bogyays! I also remember being at the house of Feri bácsi in Pusztakovácsi a couple of days before Erzsébet and Erik left the country – sometime in 1948. My father went there to learn about their plans, and he took me with him.

Interestingly, many years later that house was made into a 'Castle-Hotel' and I spent a night there during my genealogical searches. That's when I met a young man named Samu (maybe Zoltán?), who shared with me the manuscript he was preparing on the history of Pusztakovácsi, which was of interest to me not only on account of the Bogyay, but because of the Juhász family that lived there. I enjoyed reading Samu's manuscript, especially the story of Pipet and Pali, who were, unfortunately, typical representatives of the White Terror. The story spoke well of their mother, Szilárdka Svastics, whom I also remember.





Before telling you about Ivan and our friendship, let me show here a picture taken in 1943, celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the marriage of Ferenc Bogyay and Szilárdka Svastits. The celebrants are sitting between two priests; standing behind them from left to right we have Judith, Erzsébet, Manyi néni, Lici néni, Fenci néni, Pali and Péter, with Pipet bácsi and Iván standing in the very back.



Next, I have a picture of Iván at his home in Budapest, where I visited him several times, but never in Szilárskány, where he still owned his enormous mansion with many old paintings on the walls. The next photo is of Ivan's daughter, Katalin (Huki) and Huki's younger daughter, Zsófi, who is one of my favorites.

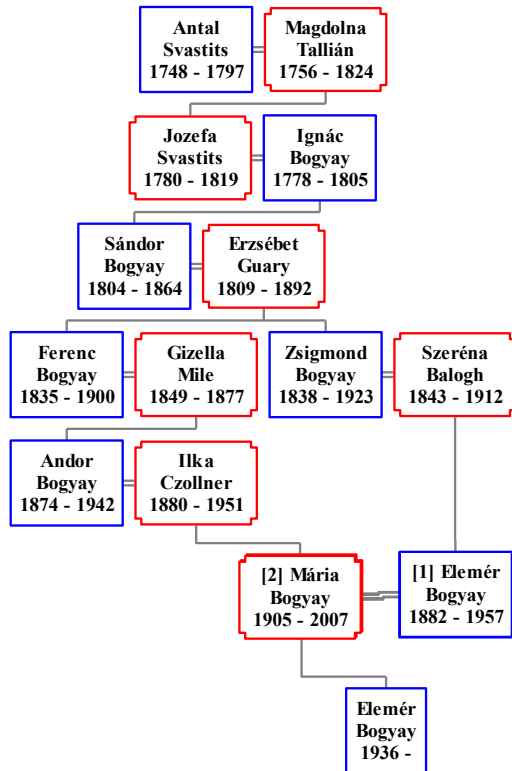


On the right, I also have a cut-out of a photo of Iván getting his rubin-diploma, which marked the 70<sup>th</sup> year of receiving his diploma from the Academy in Keszthely. His daughter, Eszter is on the left, while Huki is on the right. Iván has two daughters and three sons and numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren, of whom I know only Huki and her two daughters.

Moving on to other Svastits relatives of mine, let me introduce Elemér Bogyay, who also left Hungary in 1956, but ended up in Canada, rather than the USA. He is also a descendant of Antal Svastits and Magdolna Tallián, as shown below, where I also have a picture of him with his decorations for his part in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Even though we Skyped back and forth for some time, we did not meet until last year.



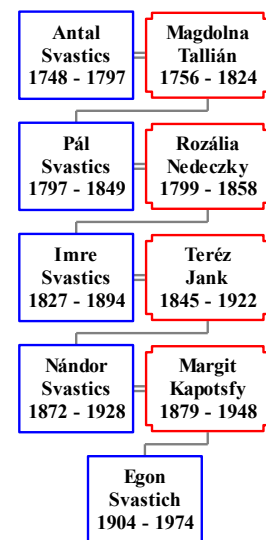




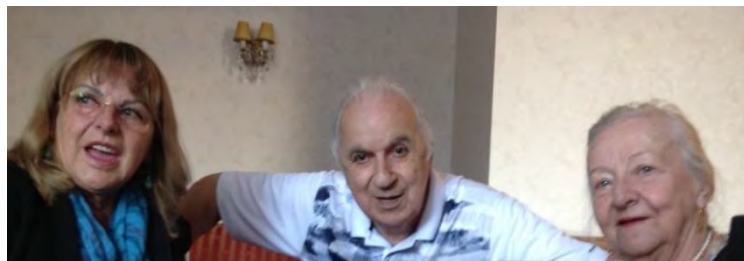
As you can see, Elemér’s mother was a niece of his father. Moreover, being a 2<sup>nd</sup> cousin of Iván Petres, Elemér was close to Iván’s children too, and hence at one time he had Huki visit with his family in Canada.

Next, I want to return to Egon Svastich and his son, Peter and Peter’s half-sibling, Theodora (Dóra) Svastics, whom I finally met last year at the same reception where I met Elemér. Dóra and I corresponded earlier, but then we lost contact until last year, when I managed to locate her once again. She knew my brother professionally, as well as Egon and Kinga, since earlier she worked at the hospital where Egon was a surgeon. I learned about Dóra since she was the organizer of a Svastics reunion when it was held in Szentgáloskér, which used to be her family’s hometown.

She is shown on the right as we were talking at the Hotel Gellért, while further to the right I show the descendance of her father from Antal Svastics and Magdolna vizeki Tallián, and below I have a picture of her half-brother, Peter Svastich.



Below I show another picture of Dóra – this time with her daughter, Éva and another picture of Peter too with his wife and daughter, Adrianna, who is with the Pennsylvania Ballet in Philadelphia. Concerning Peter, I learned that he received his B.A. cum laude from Princeton University in 1965, and his J.D. from the Yale Law School in 1968. Since then, he has spent his entire business career in the investment management and financial services industry since joining a fund management and investment services firm located in Madrid, Spain in 1970.

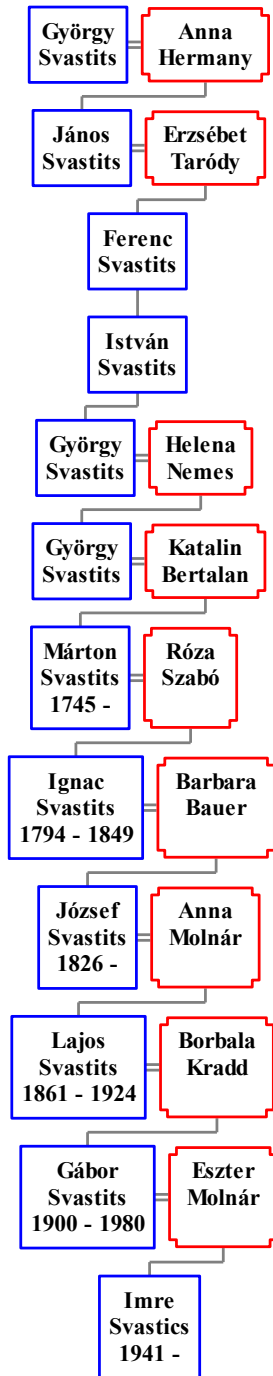


I learned about Peter years ago from Liz Burton but didn't get around to call on him until recently. Since then, we exchanged a number of messages, had some pleasant conversations over the phone, and shared with one another whatever information we had about the family.

Next, I must say a few words about Sándor Bánó too, whose descendance is shown on the right. Below I also show a picture of him and his family from Christmas 2015, as well as one of him alone. We never met, but corresponded over the years, and he was kind enough to send me the video too that was made at the Bánó Reunion organized by him. In addition to getting to know his side of the Svastics family, I learned a lot from that video. The Bánó, as well as the Kacsokovics families are of old nobility too. In addition to Sándor (nicknamed Sanyi), a relative of his, Attila Bánó is also deeply into genealogy, with several books to his credit. I enjoyed reading some of them. Sanyi lived in America before moving back and remarrying in Hungary.



Next, I must tell you about Jimmy Svastics and his late wife, Helen.

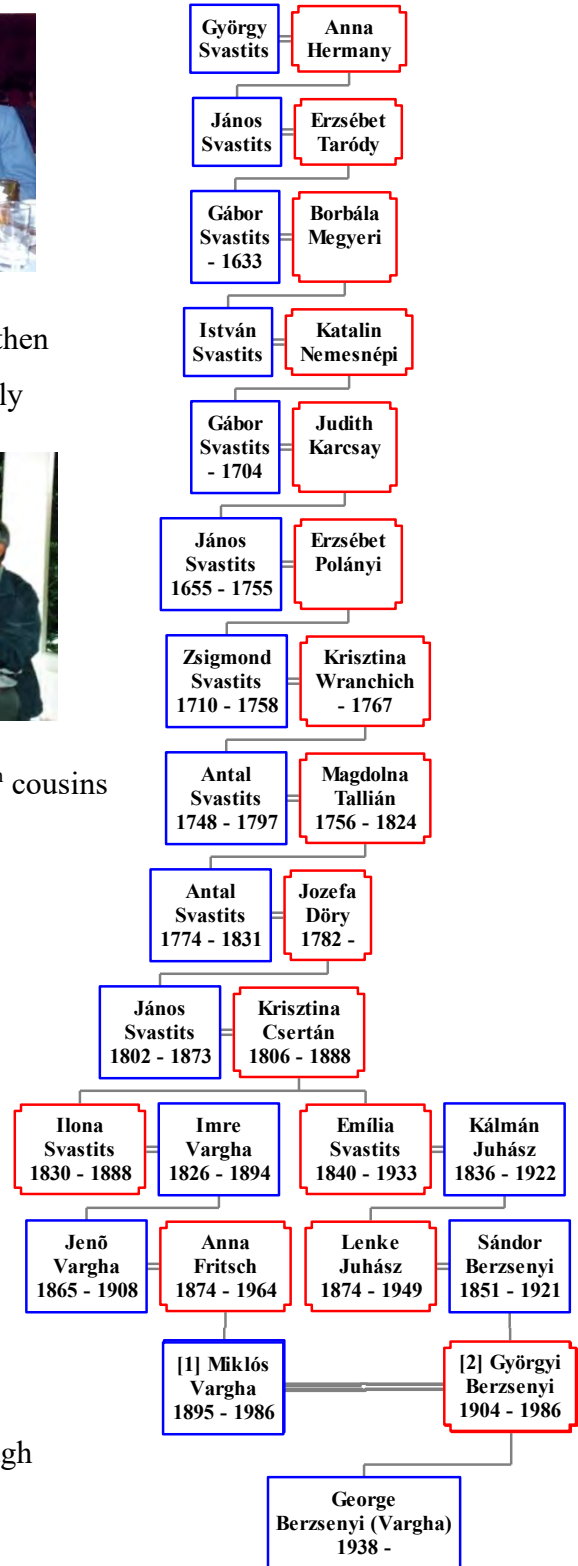


Jimmy and Helen then and more recently



Ignac and Antal were 5<sup>th</sup> cousins

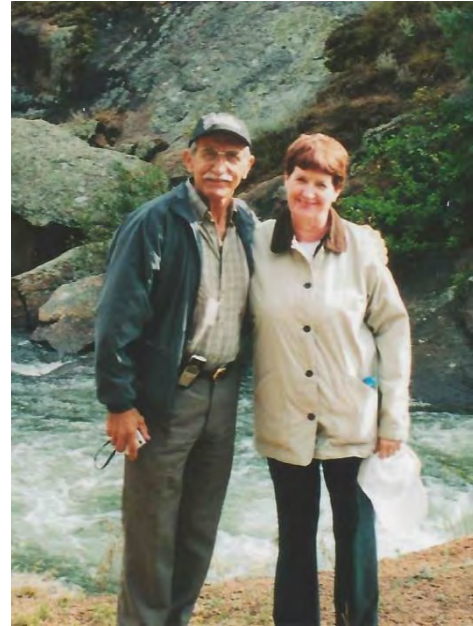
Jimmy and two of my grandparents were 9<sup>th</sup> cousins, and hence, Jimmy's grandchildren are my 11<sup>th</sup> cousins.



As your Mom would say, the relationship is far enough for us to be best friends.

Mom and I visited them in 2004 on our way to Australia and they came to see us the following year.

The next couple of pictures commemorate their visit with us in Pine Junction, Colorado.



Jimmy was the one, who initiated the first Svastits Reunion in 1997 jointly with Egon Svastics, he was the one who found a pianist to play and record the Svastits music, and he is the one who sent me the Svastits family tree with the identifying numbers for the various members of the family. Moreover, the roaming Svastics Crest crafted from colored glass is his creation too.

Jimmy was only 15 when he and one of his sisters left Hungary. They hail from the csécsényi branch of the Svastits family and came from Tapolcafő in the mountainous region of Bakony. Therefore, he loves the outdoors. After some initial struggles in the United States, he became a goldsmith, making and losing a fortune several times. Unfortunately, his wife, Helen passed away some years ago. She was from Scotland. He goes by the name James and hence, Jimmy, rather than Imre, which translates to Emerick. In spite of being distant, I consider him one of my favorite relatives.



Recently, I discovered that Jimmy is writing an account of his life on Facebook, which I downloaded and perused with interest. In particular, I found there the family photo shown above on the left, where he is the little boy next to his father. He had five older siblings. I also found there a couple of recent pictures of Jimmy, of which I reproduced the one shown above on the right, where he is shown with grandchildren Fiona and Lucas a couple of Easters ago.

Interestingly, upon arriving to Los Angeles, Jimmy spent some time at the Sunshine Restaurant too, which was frequented by my friend, Laci Papp and myself, and in fact, I worked there as a waiter some of the time in the spring of 1962. Seemingly he bought his first cars for \$50 also, and he had an Austin Healey too. And we knew many of the same Hungarians, except for the fact that we missed one another by a year. He was there in 1960-61, while I spent the year 1961-62 there and moved to Texas to join my father in June of 1962. Jimmy stayed in Los Angeles, but by then he had a job in a jewelry shop, where he mastered goldsmithing.

It seems, he managed to accumulate sizeable wealth 3 times and managed to go broke each time. Nevertheless, he found his footing each time, which is not so easy in America, where there is little mercy for those who fail. Normally, you must pull yourself up by your bootstraps, as the saying goes, which Jimmy mastered over the years. Now in retirement and as a widower, he lives a good life, playing golf, enjoying the beaches of California, and spending a lot of time with his grandchildren.

Lastly, but possibly most importantly, I must call attention once again to your 4<sup>th</sup> cousin, Kornél Szemeredi of Los Angeles, whom I should have met in 1960-61, when I was in Los Angeles. He was in the Hungarian Boys Scouts (cserkész), while I was playing the part of a guard at the traditional procession on Saint Stephen's Day on the 20<sup>th</sup> of August 1961. I put a blue dot on both of us for easier identification. Behind me my late friend, Laci Papp is looking sideways; he was also 'volunteered' into guard-duty.



Kornél and I learned about one another in 2007, when I found out that his mother, Livia Tábornszky also left Hungary in 1956 and similarly settled in the United States. In fact, near Los Angeles, where I spent a year while they were there. Unfortunately, she died in 1995, so I never met her, and it was not until 2016 that I finally met Kornél, her older son, who is similarly involved with genealogy. In fact, Kornél maintains the Svastits website on MyHeritage.com, where he has an extensive family tree, many-many pictures, as well as some 'sound-bites' including recordings of some of our common relatives, as well as some Svastits



music by our common ancestor, János Svastits (from the CD I sent him).

Kornél is nearly 10 years my junior and hence, my Hungarian is better than his, but his English is better than mine. He excelled in high school (being the valedictorian), was accepted at UCLA, where he majored in Medical / Clinical Technology. Post-graduate studies and licensure in Clinical Laboratory Science led him to technical supervision of private, commercial and hospital labs. He found his 45 years career in healthcare and clinical lab studies (from formulating chemical reagents to commercial lab automation, blood banking and regulatory challenges), both interesting and challenging. Nevertheless, he enjoys retirement with his wife, Vicki (daughter of the famed György Tatar - Kató Patócs dance duo of the Hungarian Opera House). Their two daughters live nearby, and hence they get together often with them and their families.

The picture on the right shows Vicki and Kornél in sunny California, while the next picture below shows



the two of them with their daughters. Next to that photo, I also show one taken in 2016 of Kornél, Kay and myself. Kornél and I continue to collaborate on the Svastits genealogy. We both enjoy it a lot. The last picture shows Kornél and Vicki surrounded by their family.



## Other Gyarmathy Relatives

In the present piece I will write more about some of my Gyarmathy relatives, whom I already introduced in **Book 1**, as well as about some further relatives among the Gyarmathys.

Keeping my promise, I will start by telling you more about Reverend János Gyarmathy, who was known in the family as Jancsi bácsi. He was of my mother's generation, a second cousin of hers, who was fondly remembered and highly regarded in the family. I remember the care-packages he sent in 1945-46 with sugar and coffee, as well as clothing, all of which were greatly appreciated after the war by all of us. In particular, I remember the shoes with pointed toes; as kids we wondered who would ever wear such things. I also remember the packages of sugar, which my mother used to hide from us, but I located her 'stash'. Even then, I had a 'sweet tooth'!



It was Jancsi bácsi who sponsored my father and myself and made it possible for us to come to the United States, for which I am eternally thankful. Unfortunately, I also remember that he was far from helpful after we got here. At first many job offers came to him by the generous Americans, and he gave them to others in spite of my persistent 'begging' for an opportunity to get some sort of employment. He kept telling us that we must wait until something better comes about until the offers stopped coming in. By then, we were here for about 3 weeks, living in a dormitory-like setting provided by a Catholic organization and lingering around the parish hall of Jancsi bácsi's Hungarian Catholic Church (at 1041 Chouteau Avenue, named after Saint Stephen of Hungary, I think), hoping for a job of some sort.

While the aimless waiting around was bothersome, there were two events that I remember as clearly as if they happened fairly recently. One of them was the arrival of Jancsi bácsi's nephew, Attila Gyarmathy, whom we got to know very well many years later. According to the article<sup>1</sup> from which the picture on the right was copied, he came with his wife and daughter from Cleveland, where they first went after leaving Hungary in 1956. Attila's wife, Clarisse had her mother and some of her sisters settle there after World War II; hence, it was a natural destination for them too. Nevertheless, Attila wanted to see his uncle too, and hence he came to St. Louis. He brought along his wife and daughter too, but I don't remember meeting Clarisse. I remember meeting only him and their daughter. And then I forgot about them for close to 40 years. The article related that Jancsi bácsi was delighted to learn from Attila that his mother of 92 was still in good health mentally and physically, with the humor of a 20-year-old. Jancsi bácsi last saw his mother in 1934 and remembered Attila as a little boy.



<sup>1</sup> *St. Louis Post -Dispatch*, Monday, January 7, 1957



It was also there at the church that I met Kati and her mother, Klári néni, as we were going through some clothing donated to the refugees by the American people. I lingered there in the hope of landing a job and wondered over to introduce myself. I will have more to say about them elsewhere.

Concerning jobs, I found two on my own by talking with some of the parishioners, but they didn't last but a few days. My English was not good enough. Eventually, another relative came to our rescue and found a job both for my father and myself. That was Szilárd Bogyay, to me Pipet bácsi, a Svastits relative on both sides of my family. He also rented to us the third floor of his house; we lived there, at Park Place 7 in Saint Louis, Missouri for more than a year.

Returning to Jancsi bácsi, I learned a lot about him later. Seemingly, as a young man he was a frequent visitor in Nikla, where my grandmother provided summer jobs for young men of the family as overseers on her estate. Later he became a Catholic priest, who had a brilliant future as a 'testőr lelkész' (guardsman priest) and the confessor of the wife of Admiral Miklós Horthy, who became the Regent, and hence the ruler of Hungary between the two world wars. Seemingly, he was let go from that post when it became known that he was a homosexual, and was assigned as a parish priest in Igal, in the Province of Somogy. There he managed to have a lavish lifestyle, which attracted the attention of his bishop, who banished him to America. That's how he ended up in Saint Louis, MO, where he managed quite well. In particular, he became known as an outstanding orator, and hence was chosen to greet Hungary's Cardinal Mindszenty, when he came to America for a visit.

Another big display of Jancsi bácsi's showmanship took place in Nikla in 1926, when the plaque on the present Berzsényi Museum was unveiled. I will write about that event separately; at this point I only want to point out that he was the chief organizer of the lavish celebration that took place at that time with Archduke Albrecht of the House of Habsburg being the honored guest.

After retirement, Jancsi bácsi moved to Colorado Springs and assisted his nephew, Attila Gyarmathy to settle there too. Seemingly, he was well-liked by Attila and his wife and daughter, and lived there 'happily ever after', except for the fact that his strange lifestyle must have caught up with him. He was found strangled in the trunk of his car sometime in 1961.



In **Book 1**, I also promised to write more about Attila's brother, Tihamér, who became an artist while still in high school. Even though his talents were recognized early by some influential teachers and artists, there were many twists and turns in the development of his artistic expressions and career. He was born in 1915 in Pécs, where his father, Pál was working as an architect. After graduating from high school, he was accepted into the Academy of Fine and Graphic Arts (Képzőművészeti Főiskola in Budapest), and after the completion of his studies, he spent two years in the artist communities of Western Europe (Germany, France, England, Switzerland).

His first exhibits were in Paris and Zürich, following some joint exhibits in Hungary. Later, during the communist era he also spent some time (and had several exhibits) in Poland, paving the way for his son, Gábor (Gábris) to do his university studies there.

Unfortunately, Tihamér died (in 2005) before I managed to establish contact with him, but fortunately I got to know his son, as well as his brother, Attila, whom I really liked. It is also unfortunate that I don't know enough about modern art to discuss their accomplishments with them. However, I have a book about the artwork of Tihamér, which I strongly endorse and recommend in spite of it being in Hungarian.

On the right and below I show some pictures of his including their titles and here and there the prices asked for them now (in 2020) in Hungarian Forints (HUF). 1000 HUF is equivalent to about 3 US Dollars.



Self-portrait, 1937 (120,000 HUF)



A plaza, 1967 (1,200,000 HUF)

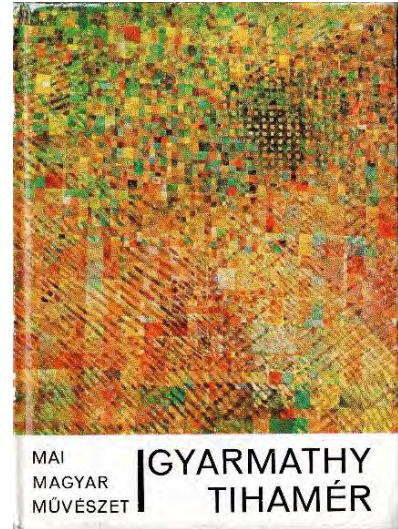


Cosmic rays (320,000 HUF)



Clown with cello (220,000 HUF)

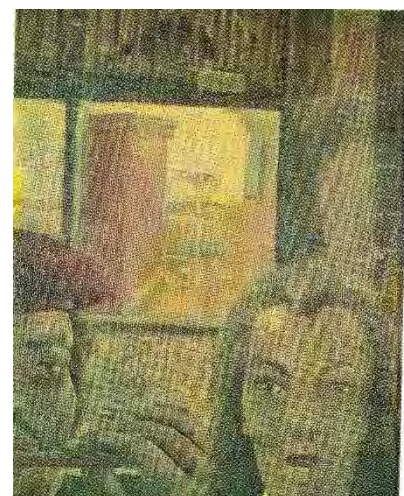
Much more familiar to me are the portraits he painted while honeymooning in Nikla at Mariska némi's place. As mentioned earlier, two of his aunts lived in Nikla at the time – hence he must have felt at home there. His portrait of Dániel Berzsenyi is presently in the museum in Nikla, while that of Farkas Berzsenyi ended up with Eszter Köllő, who lives in Sweden now, but probably maintains a home in Budapest too and she might keep the painting there.



Next, before turning my attention to Gábris, above I show a copy of the book about my 3<sup>rd</sup> cousin, Tihamér (with yet another painting of his decorating it), along with two other paintings of his. The book served me well as a source of information about him. I know of at least two other books about him and expect that his popularity will grow in the years to come.

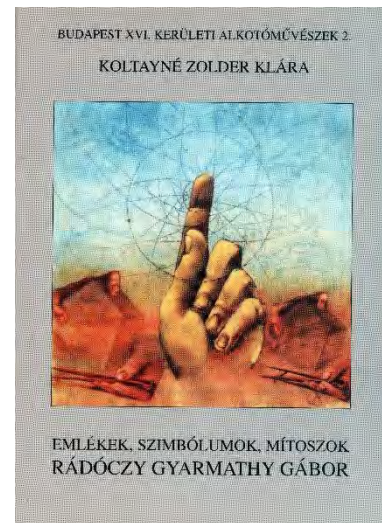


Unknown sources of light, 1971



Awaiting a miracle, 1974

Concerning Gábris, let me start with a newspaper photo below, showing him with his father and the well-known Hungarian poet, Sándor Vörös (on the left) in 1969. I also show the front cover of the book (with his painting entitled Copernicus), written about him; as mentioned earlier, he was kind enough to send me a copy thereof. Much that I learned about Gábor is from this book, which is written in Hungarian **and in English**. Hence, my commentary will be brief, letting you learn about him more directly. After all, he is your 4<sup>th</sup> cousin!



You will learn that while he was strongly influenced and encouraged by his father, Gábor's style is much different from his. Again, I will not get into analyzing his style; instead, I display a few of his pieces for your viewing.



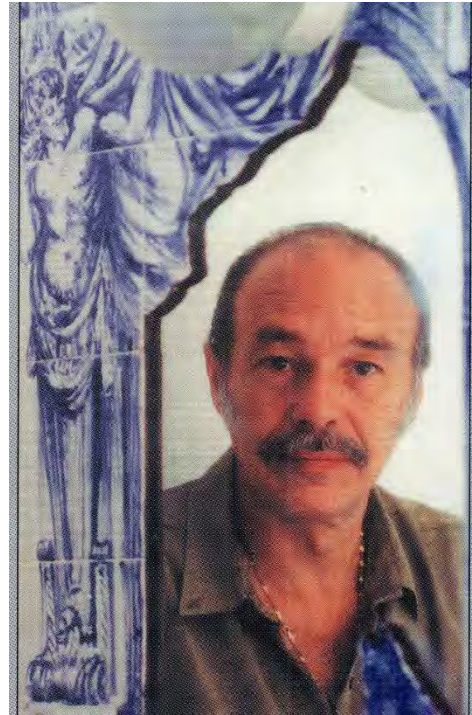
Crime and punishment (100.000 HUF)



On the right I also show a picture of Gábor, who is exactly of my brother's age, that is, they were both born on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January 1943, and share their birthday with you, Lydia, who came to this world exactly a quarter of a century later.

Though I met Gábor only once, we exchanged messages and even a letter or two, and I also called him and his wife, Dr. Edit Rusz over the telephone, and we continue to get along well. Edit is a famous sexologist, who has several books to her credit and appears frequently on television. Gábor is an avid hunter and falconer, who loves horseback riding too. They have a son, Ákos, who has a PhD in Philosophy, incredible language skills and two children, a girl and a boy. It was through Gábor that I got to know Feri Gyarmathy, who was a fourth cousin and a great help in my genealogical search of the Gyarmathy family. Much of the rest of my Gyarmathy genealogy comes indirectly from Gábor's older sister, Ágnes (that is, via her uncle Attila), who is famous in her own right as a theatrical set and costume designer. She is married to Mátyás Giricz, a producer; they too have a son, Máté, who is a fledgling painter.

Below I show two more paintings of Gábris before introducing his sister and her family too.



The group picture below was 'borrowed' from an interview I recently found on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3nT8wIqqpw>), where Ágnes and Gábor and the members of their families spoke about their ancestry, life and art. Later I found that there are several other YouTube videos about Gábor's work; unfortunately, they are all in Hungarian. But maybe Ági and Dani and Izzy and Sophie can help in deciphering them.



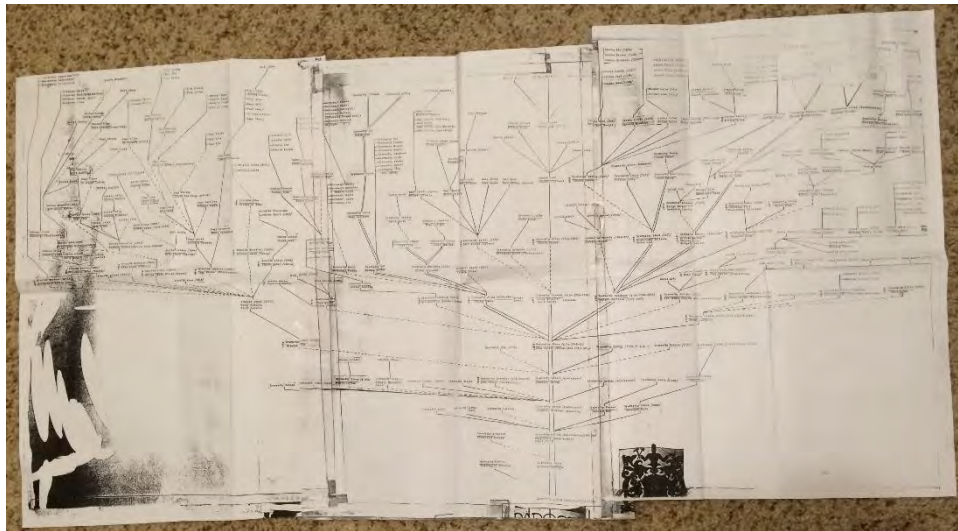
In the first row above, I have Edith Rusz, Ágnes Gyarmathy and her husband Máttyás Giricz, while in the next row features Ákos Gyarmathy, Máté Giricz and their grandfather, Tihamér Gyarmathy.



Next, I ‘recall’ Feri Gyarmathy to the scene, reminding you that I already introduced him briefly in the section on ‘My Gyarmathy Roots’ of **Book 1**. As mentioned there, he was a medical doctor and as such an outstanding researcher and leader in developing surgical procedures and maintaining a steady stream of publications about them. I have copies of the laudatory articles written in *Magyar Urológia* (Hungarian Urology journal) both on his 80<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup> birthdays, praising his excellent leadership in the field. He died peacefully at age 98, keeping up a correspondence with me for nearly 15 years. I also have wonderful memories of visiting with him and his wife and meeting two of their daughters, Erzsébet (Zsóka) and Katalin (Kati), as well as Kati’s family. Their older sister, Anna is more of a recluse. Fortunately, Kati is more interested in family history – hence, I hope to stay in touch with her. I am also appreciative of Kati telling me about her cousin, Dr. Magdolna (Maya ) Weltler, the widow of the composer Sándor Szokolay, who is also deeply into genealogy.



Hence, next I will tell you about Maya, but first I want to show you a picture of the family tree I got from Feri. Its original size was about 15 by 30 inches, and it was pasted together from pieces. After deciphering it, Imre Gyimesi and I verified most everything before entering the data into our databases.

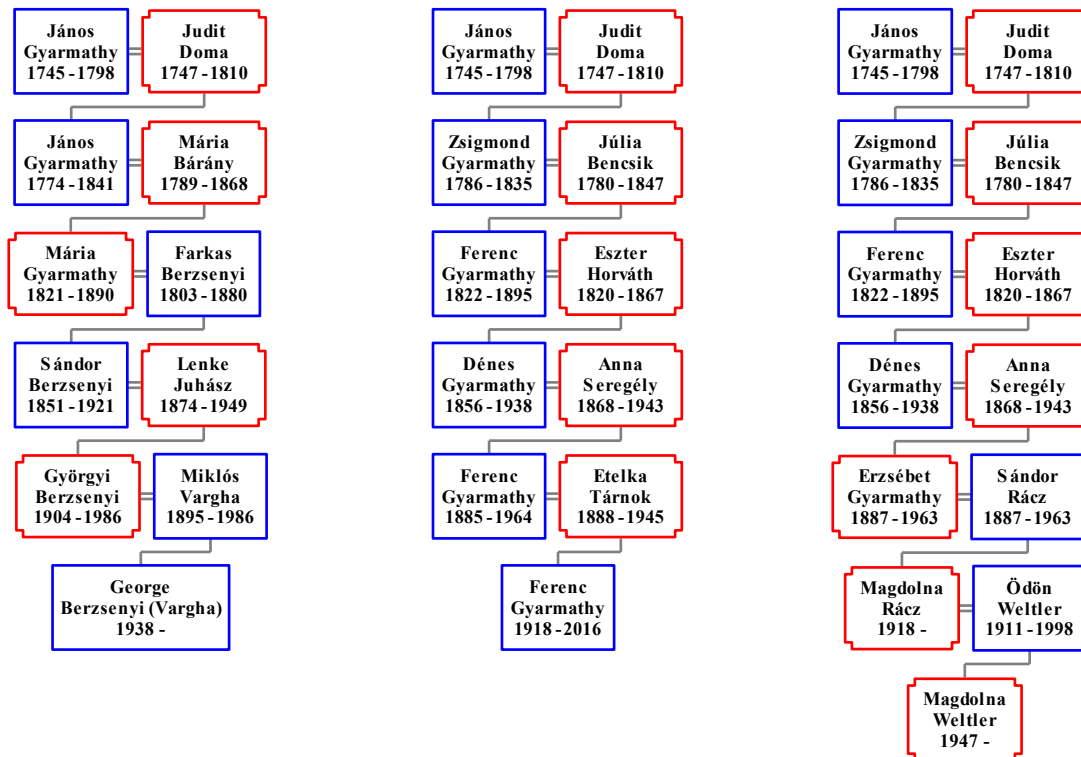


The resulting charts of our relationships shown below were then created with the Family Tree Maker software. It is clear from them that I am a 4<sup>th</sup> cousin of Feri and of Maya’s mother, while Feri was a 1<sup>st</sup> cousin of hers. Thereby, Maya belongs to a younger generation and hence I am especially pleased that she is so enthusiastic about our past.

In addition to doing an enormous amount of work in organizing and archiving the works and correspondence of Sándor Szokolay during the last 2-3 years, Maya and her daughter, Orsolya are also heavily involved in keeping alive the nationwide musical talent search initiated by him. Due

to my own efforts in talent search and development in mathematics, I look upon him as a kindred soul. The picture on the right shows the three of them some years ago.

With respect to genealogy, I learned a lot from Maya, who happens to be a medical doctor, with specialty in dermatology. I also have some hope that maybe she and her cousin, Kati will put together a Gyarmathy family reunion one day. And maybe they will be able to place within our family tree or an extension thereof yet a few more famous Gyarmathys, whom the rest of us could not. Some of them also appear in the book about Gábris, but their places in the family is not given there either.



One such person is Mihály Gyarmathy, who became a soldier at age 15 and fought in 50 battles during his career, which included service for Austria, the Netherlands, as well as Germany. Another is Sámuel Gyarmathy (1751-1830), the famous linguist of Erdély (Transylvania). Yet another one is Zsigmond Gyarmathy, who distinguished himself in the 1848-49 War for Independence against Austria. And the list continues including György Gyarmathy, who was a teacher in Nemeskér and a friend of Dániel Berzsenyi<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> According to István Hetyéssy's 1969 article in the *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények*, Issue 5, pp. 604-613



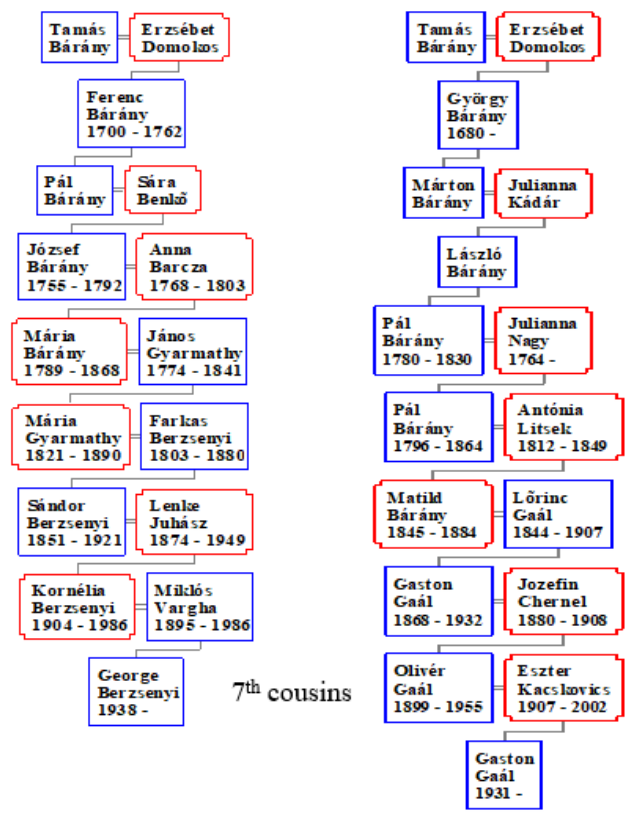
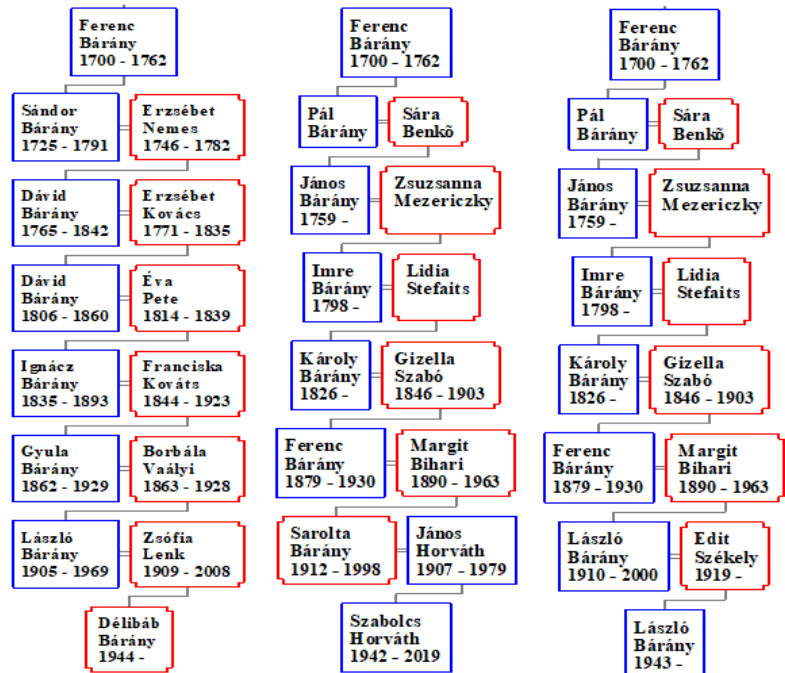
My Bárány ancestors and relatives

On the right I am introducing three of my Bárány-relatives, with whom I maintained contact for several years.

Both Szabolcs Horváth and Károly (Karcsi) Kertész, the husband of Délibáb Bárány were introduced to me by Imre Gyimesi, while I learned about László (Laci) Bárány from Szabolcs. I knew Laci only via correspondence, but I got to know Szabolcs and Karcsi and at least some members of their families in person too, when Attila Tóth and I visited them in 2015.

Gaál Gaston of Gyula (i.e., gyulai Gaál Gaston, 1868-1932) was an ornithologist landowner and a politician, who served as the Speaker of the National Assembly of Hungary in 1921-22. My Berzsenyi grandfather knew him well as a fellow landowner in Somogy.

Recognizing us as relatives, many years later, even his grandson and namesake paid a visit to Nikla, both to see the Museum and to visit with my mother. Interestingly, he also left Hungary in 1956 and settled in Houston, near Beaumont, where we lived when my mother wrote to me about his visit. I called Gaston, we chatted some, but it was not until after I retired and got into genealogy that I contacted him again. By then, his interests in genealogy waned. He died the following year (2011); hence, I missed my opportunity to explore with him more deeply our common rhendesi Bárány roots.



Much of the information about the rhendesi Bárány family is from Délibáb's husband, Károly (Karcsi) Kertész, who compiled a family tree of the rhendesi Bárány family using the software called *Agelong Tree*, which he shared with me. He was also kind enough to share with me his rich collection of over 400 photographs of various members of the family, as well as his manuscript of 100 pages entitled "A rendesi Bárány család" (in English, the Bárány family of Rendes), describing in detail the circumstances for the emergence of the family, as well as the cultural and historical background in Hungary in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, when that took place. Karcsi also included pictures of the original documents as well as the Hungarian translations thereof that paved the way to the rising of the family. There is also a discussion of the coats of arms that were used by various members of the family, as well as biographies of the most important family members. I borrowed freely from his excellent account, for which I am most thankful.

I am also most appreciative of the CDs full of documents sent to me by Szabolcs Horváth. They included several hundred official papers like land records, court decisions, proofs of nobility and even some personal communications by members of the family. Most of the relevant ones were included by Károly Kertész in his manuscript. The rest are of interest only to someone who is seriously involved with the history of the Bárány family. I will try to find such a person in America and send them to him/her. By the way, Szabolcs was a chemical engineer and so is his older daughter, Nikoletta, while his younger daughter is a graduate of the Agricultural Institute in Gödöllő, and his son is a construction engineer. I show below a picture of Szabolcs and his family from 2010.



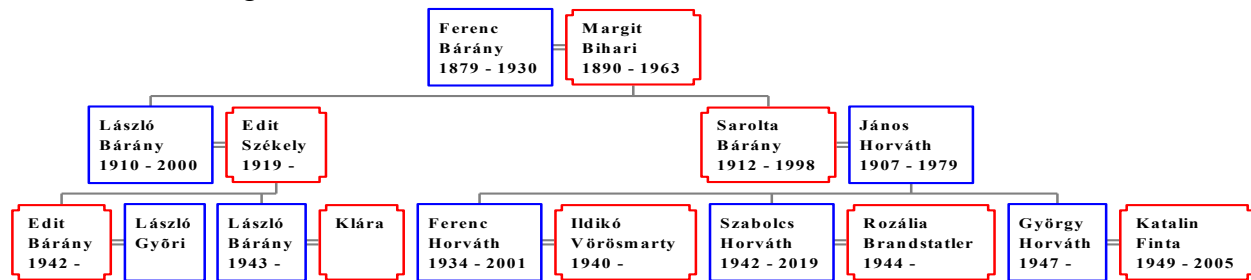
I also show a picture of Szabolcs with his grandson, Zsigmond, and of his wife, Rozi with granddaughter Sára, along with a picture of their home in Bakonyszücs, where they retired in 2002.



I 2011, I managed to visit Szabolcs in person too; that's when the picture above on the right was taken of Szabolcs, his wife, Rozi and myself in front of their countryside home.



Next, I want to show the descendant tree of the grandfather of Szabolcs, and via that tree introduce his first cousins, Edit and László Bárány. Seemingly, Szabolcs lost touch with them after his uncle, László Bárány (1910-2000) came to the United States in 1956, following our glorious, but tragic Revolution there. Prior to leaving Hungary, he was imprisoned by the communists for years – so much so that his son hardly ever saw him. His only crime was that, like my father, he was an officer in the Hungarian army that fought against the Russians during WWII.



I was glad to be able to locate Szabolcs's cousins, Edit and László Bárány, and while Edit was unreasonably security-conscious, László (Laci) and I exchanged a number of very friendly messages between 2010 and 2015, when he retired and moved back to Majorca in Europe after his wife left him. He was an electrical engineer, and in spite of leaving Hungary when he was 12, he spoke Hungarian nearly flawlessly and he was very deeply Hungarian. Below I show László with his four sons, along with a picture of his from 2015 when he was 70. He also has two daughters; except for him, they all live in California.



The next photos introduce Karcsi Ker-tész and his wife, Délibáb. I greatly enjoyed meeting both Délibáb and Karcsi and was saddened by Délibáb's recent death.

In addition to being a wonderful wife to Karcsi for 54 years, a great mother to her son and daughter and a fantastic grandmother to her five grandjuda, Délibáb was successful professionally as well.



With her father being a Lutheran pastor and a mother, who served as the cantor of their church, during communism, Délibáb had no chance to further her education after graduating from high school. Therefore, it took her longer to become a qualified librarian, as well as to get her teaching degree in Szombathely. While heading the Library of Sümeg, she authored a well-received book on the bibliography of the artist József Egri in 1981, to be followed by a similar volume on the bibliography of the artist Erzsébet Udvardy. Later she worked with the movie theater of Tapolca, and was credited for making it into a culturally important center of town.

In closing, I should also point out that over the years many members of the Bárány family moved away from the southern shore of Lake Balaton, and became landowners in other parts of Somogy, including Gomba, where Boldizsár Bárány lived, and Dániel Berzsenyi had a vineyard too.

I found it to be disrespectful and in extremely poor taste that the noted author, Magda Szabó (1917-2007) of Hungary ignored the fact that Boldizsár Bárány was a well-respected literary figure in his days and named her popular children's story *Bárány Boldizsár*. Neither did I care for the use of the last name 'Berzsenyi' for the characters in his books, *Berzsenyi báró és családja* (in English, Baron Berzsenyi and his family) and *A Berzsenyi lányok tizenkét vőlegénye* (in English, The twelve grooms of the Berzsenyi girls) by the earlier writer and translator, Zoltán Ambrus (1861-1932). Both of them could have used other, more fictitious names.

## The search for my roffi Borbély foremother

*The only thing I know about her is that she was the daughter of roffi Borbély Sámuel and the wife of György Vargha I, who was raised to the rank of 'lófő' by Prince György Rákóczi I in 1635. That information comes from the Vargha family tree that was left to us by my father. Later Imre Gyimesi, my wonderful co-worker located some notes of the well-known genealogist Zoltán Daróczy, in which it is stated that after leaving Transylvania (Erdély) and prior to settling in Balatonfüred, György Vargha II, first went to Tiszaroff, the place where György Borbély's family became landowners after similarly leaving Transylvania. While I have no proof for it, I strongly suspect that György Borbély was a son of the same Sámuel Borbély, whose daughter married György Vargha I, and that the sister and brother and their families left Transylvania together after György Vargha I disappeared in the ill-fated war against Poland by Prince György Rákóczi II. in 1657.*

*In the present passage I will tell you about my unsuccessful search for my foremother, as well as about my findings in the process. In particular, I learned a lot about the Borbély family, and made friends with my namesake, György Borbély, the only remaining male of the family still bearing that name. I also learned about some Borbély descendants, who are related to me not via the Vargha, but via the Berzsenyi family. Naturally, I will comment on them too.*

### Other uncertainties

First of all, we don't even know when Ancestor György Vargha II left Transylvania (probably along with his mother and possible other siblings, as well as with György Borbély, who was presumably his uncle). They probably waited some years, hoping for the return of György Vargha I from Poland, and they might have waited even for his return from captivity, since many of the men were taken prisoners by the Tartar forces that helped the Poles defeat the Hungarians. However, I strongly suspect that they left Transylvania while György Vargha II was still a relatively young man to have his sons, Lőrinc and János born in Balatonfüred in the 1680s (Lőrinc was born in 1685). Unfortunately, we have no information concerning the wife of György Vargha II. Neither do we know anything about the reasons for his eventual move to Balatonfüred or his adventures of going through more than half of the country still occupied by the Turks.

As one of your 4<sup>th</sup> cousins, Pali Kasza pointed out<sup>1</sup>, the move by the Vargha and Borbély families from Transylvania must have been courageous. Their choice of Tiszaroff was probably influenced by the fact that they were granted some land there by the Rákóczi family, whom they served. They might have fled from the Tartars, who swept through part of Transylvania in 1683<sup>2</sup>. Buda was taken back from the Turks only in 1686; maybe they made their move in anticipation of that.

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<sup>1</sup> E-mail communication

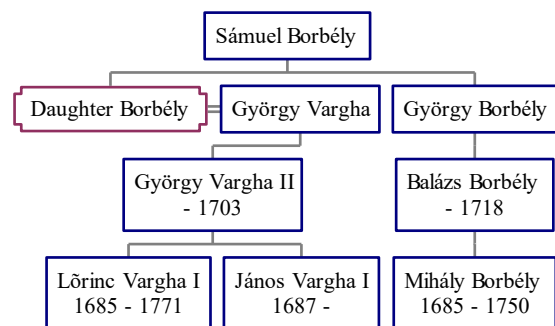
<sup>2</sup> The homepage of Tiszaroff on the Internet

Following the Austrian-led army that reoccupied from the Turks the formerly Hungarian-held territories, the Habsburgs quickly granted huge estates to their Austrian subjects, and even the former Hungarian owners of those estates had to pledge huge sums of money to get their properties back. The success of the Borbély family is evidenced by the fact that by 1728 it was the sole owner of the lands around Tiszaroff; their forename of ‘roffi’ probably dates back to then.

### Sámuel Magyary Kossa

In search of my foremother, my first success came in 2007 while we were at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, where I found an article by Sámuel Magyary Kossa in a publication by Iván Nagy<sup>3</sup> about the Borbély family. It gives a detailed account of the descendants of the above-mentioned György Borbély, but there is nothing about his parents or siblings, and hence no proof of my suppositions. It limits itself to saying that the Borbély family, of which he was also a descendant, originated in Transylvania, and moved to the Tiszaroff area in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. Here I display the probable relationship between the two families.

Later I learned that its author was a well-recognized genealogist, and hence I looked for other articles by him concerning the Borbély family. Unfortunately, I found none, and was later reassured<sup>4</sup> that indeed, he wrote no more about the Borbélys. Nevertheless, I learned a fair amount about Sámuel Magyary Kossa, and after publishing my article in *Matrikula* about the Vargha family<sup>5</sup>, I wrote a circular<sup>6</sup> to my Vargha relatives asking them to follow up on my findings. Unfortunately, none of them did so. Nevertheless, I did get some reactions to that article. Gyula Körtvélyessy informed me<sup>7</sup> that in the 1600s one of his ancestors also married a daughter of Sámuel Borbély, but I have yet to get back with him to see the document he cited.



### Berzsényi Connection

My next ‘break-through’ came when I spotted the ‘Magyary-Kossa’ name among the descendants of Kálmán Berzsényi in the latest version of the Berzsényi family tree, which contains close to 10,000 names. Though several of us helped in its development, I must credit my distant cousin-in-law, Inre Gyimesi for its development. In particular, the genealogist Sámuel Magyary Kossa turned out to be a distant cousin too. And then I remembered that I also saw a Magyary-Kossa among the members of MACSE, the Hungarian genealogical society of which I became a member

<sup>3</sup> Nagy Iván, *Családtörténeti Értesítő*, 1899, pp. 53-62, 105-117 and 261-262

<sup>4</sup> Private communication by György Borbély, whom I will introduce later

<sup>5</sup> George Berzsényi, A szentlászlói és balatonfüredi Vargha család (The Vargha family of Szentlászló and Balatonfüred), *Matrikula*, III, 2(2014), pp 1-11

<sup>6</sup> Private communication

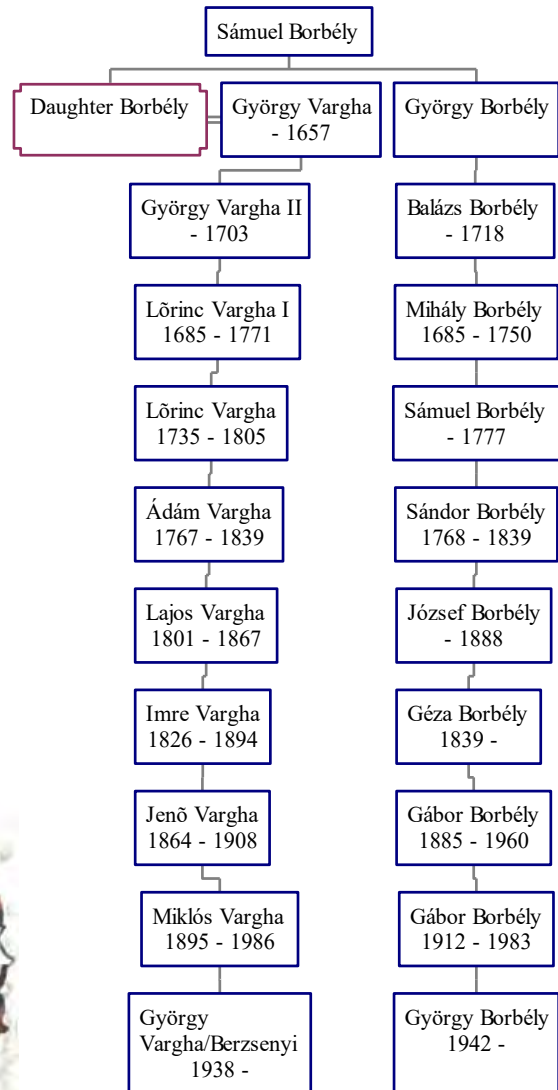
<sup>7</sup> E-mail message on 9-2-2014

in 2013. It turned out that he was named István and was a medical doctor in Germany. With the help of a couple of fellow MACSE members, I finally located him, and with his help found several other Berzsényi relatives too. I will say more about them in **Part 2B** of these **Tattered Tales** of mine. Interestingly, it also turned out that István served with Cousin Gaston (Ungár) in the infamous ‘MUSZ’ regiment of the communist Hungarian Army. Since the so-called ‘collapse of communism’ in 1990, the former comrades used to get together for a reunion almost every year.

**György roffi Borbély**

Unbeknownst to me, my search for István Magyary-Kossa was called to the attention of yet another Magyary-Kossa relative, who is not a Berzsényi relative of mine, but a direct descendant of the first György Borbély mentioned above. His descendence is shown on the right along with mine, and it is easy to see that if indeed my conjectures are correct, then we are 9<sup>th</sup> cousins. Moreover, we share the same first name, and both of us are the second Georges displayed. Since finding one another, we exchanged several messages and even met one another in Budapest in 2015. I learned that he is a mechanical engineer with an excellent command of English.

The first photo below commemorates Gyuri’s getting his golden diploma in 2015, while the second one shows the roffi Borbély coat of arms.



Gyuri also joined us at the Gellért Hotel in 2019 as evidenced by the next picture, showing the two of us. Kay spoke with him more and learned about Gyuri’s extensive travels within present-day as well as historical Hungary, and also throughout the world.

He speaks German, English and Russian fluently, as well as some French, and hence he ended up representing various Hungarian manufacturers, including the huge Ganz-MÁVAG exporting their excellent products. Later he shared with me the itinerary of his travels.



He also shared with me the results of his genealogical research, which included the updating of the roffi Borbély family tree that was published by Sámuel Magyary Kossa; there, Gyuri Borbly's grandfather appears only as a student of law.

Gyuri Borbély also shared with me his collection of pictures, including some historical ones that he shared with his three children. I will display some of them, starting with the one below, taken in 1895 at the last family reunion of the descendants of the Borbély family. It includes Gyuri's grandfather, 5-years old Gábor in the front row, as well as Gábor's older brother, György in the next row. Gábor became a lawyer, while György served his region in parliament, as well as governor of the Province of Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok. In appreciation of his contributions, a statue was erected in Tiszaroff in 1942, the year following his death. Both his portrait and the statue of his are shown on the next page, along with two pictures of the Borbély mansion in Tiszaroff – an old one and a more recent one. Needless to say, it was taken away from the Borbély family during communism and was not returned. It became a castle-hotel at one time, then a bank later.







Gyuri Borbély also shared with me his memoir, written for his children. I found it most interesting and informative, and I am appreciative of his sending it to me.

Returning to Sámuel Magyari-Kossa, I suspect that he may have made further breakthroughs in his research of the roffi Borbély family. It is known that after practicing law for some years and managing his estates first from Tiszaroff and then from Tápiószentmárton, he spent most of his time pursuing genealogical studies and expanding his library of over 16,000 volumes, shown here.

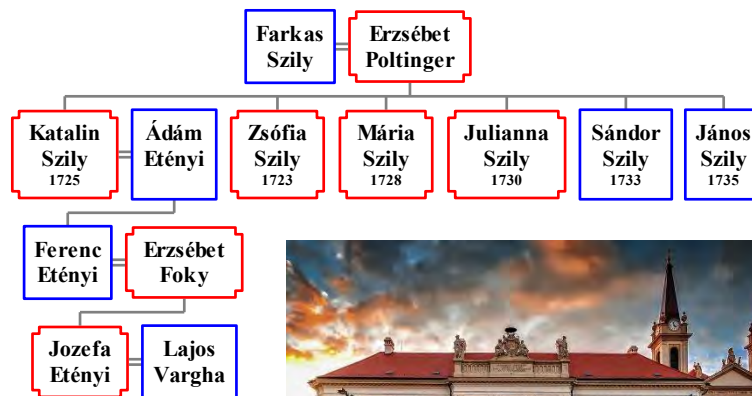


He bequeathed his research papers along with his entire library to the city of Tápiószentmárton, whose library bears his name, and it is time for someone to visit that library.

## My Foky, Hertelendy, Szily and Farkas ancestors

Revisiting my Etényi ancestors, I will comment on each of the above families, starting with the Szily family, whose forename was 'felsőszopori' in view of the fact that the family originated from Felsőszopor in the Province of Szatmár in Erdély (Transylvania). Interestingly, later they relocated to the Province of Sopron to a place by the same name. The forename is important also for the reason that we have another family named Szily, but with the forename 'nagyszigeti' among the ancestors of some of our Juhász relatives.

Below I display the descendants of Farkas Szily and his wife, with special attention to their daughter, Katalin and to their younger son, János, who became the first bishop of Szombathely. I also show a picture of his below along with the Szily family's coat of arms and the Bishop's Palace.



The numbers in the family tree are the years in which members of the family were born. They are included only to show that János was the youngest of the siblings. Interestingly, prior to the establishment of the Bishopric of Szombathely, Szily was the Bishop of Knin, the fort, which was once captured by the first known ancestor of the Svastits family.

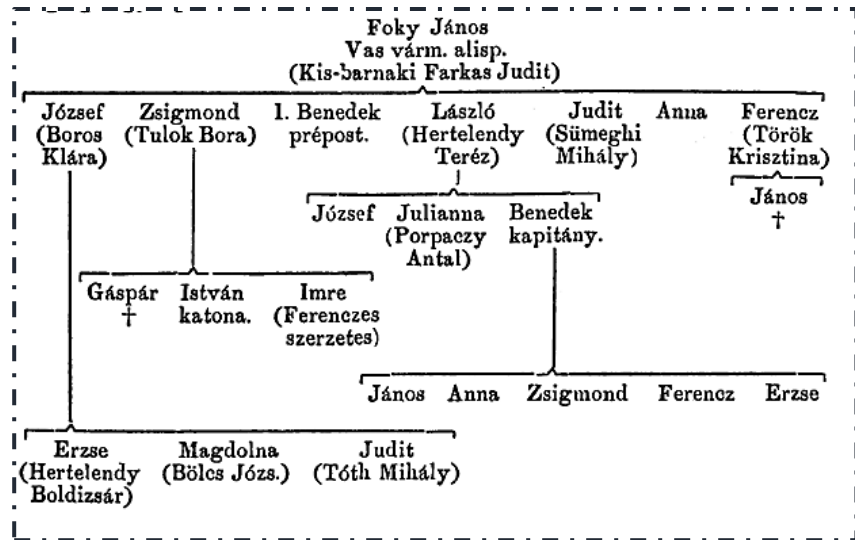
Concerning the accomplishments of János Szily as the Bishop of Szombathely, I can only scratch the surface. In addition to establishing the basilica, the seminary and the Jesuit high school in the city, he initiated 19 new parishes in his region, unified the teaching of the catechism and provided religious leadership not just locally, but throughout the country since he was one of the most educated priests with doctorates in theology and philosophy from Rome. In other words, we should be proud of this distant blood-relative of ours.

Concerning the Foky family of Jozefa Etényi's mother, János Foky (at the top of the chart shown below), was the son of Imre Foky, who received his nobility in 1623. János himself served as the Captain of the Fort of Keszó and later as a Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Vas.

## Other ancestry

## Szily-Foky-Farkas-Hertelendy

The chart on the right, copied from Iván Nagy's fundamental *Magyarország Családai*, shows the descendants of János Foky, but fails to include his brother, Dániel who served as the Mayor of Vienna. It also fails to mention that one of his great-grandsons, Zsigmond (1770-1823) was raised to the level of Baron due to his bravery on the battlefield. Zsigmond's sister, 'Erzse' is Erzsébet Foky, Jozefa Etényi's mother.



Next, I will shift attention to Judit Farkas, the wife of János, her brother, Gábor, and the family trees shown on the right. They exemplify how close the relationship was within the nobility even if its members lived far from one another. The Farkas family of Kisbarnak (hence their forename 'kisbarnaki') makes Pál (Pali) Bogyay, whom we met in Australia an 8<sup>th</sup> cousin of mine. (Though, he is much closer via the Svastits line.)

Wanting to know more about Great-great-grandmother Jozefa Etényi's Hertelendy ancestors too, I was led to an article by László Hertelendy. In the 1932 issue of *Turul*, Hungary's earlier genealogical magazine, on pages 62-67, he described the history of the Hertelendy family of Hertelend and Vindornyalak, where they had extensive holdings.

According to the article, the Hertelendy family lived in the Province of Tolna and only after the advance of the Turks moved to the regions north of the Lake Balaton. The first known Hertelendy was named Tamás, who is mentioned in 1481 as a 'man of the king' (homo regius), who was elected by the nobles of the province to serve as a representative of the law, along with representing the Catholic Church (homo capitularis) in controversial cases. From him and his wife, Dorottya, the Hertelendy descendance of Jozefa Etényi is shown below along with the coat of arms of the family.



Mátyás served as a regional judge in the Province of Zala and so did his son, Mihály, who served as a regional judge in the Province of Vas. He seemingly moved there on account of his wife's inheritance. His son, Ambrus followed him in his position. Ambrus' son, Ádám (1619-1653) bought some land in Rőjtök, in the Province of Sopron – hence the family moved there. Via his marriages (to Judit Bakó and then to Anna Tompa) he accumulated land in the vicinity of 25 vil-lages.

Zsigmond Hertelendy was his son, while Boldizsár was the son of Zsigmond. The article mentions that Boldizsár and his wife were installed in their property in Tisztamarok (Province of Vas) by Miklós Pállfy, the Palatine of Hungary in 1725.

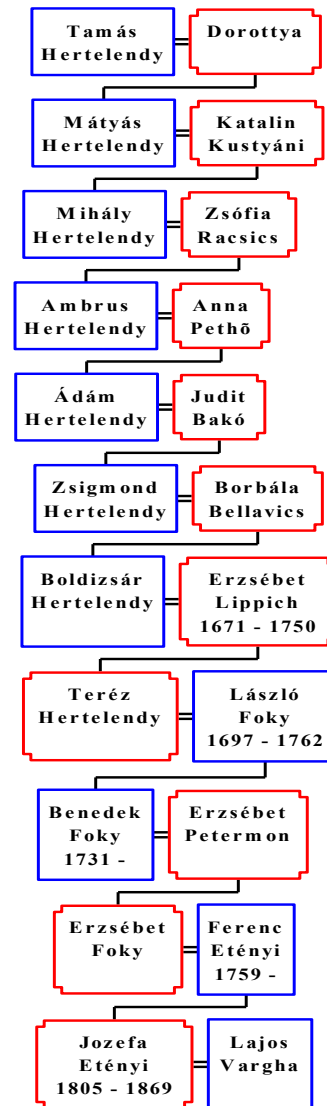


The article also mentions several notable descendants of Ádám Hertelendy, including some military heroes, among whom Gábor (born 1742) distinguished himself in the Napoleonic wars, while Miklós (born 1813) was a colonel in the 1848-49 War for Independence against Austria.

By the way, a later descendant, Margit Hertelendy of the same family was the first wife of Miklós Birck, the second husband of my first cousin, Mártyi, who is thereby a distant cousin of her second husband' first wife.

Moreover, the famously beautiful Anna Hertelendy (born 1741), who became the grandmother of Ferenc Deák, was also from this family, and hence, she was a blood-relative of ours via the Hertelendy lineage.

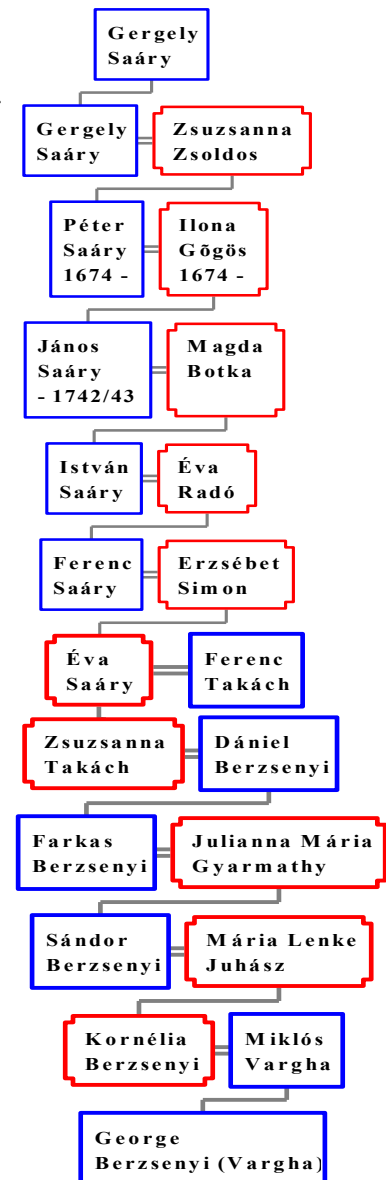
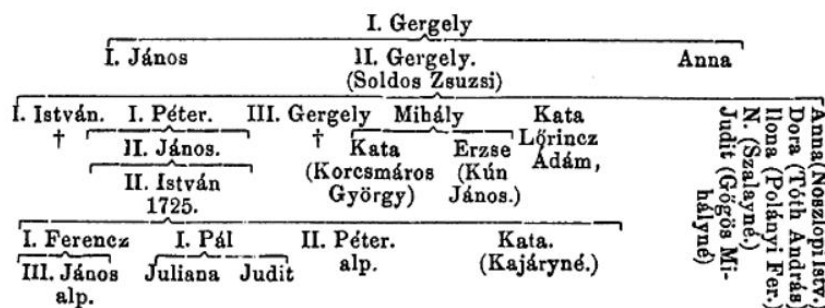
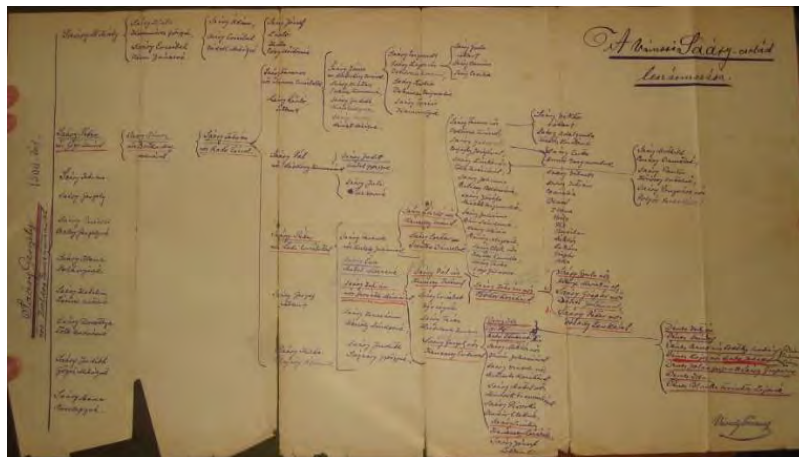
Returning to the article by László Hertelendy, my interest in it was also prompted by the similarity of the early history of the Hertelendy and the Berzsenyi families. Both of them were influential in the southern part of Transdunabia (Dunántúl) but had to move to the north of Lake Balaton as the Turkish forces expanded their territory.



More about our Saáry ancestors

The vámosi Saáry family is originally from the Province of Veszprém. Several members of it lived in Vámos (now, Nemesvámos) already in 1549, at which time it was recorded that János and Albert each had a mansion there. According to Kempelen' *Magyar Nemes Családok*, the family received it nobility and coat of arms on March 9, 1556.

Partly based on the family tree provided by Iván Nagy in *Magyarország Családjai* and partly on the hand-written notes shown below (shared with me by Géza Várady), I constructed my descendance tree on the right, where I must call attention to Éva Saáry, the mother of Zsuzsanna dukai Takách, whose property was seemingly inherited by Zsuzsanna and her husband, Dániel Berzsenyi upon her death on February 15, 1803. That is what made it possible for Dániel to have the funds necessary to take out of mortgage the land in Nikla inherited from his mother and move his family there.



Note that Éva Saáry must have been a sister of III. János on the left, who was evidently the lieutenant governor of one of the provinces (in view of the abbreviation alp. for 'alispán' written after his name).

### My vizeki Tallián, sághi Sándor and nádasdi Nádasdy ancestors

As shown in the partial family tree below, I had Tallián ancestors on more than one side of my family. More specifically, not only was Krisztina Tallián the paternal grandmother of Dániel Berzsényi, but Magdolna Tallián was the paternal grandmother of János Svastits, another one of my great-great-grandfathers, whose mother, Jozefa Dóry was a Tallián descendant also. Thereby we have plenty of Tallián blood in us!



My source for the ‘root’ of the **Tallián tree** is the tree published on the internet, of which I display below the relevant part. Clearly, the sons marked by A2 and A3 are our ancestors.

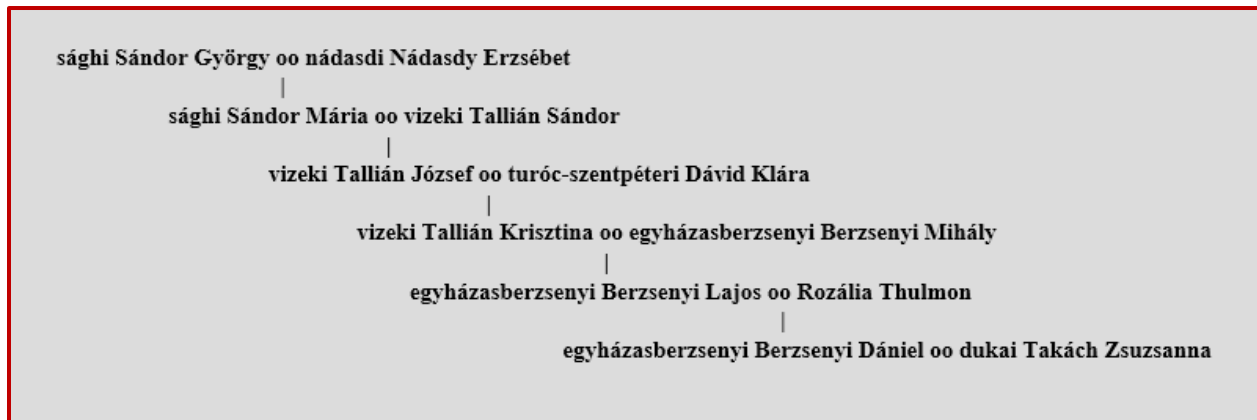


## Other ancestry

## Tallián-Sándor-Nádasdy

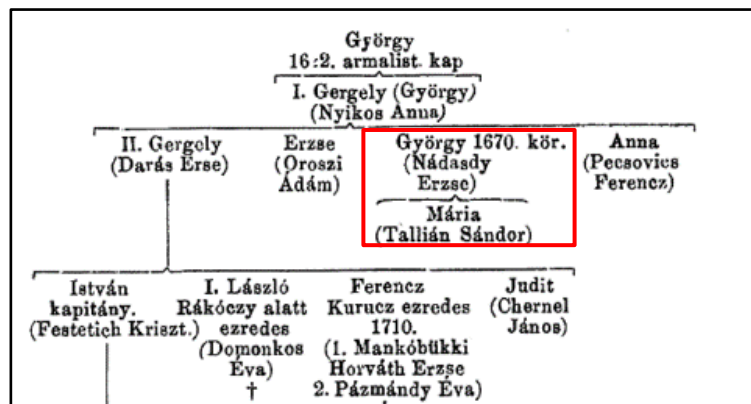
You should recall that János Svastits was doubly one of my great-great-grandfathers and that Sándor Berzsényi was my maternal grandfather. The “doubly” comes from the fact that my maternal grandmother’s mother and my paternal grandfather’s mother were siblings, whose father was János Svastits. Therefore, the above family tree is indeed very central to my genealogy.

Next I want to call attention to the great-great-grandparents, Sándor Tallián and Mária Sándor of Dániel Berzsényi in the Tallián tree shown above and show the ancestry of Mária Sándor.



It clearly shows that Dániel Berzsényi was indeed correct in claiming in a letter to Kazinczy<sup>1</sup> that he has Nádasdy blood in his veins. Erzsébet Nádasdy was an 11<sup>th</sup> generation descendant of László Nádasdy, who was a son of the legendary Count Petendi.

To prove my claim concerning Erzsébet Nádasdy’s ancestry, I consulted the internet version of Iván Nagy’s excellent book on Hungary’s families<sup>2</sup> and copied from there the table on the right concerning the sághi Sándor family, as well as the two tables on the next page concerning the Nádasdy family, marking in them via red boxes the relevant information.



By the way, György Sándor received his nobility in 1622 and lived in a mansion built with stones across from the province’s capital in Pápa. I learned from an article<sup>3</sup> about the sacking of Pápa in 1707 by the labanc (loyal to the Hapsburgs) forces that his was one of the two houses that survived the burning of the city.

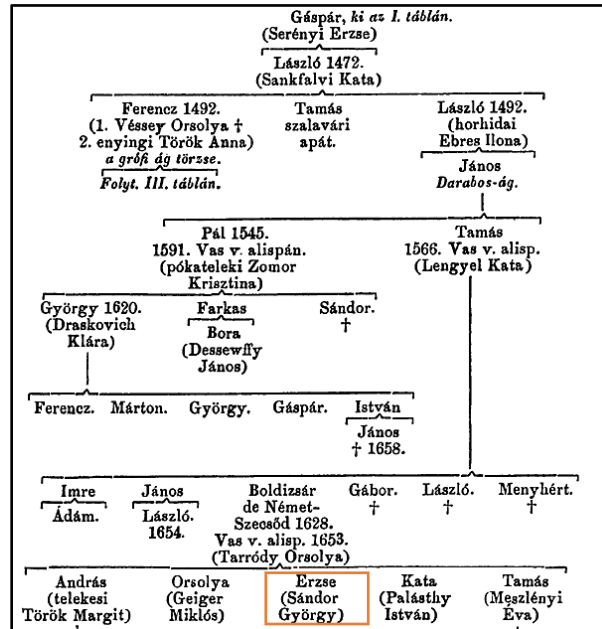
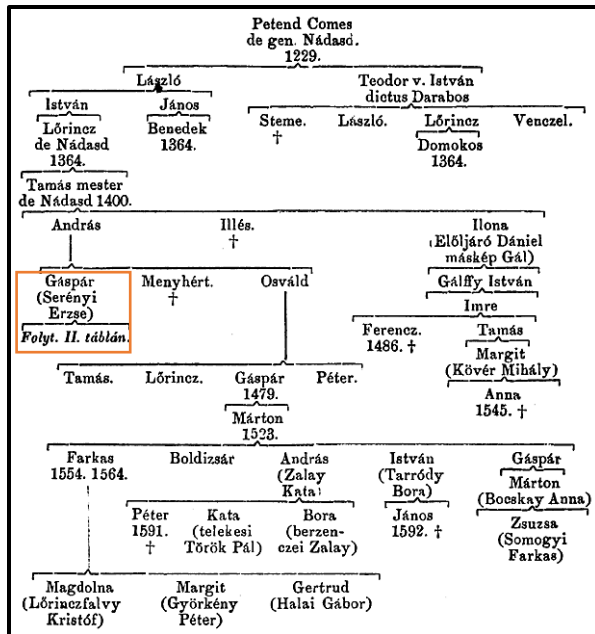
<sup>1</sup> Dated March 12, 1809; listed as #20 in Fórizs’s critical edition of his letters

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.arcanum.com/en/online-kiadvanyok/Nagyivan-nagy-ivan-magyarorszag-csaladai-1/nyolcadik-kotet-6DB3/nadasdy-csalad-nadasdi-grof-fogarasfold-orokos-ura-6E02/>

<sup>3</sup> Szazadok\_1879\_pages 671-671

## Other ancestry

## Tallián-Sándor-Nádasdy



Even though Erzsébet (abbreviated as Erzse in the second table) was not from the branch of Ferenc, the grandson of Gáspár in the second table, who was elevated to the 'count' level, she was a blood relative, and hence we are blood relatives of the many important Nádasdys, who played major roles in Hungary's history. They included the following:

Tamás Nádasdy (1498-1562), who served as the Palatine of Hungary

Ferenc II Nádasdy (1565-1604), the son of Tamás, known as the 'Black Captain' (Fekete Bég), an excellent general, who was dreaded by the Turks on the battlefield

Ferenc III Nádasdy, a grandson of Ferenc II Nádasdy, a fierce opponent of the Habsburgs, who was executed in 1671 following a conspiracy formed by several Hungarian patriots. Prior to his death, he created one of the most notable libraries and art collections in Central Europe, which were confiscated by the Austrians after his execution.

Their portraits, along with those of several other members of the family formed an 'Ancestral Gallery' created by the Nádasdys in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, the first such collection in Hungary. Presently, those paintings are in a special collection in the Hungarian National Museum in Budapest. A few of them – György I Rákóczi, Tamás Nádasdy, Ádám Bathány and Ferenc II Nádasdy – are displayed below. They were among the verifiable ancestors, but some others in the gallery were not authenticated. (Please recall that it was Rákóczi, who gave the 'lófő' rank to our szentlászlói Vargha ancestor and that Benedek Berzsényi fought against the Turks in the regiment of Bathány.)

Following the portraits, I show pictures of the three forts/castles that served as the homes for the Nádasdy family over the years.

I should also mention the "Nádasdy huszárezred", the huszár (riding) regiment formed in 1688, which took part in a total of 66 important battles prior to WWI, earning the highest decorations for its member.



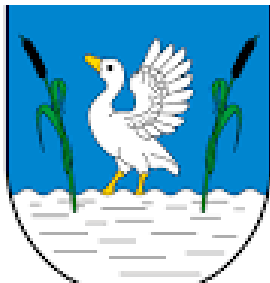
## Other ancestry

## Talián-Sándor-Nádasdy



The castle above is in Nádasladány, the one next to it is in Sorkifalud, while the one on the right is in Sárvár, where the fort survived without any damage throughout the centuries.

Even today, there are a number of famous members of the Nádasdy family both in Hungary and abroad, including a ballet master, a



writer, a poet, a linguist and many others. They are all our distant relatives.



The Nádasdy family is also distinguished by the fact that the oldest Hungarian coat of arms is theirs. A small replica of it is shown above on the left.

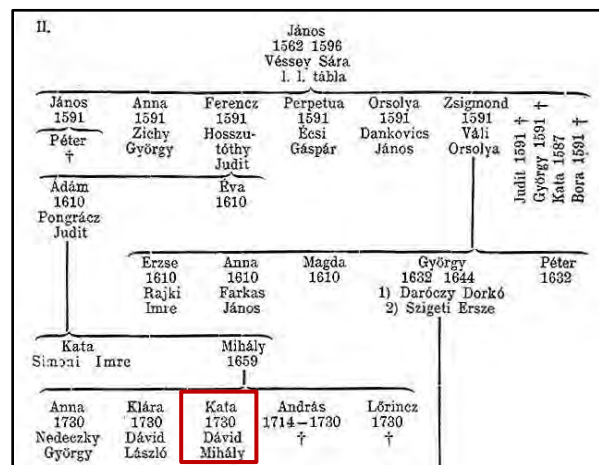
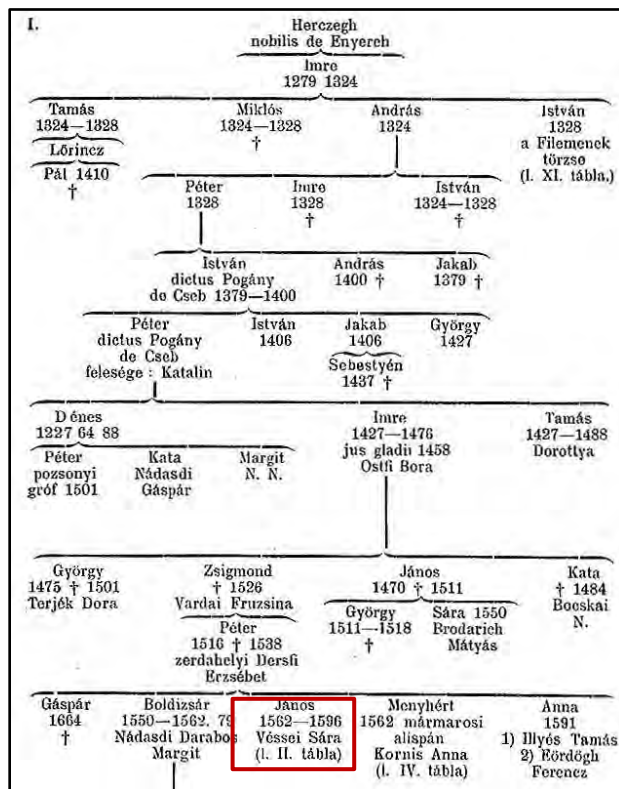
My telekesi Török and csebi Pogány ancestors

The family of Magdolna Török was not only rich, but also ancient as far as its Hungarian nobility was concerned. And so was the csebi Pogány family, both of which I will introduce via family trees copied from well-established sources.

In case of the csebi Pogány family, my first two tables below are abbreviations of Tables I. and II. in Volume 8 of Béla Kempelen’s book on the Hungarian noble families

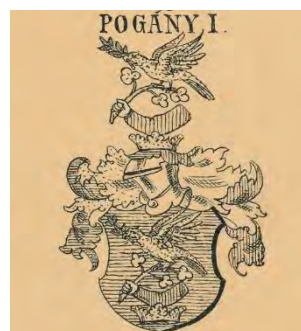
(<https://www.arcanum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/Kempelen-kempelen-bela-magyar-nemes-csaladok-1/8-kotet-E988/pogany-csebi-100F9/>),

while the 3<sup>rd</sup> table is from Tivadar Noszlopy’s well-known book on Dániel Berzsényi and his family that was introduced earlier to my readers. Since Dániel Berzsényi was my great-great-grandfather, it should suffice to show his Pogány-descendance and Török-descendance in what follows.



Csebi Pogány Mihály, 1659.  
Kosztolányi Helén.  
Csebi Pogány Katalin, 1730.  
Turóc-Szentpéteri Dávid Mihályné.  
Turóc-Szentpéteri Dávid Klára,  
vizeki Tallián Józsefné,  
vizeki Tallián Krisztína,  
Berzsényi Mihályné, Iietyén.  
Berzsényi Lajos,  
Thulmon Rozália.  
Berzsényi Dániel.

Indeed, the coat of arms of the family – two versions of it being shown on the right – goes back to the earliest ones given in Hungary. Hence, it is understandable that Dániel Berzsényi was proud of his csebi Pogány heritage, and we should be proud of it too. Interestingly, an old hand-written version of the csebi Pogány family tree was displayed at the Berzsényi Museum in Egyházashetye, and I managed to obtain a copy of it in 2007.



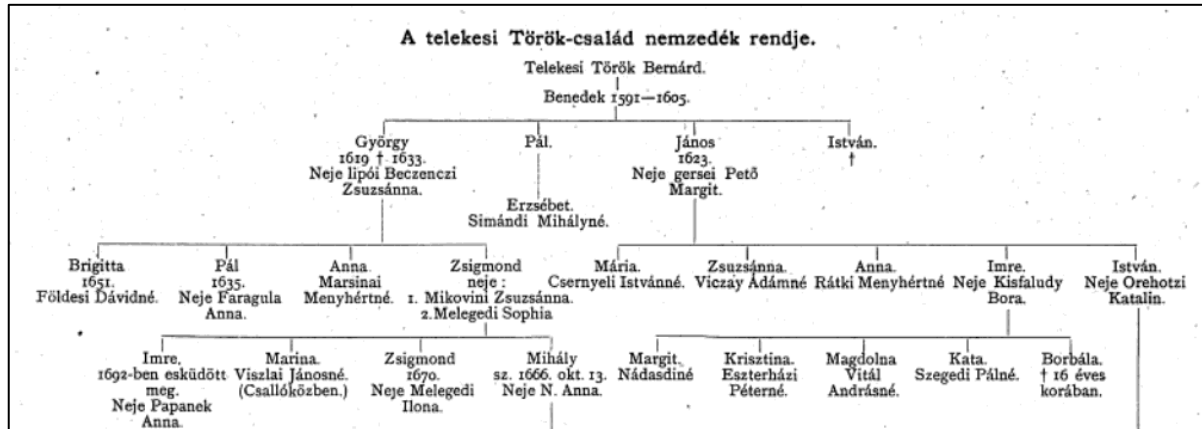
## Oher ancestry

The situation with our telekesi Török ancestry is a bit more hidden by the shrouds of history. All we know is that Magdolna telekesi Török must have lived towards the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century since her husband, Mihály Thulmon, died in Ikervár in 1692. We also know that she was tremendously rich.

On the right I display the family's coat of arms and Dániel Berzsenyi's descentance from Magdolna Török, while below I show two of the most reliable family trees<sup>1, 2</sup> of the telekesi Török family accessible via the internet. Though she is not included in either of them, I suspect that Magdolna was either the sister or the daughter of Benedek, and hence she should have been listed as D2 or E4 in the second tree below.



## Török and Pogány



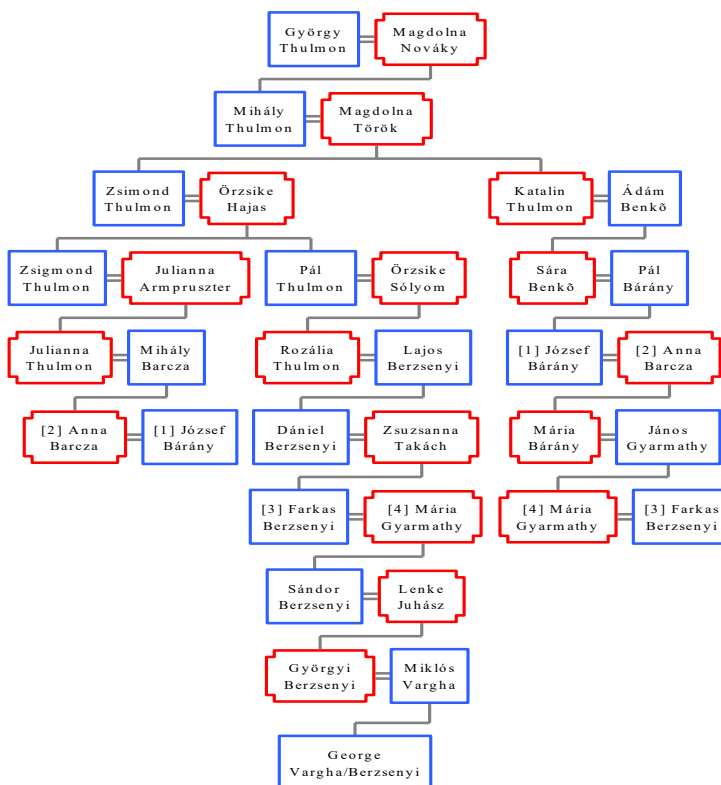
- A1. Török Osvát, lovas hadnagy Nándorfehérvárott;
  - B1. Török Farkas, lovászmester Szigetvárott, d:1566;
    - C1. Török Bernát, 1557: Nádasy Kristóf főprefektusa Egervárott;
      - D1. Török Benedek, lvd:1591/1605;
        - E1. telekesi Török György, m. *Bezenczi Zsuzsanna*;
        - E2. telekesi Török *Erzsébet*, m. *Marczalhti Miklós*;
        - E3. telekesi Török János, lvd:1623, m. gersei *Pethő Margit*; ==> [Pethő család](#)
          - F1. Török *Imre*, m. *Kisfaludy Borbála*;
            - G1. Török *Katalin*, m. *Szegedy Pál*;
          - F2. Török *Margit*, m. *Chernel István*;
          - F3. Török *Zsuzsanna*, m. *Viczay Ádám*;
          - F4. Török *Anna*, m. *Rátky Menyhért*;
          - F5. Török *István*, d:1668, m. *Orehóczy Katalin*; ==> [Orehóczy család](#)
            - G1. Török *István*, kuruc ezredes, élt:1666/1722, m. *Komáromy Katalin*;
            - G2. Török *Zsuzsanna*, m. *Vrágovits György*;
            - G3. Török *Julianna*, m. *Hevenyessy János* de Kis-Heves; <== [Hevenyessy család](#)

<sup>1</sup> The first family tree is at the end of an article by Farkas Széll that appeared in the 1891 issue of *Turul*: [https://books.google.com/books?id=n2DI0wmpws8C&pg=PA39&lpg=PA39&dq=telekesi+T%C3%B6r%C3%B6k+csal%C3%A1d&source=bl&ots=jEXXxdJfFd&sig=ACfU3U3um8iHyzZR4iD\\_HC8kJRGxf-cOGA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjwr5LglaT7AhWMFzQIHdZ4Doo4FBD0AXoECA0QAw#v=onepage&q=telekesi%20T%C3%B6r%C3%B6k%20csal%C3%A1d&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=n2DI0wmpws8C&pg=PA39&lpg=PA39&dq=telekesi+T%C3%B6r%C3%B6k+csal%C3%A1d&source=bl&ots=jEXXxdJfFd&sig=ACfU3U3um8iHyzZR4iD_HC8kJRGxf-cOGA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjwr5LglaT7AhWMFzQIHdZ4Doo4FBD0AXoECA0QAw#v=onepage&q=telekesi%20T%C3%B6r%C3%B6k%20csal%C3%A1d&f=false)

<sup>2</sup> For the coat of arms and the second tree, see: <http://olypen.com/zob/genealogy/Zob-tree/Torok/Torok.html>

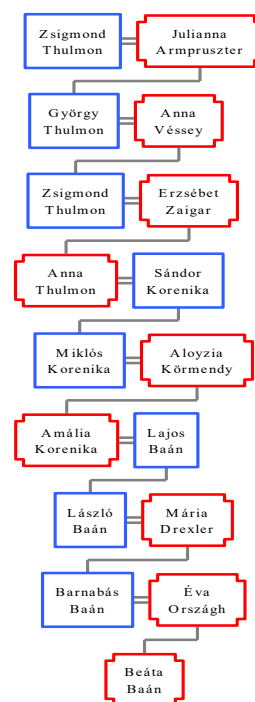
### My Thulmon ancestors and relatives

Clearly, my most direct Thulmon ancestor is the mother of Dániel Berzsenyi, my great-great-great-grandmother (szépanya in Hungarian), Rozália Thulmon, but please recall that both of the parents of another ‘szépanya’ of mine, Mária Bárány also have Thulmons among their ancestors. More specifically, the mother of Anna Barcza was Julianna Thulmon, while the maternal grandmother of her husband, József Bárány was Katalin Thulmon. For that matter, Mihály Thulmon and his wife, the reputedly very rich Magdolna Török were common ancestors of Dániel Berzsenyi, Anna Barcza and József Bárány. These can be seen in the family tree shown on the right. Hence, it is natural for me to introduce the Thulmon family more properly.



The first two known Thulmons were the brothers Mihály and György, who were granted the rank of Hungarian nobility by Leopold I of the House of Habsburg in 1658 on the basis of their military accomplishments. As indicated above, we are the descendants of György.

Concerning other Thulmon descendants, I must start with Beáta (Bea) Baán, whose descendance from our first common Thulmon ancestor is shown on the right. On the basis of that, it is easy to see that I am a 6<sup>th</sup> cousin of Bea’s late father.



Bea and I met for the first time the following year, when you, Daniel, drove us to Balatonfüred to meet her and Attila Tóth. The first picture below commemorates that meeting, while the second photo is from our last meeting in 2011. The third one is ‘official’.



Incidentally, Bea was also the one who called my attention to the first book by Czeizel about the most famous poets of Hungary; I will have more about him and his books below. But I can't delay calling attention to the fact that it was Bea who initiated and continues to edit the excellent *Füredi História* publication, which was of great help in my genealogical searches over the years. Yesterday (May 28, 2022), I was happy to witness on the FüredTV the celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> year of this wonderful publication, hear Bea's reminiscences about it and see her properly appreciated by the community of Balatonfüred.

Next, I want to point out that not only did my ancestor, Lajos Berzsenyi marry into the Thulmon family, but his two sisters, Anna and Teréz did the same. And hence, thanks to Teréz, I have many 5<sup>th</sup> cousins among her descendants. I will discuss them in **Part 2B** in the chapter entitled “The Branch of Mihály”, meaning the descendants of Mihály Berzsenyi, who was the grandfather of Dániel Berzsenyi.

In addition to the three children of Mihály Berzsenyi, his brother, Benedek also married into the Thulmon family and hence, when Daniel Berzsenyi moved to the Province of Somogy and started to manage the estate inherited from his mother, he was not the first Berzsenyi there, and in fact, not even in the village of Nikla (called Mikla at the time), since István Berzsenyi (1765-1841), the grandson of Benedek (and hence Dániel's 2<sup>nd</sup> cousin) also lived there. In fact, István's first wife, who happened to be Anna Barcza, the widow of József Bárány – and hence, my great-great-great-grandmother via their daughter, Mária Bárány – died just before Dániel and his family arrived at Mikla. (Note that in the descendants of István and Anna I also have some 5½ -th cousins, to be discussed later too.)

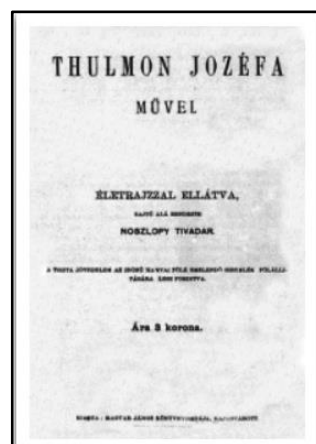
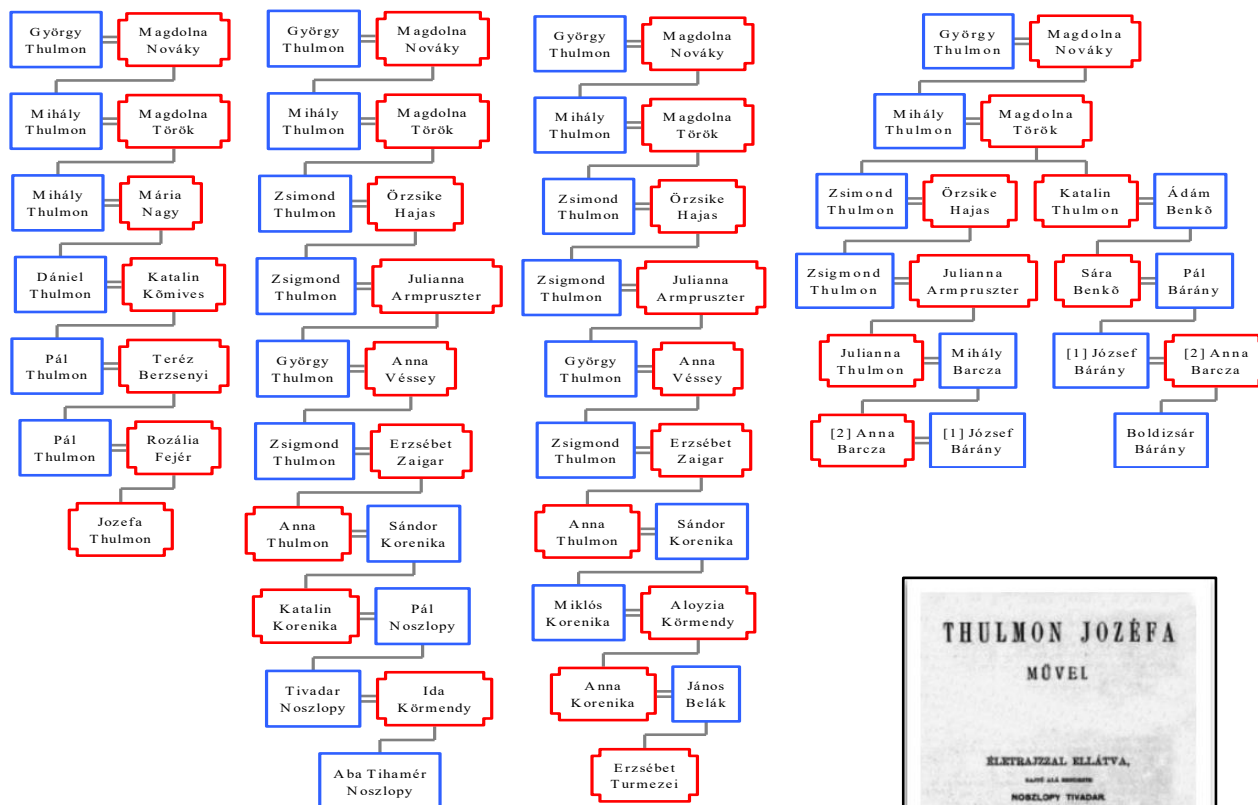
Returning to the Thulmon family, I must also say a few words about its wealth, which they acquired mostly by marrying into rich families, like the (telekesi, that was their forename) Török and the (táplánfalvi) Nagy families. In evidence thereof, in one of his letters to Kazinczy, Dániel Berzsenyi mentioned that the bathtub of Magdolna Török was made of silver. Their riches were shared by the Berzsenyi, Bárány, Noszlopy, Gömbös and many other families that married into the Thulmon family.

More importantly, many members of these families also inherited the Thulmons’ literary vein, as well as their tendency for melancholy, which culminated in Dániel Berzsenyi, fulfilling the Cassandra-like prediction of his Thulmon ancestors:

*“There will be born in this family a great poet”.*

Indeed, he is still recognized as the greatest poet of odes in Hungarian literature, while his elegies are just as superb and more recently, even his essays gained renewed appreciation in literary circles. I have written and will write about him extensively, but for the present passage, I will pay attention to some other literary figures of Thulmon ancestry.

The first among them is Jozefa Thulmon, whose Thulmon-descendance is shown in the first tree below. Next to hers, I display the Thulmon-descendance of Tivadar Noszlopy and his son, Aba Tihamér, Erzsébet Túrmezei and Boldizsár Bárány, promising to write a few words about each of them.



Starting with Jozefa Thulmon, I must emphasize that while the Thulmon family was of foreign background, she was one of the most patriotic young women of Hungary. Her writings appeared in a variety of publications, encouraging patriotism during and after the 1848-49 War for Independence. She was such a consummate writer that when she broke her right hand, she learned to write with her left hand in order to express her thoughts. Her works were published in 1895 by Tivadar Noszlopy, a distant cousin and great admirer of hers, who was a writer himself. I show the resulting book on the right.

One can access it on the internet here: <https://digitalia.lib.pte.hu/hu/pub/noszlopy-tivadar-thulmon-jozefa-muvei-magyar-janos-ny-kaposvar-1895-4409>

Other important publications of Tivadar Noszlopy were

*Emlékeim Somogyból* (My memories from Somogy) – a collection of essays about interesting people and families in his native Somogy,

*Elmúlt időkből* (Of times long past), another collection of stories, including a piece about the Thulmon family with a family tree thereof,

*Mezei virágok* (The flowers of the fields) and *Vadrózsák* (Wild roses) – two collections of poems, some of which were put to music, and most importantly,

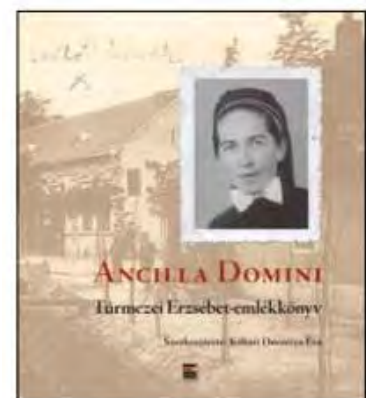
*Berzsenyi Dániel és családja* (Dániel Berzsenyi and his family) – written on the basis of carefully conducted interviews with family members, including László Berzsenyi, the youngest son of the poet, who was most attentive to his father's poetry and reputation. I heavily relied on that book.

Concerning his son, Aba Tivadar Noszlopy, I must add that I thoroughly enjoy perusing two of his collections of reminiscences<sup>1</sup> recently (October 2019) given to me by a favorite Berzsenyi-cousin, György Dormán. He followed in his father's footsteps in writing a lot about happenings in the Province of Somogy and its capitol, Kaposvár, where he lived most of his life. In addition to writing, he was a collector of songs.



At this point, I must mention that Antal Noszlopy, the grandfather of Tivadar, also had some literary leanings, as well as Constantin, Ignác, Kálmán and Zsigmond Noszlopy, each of whom were from the same family, made at least minor contributions to literature. Thus, it is possible that there was a separate literary gene in the Noszlopys too.

Third in my list of Thulmon-descendants is Erzsébet Túrmezei (1912-2000). I show a picture of the book about her on the right. Unfortunately, I didn't learn about her until years after her death; would have loved to correspond with her. With her letters, she sent various poems of hers to my mother, including one entitled "Niklai lány" (The girl from Nikla), which was very sweet.



Bea knew of her since childhood and later personally as well and via correspondence and wrote to me about Erzsébet upon my request. Seemingly, she was a highly regarded leader and a devoted deaconess of the Lutheran Church of Hungary and a well-recognized poetess as well.

Next, I want to say at least a few words about Boldizsár Bárány (1793-1860), the younger brother of my great-great-grandmother, Mária Bárány, who was brought up by his grandparents after

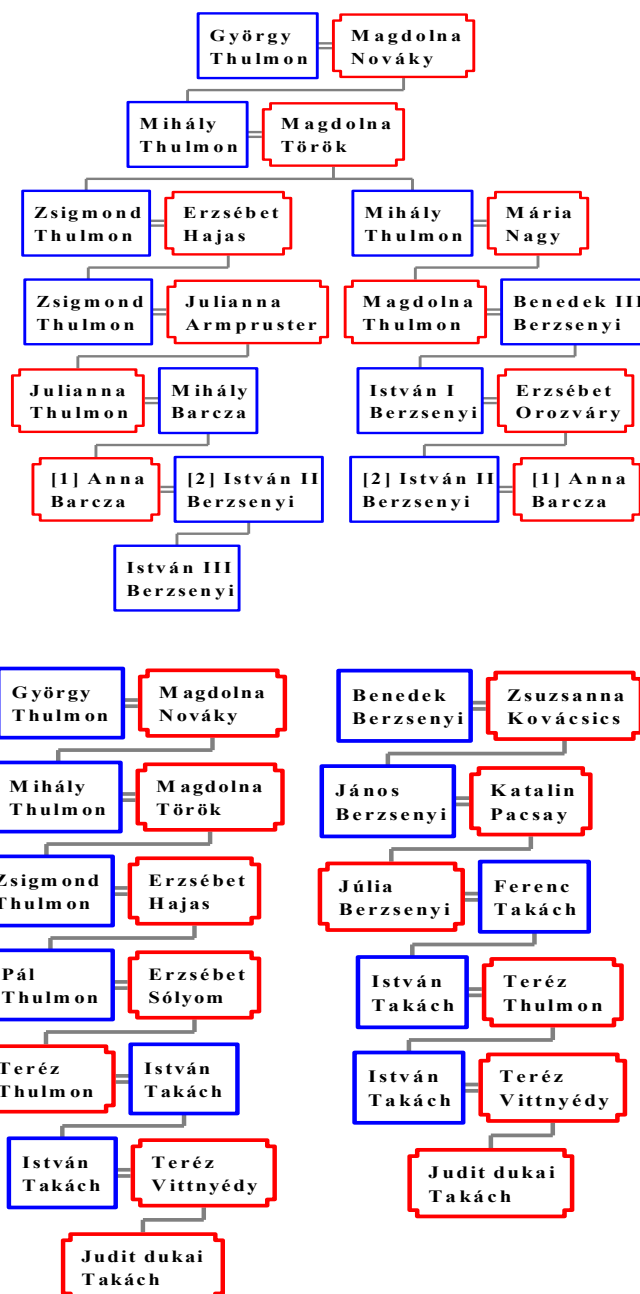
<sup>1</sup> *Somogyország* and *Régi Somogy – Régi Kaposvár*, published by the author in Kaposvár, 1943 (in English, *The country of Somogy* and *Long ago Somogy – Long ago Kaposvár*)

the death of his father. He was a lawyer, who spent most of his life in Gomba (just outside of Marcali), managing his estates, writing poetry and dramas, translating plays and staging several of his own in theatres in Buda, Pest, Kassa, Székesfehérvár and elsewhere. In his youth he traveled worldwide, was a friend of the famous Hungarian playwright, József Katona and he is best known for his critical edition of Katona's *Bánk Bán*. Later Erkel's opera based on the play became Hungary's national opera. Unfortunately, neither of the marriages of Boldizsár were successful and he suffered from not being able to tolerate sunlight.

Next, I must mention István Berzsényi, a neighbor of Dániel in Nikla, who also wrote poetry. He was also a superb violinist and hence, he also composed music to some of his poems. In fact, his love of music was so huge that he had his own Gypsy band of musicians living on his estate, which he managed so poorly that his wife had to appeal to the courts to put an end to his limitless spendings. Thereafter he moved to Kaposvár, where his debts finally led to his bankruptcy.

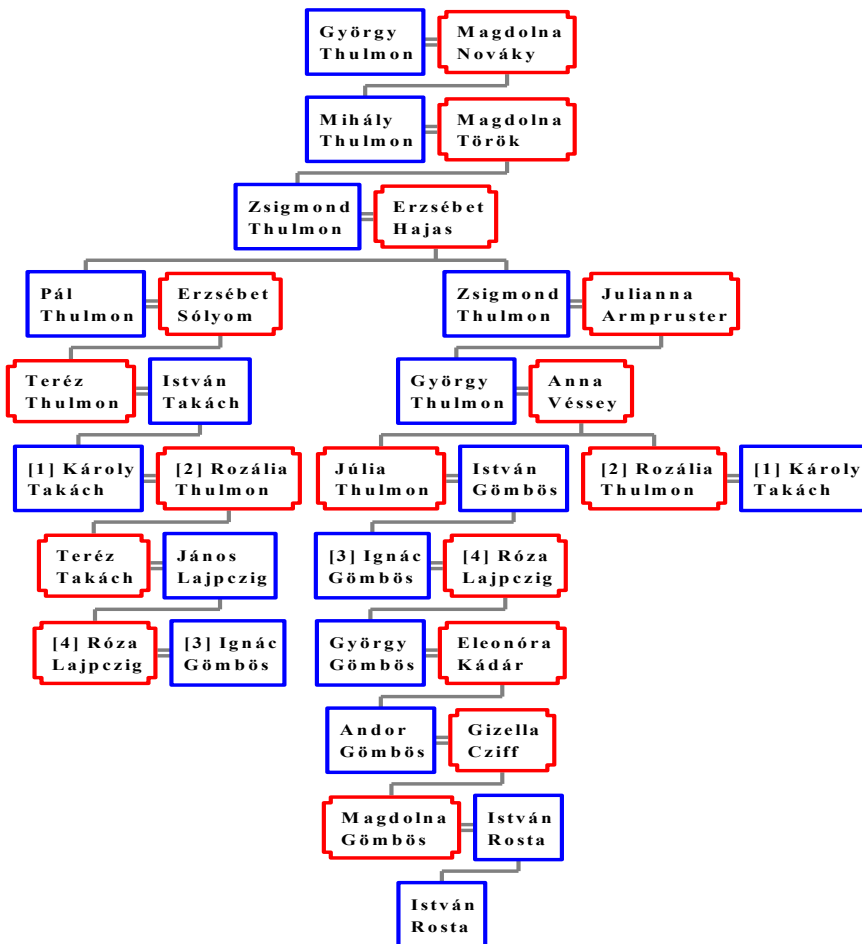
After his death, his first-born son, Pongrác, a lawyer in Marcali, tried to collect his poems, of which he found 26. Unfortunately, they were never published, though many of them are quite good. I have a copy of them too. In writing them, he was definitely influenced by his distant relative, Dániel Berzsényi, as well as by his half-brother, Boldizsár Bárány, who was born from Anna Barcza's first marriage. To further complicate family relations, it should be noted that István's wife was the widow of his uncle József.

Next, I must mention Judit dukai Takách, whose Thulmon descendance is paralleled on the right with her Berzsényi descendance. On account of the latter, I wrote a separate piece about her in **Part 2B** of these **Tales**, which is devoted to passages about some of the nearly 10,000 descendants of Benedek I Berzsényi known to us to date. There I also write more extensively about Dániel Berzsényi and his poetry.





While I am sure that there were several more outstanding Thulmon-descendants whom I should recognize for their literary contributions (including the children of Dániel Berzsenyi, who destroyed their writings so as to avoid comparisons to their famous father),



I will limit myself to just one more writer, István Rosta of Kaposvár, whose

picture and 3-fold descentance is shown above. István, who is 8 years my junior, is a professor emeritus at the local university and a candidate at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in history. A total of 12 books of his appeared to date, including a monumental 550-page history of technology in Hungary. He was kind enough to send me some of his books, which I truly appreciate.

Concerning the literary gene in the Thulmon family, one of my heroes, the late Dr. Endre (Bandi) Czeizel, the world-renown geneticist also recognized it in his analysis of the nature of Dániel Berzsenyi's genius. He included Berzsenyi both in his earlier book<sup>2</sup> on the 21 greatest poet geniuses of Hungary, as well as in his latter one<sup>3</sup>, where he limited himself to the top 16 of them. He based his choices on the opinion of carefully selected experts and made a thorough study of the genealogy as well as the life history and the personal traits of each of the selected poets in the hope of determining the possible causes for their emergence. In the case of Dániel Berzsenyi, partially on account of the other known literary figures in the family, he felt that the Thulmon inheritance was to be blamed not only for the 'poetic vein', but also for the melancholic tendency among many of the descendants.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Czeizel Endre, *Aki költő akar lenni, pokolra kell annak menni?* (English translation: "Does one have to go through hell first before becoming a poet?"), Táncos Grafika, Budapest, 2001

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Czeizel Endre, *A Magyar költő-géniuszok sorsa*, (English translation: "The fate of the Hungarian poet-geniuses"), Galenis Kiadó, 2012

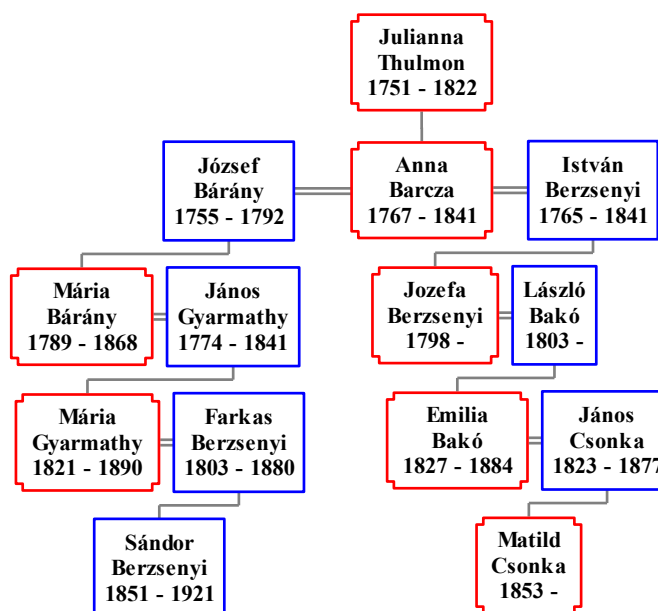
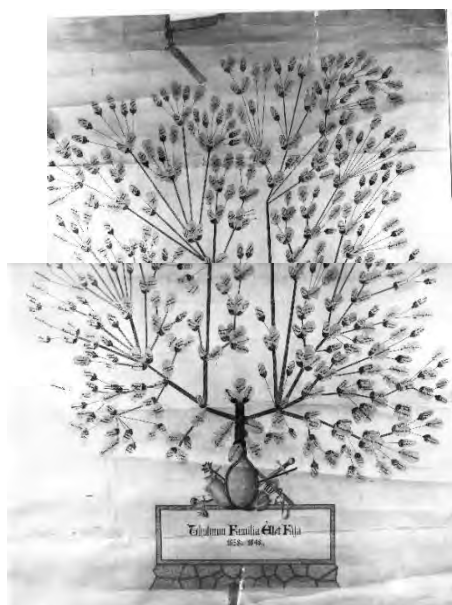
I show a picture of Bandi on the right with appreciation of his friendship and kind words about my help in his second book about the poets. Over the years I bought close to a dozen books of his and learned a lot from all of them.



**Postscript**

Interestingly, my brother inherited a Thulmon family tree from our distant cousin, Tibor Berzsényi, and had several photographs made of it. He gave me one of them, which I enlarged so as to be able to decipher the names. Later I created a family tree from it in the Family Tree Maker environment and then I shared that with Imre Gyimesi and Bea Baán. But it was only much later that I finally learned about its history.

It turned out that the tree was drawn by Ferenc (Feri) Gyarmathy, a Gyarmathy relative at the request of Matild Csonka, a Berzsényi relative of ours. Ferenc was seemingly on vacation from school and probably needed the money. It may be that the three was drawn by Matild néni and Feri bácsi only wrote in the names; I didn't ask him that. And clearly, I should have asked him more about Matild néni. All I know about her is that she was an artist, whose pictures of Kosuth and Széchenyi decorated the library in Nikla that was established by my grandfather, Sándor Berzsényi and his cousin and law-partner, Vince Lájpczig, the father of Jolán néni and Pisti bácsi. In her reminiscences my mother wrote about her that 'Matild Csonka lived with her brother in the house that used to be Antal Berzsényi's; she was very cultured and smart, who looked upon us as her relatives'. Her picture on the right was probably taken in front of that house. Below I also show the family tree that originated with Matild néni and Feri bácsi, as well my grandfather's relationship to Matild néni. I hope that one of these days at least one of her paintings surfaces.

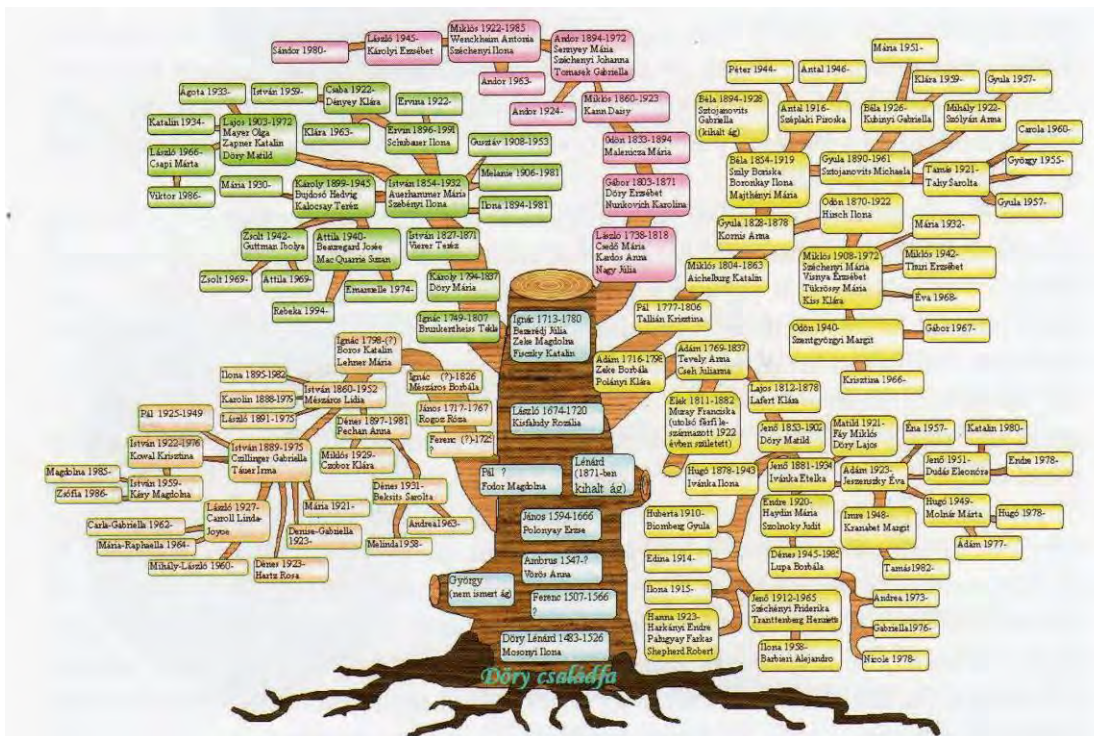


### My jobaházi Döry ancestors

The family tree below gives the Döry ancestors of my great-great-grandfather János Svastits, the composer, whose mother, and hence my great-great-grandmother (in Hungarian, szépanya) was Jozefa Döry. The first known member of the Döry family was Sebestyén (Sebastian), whose two sons, Mihály and Benedek were raised to the nobility by Louis I in 1360. Mihály's branch was from Csáford, and hence his descendants took the forename „csáfordi”; that branch of the family died out centuries ago. Benedek was from Jobaháza, and hence our forename „jobaházi”.



Above, I displayed the Döry ancestry of János Svastits next to the book written about the family and the book that prompted not only the book about the Döry family, but an entire series of similar books. Below, I show a traditional family tree, which was probably framed and hung in a prominent location in several Döry mansions.



Further branchings led to some Baron and Count Dörys, but our branch retained only its simple nobility. Nevertheless, they were well off, and I suspect that was how János Svastits ükapám (that is, my great-great-grandfather John Svastits) had some land and other riches to squander away. But that is another story.

The jobaházi Döry family gained a bit of notoriety in the year 1900, when the popular novelist Kálmán Mikszáth published his novel entitled *Különös Házasság* about the strange marriage and even stranger divorce proceedings of Baroness Mária Döry to Count János Buttler. (It's English translation, which appeared in 1964, was indeed entitled *A Strange Marriage*.) The novel was widely read throughout the country, and Mikszáth vouched for the validity of his story time and again. Nevertheless, he also made a disclaimer, giving his Döry family the forename „halápi”, and stating that they are not connected at all to the Dörys of Jobaháza, “a noble and even older family which is still flourishing”. In reality, there were no Dörys of Haláp, but in the jobaházi Döry family, there was a Katalin (rather than Mária) Döry, who married a János Buttler, and there were some complications about the marriage while it lasted, but Mikszáth made the story a lot more intriguing. With his sharp Lutheran tongue he poked fun of the way the Catholic Church handled matters, as well as of the provincial ways of the nobility, and while it would be an exaggeration to say that the Döry and Buttler families became a laughing stock, they certainly became memorable. So much so that one of them, Ferenc Döry, who happened to be the director of one of the archives of Hungary, thoroughly researched the marriage and the divorce, and prepared a serious monograph about it.

Unfortunately, while his monograph revealed the true story, it could not compete with the best-seller of Mikszáth. (By the way, since the story's Mária/Katalin was only a 6<sup>th</sup> cousin-once-removed to our Jozefa, it doesn't really hit too close to home.)

Long ago, while still in Hungary, I read Mikszáth's book and might have even seen the movie made from it sometime after World War II. It was brought back to mind by my reading of Attila Bánó's book, *Régi magyar családok – mai sorsok* (Old Hungarian families – their present situation) published in Budapest in 2004, which discusses 50 aristocratic families, with the Buttlers and Dörys among them. Bánó's book prompted the publication of several books in the series, including the book featured above about the Döry family.

Mikszáth first heard the story from a politician named Dezső Bernáth, and hence in the novel, Mikszáth featured Zsigmond Bernáth as the best friend and fellow student of János Buttler. Seeing the name Bernáth again, I decided to call on my friend, Elemér Bernáth, a retired science teacher in Ft. Morgan, Colorado. Thus, I learned from him that – himself included -- they are all from the same old noble family. In fact, he led me to a website featuring the history of the Bernáth family, which I found most enjoyable too.

As the name suggests, the Buttler family originated in Ireland. Some of its members became famous knights who ventured first into Germany and then into Poland as well. From there one of them settled in Hungary, where he was first given citizenship in 1687, and then the command of the famous Fort of Eger in 1689. Centuries later, the Butler family played an important role in the creation of the Ludovika shown below, along with a statue of János Butler on its grounds.



The establishment of a Hungarian Military Academy was mandated by a law that was passed by Parliament in 1808, but it was not until 1831 that its cornerstone was placed at its future location in Budapest by Palatine József Habsburg. It was named after Hungary's Queen Ludovika, the third wife of Frederick I of the House of Habsburg, who donated 50 thousand Forints for the project. In comparison, the City of Pest came up with 30 thousand, Buda with 8 thousand, the Bishop of Zagreb with 12 thousand, while Count János Butler with **126 thousand Forints**. It was completed by 1836, but it was not until after the Compromise of 1867 that it opened its doors. Many of Hungary's most distinguished military officers were among the graduates of 'The Ludovika'. Since you all have lots of Irish blood in your veins, this strange Irish 'connection' may be of interest to you.

## My Barcza ancestors and relatives

The nagyalásnyi Barcza family's nobility was officially granted in 1647, when György Barcza was given title to the holdings of his relative, István, whose property was seized on account of his disloyalty to the crown. Since the Austrians were ruling Hungary at that time, István was probably a rebellious Hungarian, whose attitude was not appreciated by the Habsburgs of Austria. György later became commander of the Fort of Devecser.

The Barczas married into the Berzsényi family a number of times, including the marriage in 1825 of Károly Barcza to Lidia Berzsényi, the daughter of Dániel Berzsényi. Károly was the son of Sámuel Barcza and Julia Káldy of Mesterháza, whom Dániel Berzsényi often visited even after the death of Sámuel Barcza in 1808. Seemingly, the widow was very fond of him and his poetry. According to Hetyéssy, whose genealogical research I value a lot, one of my great-great-grandfather's poems (*A csermelyhez*; in English, "To the creek") was capturing Julia's grief upon the death of Sámuel.

Another marriage of the Barczas into our extended family was that of István Barcza, who married Zsuzsanna Gömbös, a first cousin of Dániel Berzsényi on his mother's side. They lived in Pusztakovácsi, near Nikla, and visited one another frequently. Dániel and István greatly enjoyed each other's company. Interestingly, István's sister, Borbála (Bora) married Pál Káldy, who was the only witness at the wedding of Dániel Berzsényi and Zsuzsanna dukai Takách. Pál Káldy and his wife were also among the godparents of their first two children, Lidia and Farkas.

Yet another Barcza of nearby Somogyfajsz was Szilveszter Barcza, who married into my maternal grandmother's Juhász family by marrying her aunt, Szidónia Juhász. Szilveszter was the son of Antal Barcza (1808-1857) and Julianna Boros (1818-1905), who was a maid in the Barcza household. Though I don't think that Antal ever married her, he accepted Szilveszter as his son; i.e., his birth was legitimized. I met several of his descendants, including his grandson, Sándor, who still remembered my mother as a young girl visiting in Pusztakovácsi and playing the piano. Sándor was close to his 98<sup>th</sup> birthday when he died in 2007. Unfortunately, none of the descendants of Szilveszter Barcza and Szidónia Juhász attended our 2017 Juhász family reunion.

Returning to the Berzsényis, the Barcza who introduced the most Barczas into our family was Márton Barcza, who married Katalin Berzsényi, a descendant of Benedek Berzsényi via

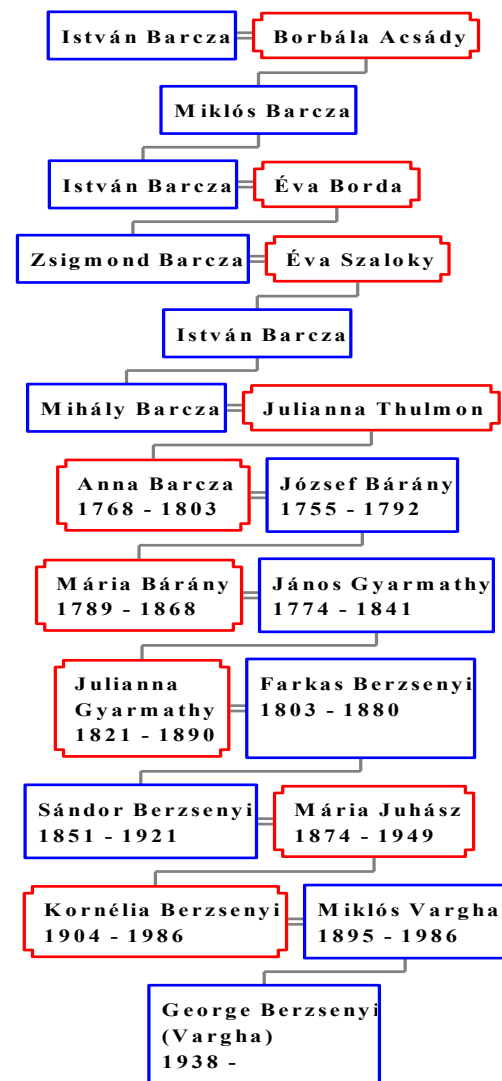
Benedek → Gábor → Zsigmond → Pál → Katalin.

Of the 68 descendants of Benedek Berzsényi, whose last name is Barcza, 53 descended from Márton and Katalin.

Finally, I must remind you of my great-great-great-grandmother, Anna Barcza, who was a great beauty. Both István Berzsényi (b. 1765) and József Bárány (b. 1755) wanted to marry her and did so, but in reverse order. After giving birth to my great-great-grandmother, Mária and her brother, Boldizsár, two of István Berzsényi's shepherds murdered József Bárány in 1792. Shortly afterwards, Anna Barcza married István Berzsényi and bore him 6 children, making the great-great-grandchildren thereof 5½ - th cousins of mine. Thus, for example, Viktor Liszka, the retired surgeon whom I visited in Jacksonville was one such cousin of mine. Many others will be introduced in Part 2B of these volumes, as members of the "Branch of Benedek, Part 2/2".

In closing, I must mention that much of my information concerning the Barcza family is due to a young friend of Imre Gyimesi, Balázs Aczél, and to Imre Maár, whom I remember from my visits in Pusztakovácsi to my grandmother's brother, Béla bácsi.

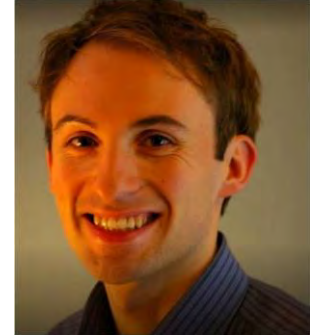
After corresponding with Imre, I visited him in Budapest, where he showed me a number of old family photos. However, with my scanner not operational, I couldn't scan any of them. In the picture on the right, he is shown with his wife, Anna (Panna) Füzesi, with whom I exchanged a couple of letters after Imre's death. The descendant trees below show that Imre was a 10<sup>th</sup> cousin of mine.



In Imre's tree above, please also note that Károly Barcza and Jozefa Mentler also had a son named Antal; he was the father of Szilveszter Barcza introduced earlier. Hence, the great-great-

grandchildren of Antal, who are my third cousins via the Juhász family, are also the 3<sup>rd</sup> cousins of Imre Maár.

It turns out that Ádám Barcza and Klára Bezerédj in Imre's tree on the left also had a son named László in addition to Zsigmond. Balázs Aczél, my other correspondent about the Barcza family turns out to be a descendant of László Barcza, and hence a 6<sup>th</sup> cousin of Imre and a 10<sup>th</sup> cousin of mine. I don't have specific details about Balázs's ancestors, but learned that in addition to his Barcza ancestry, he is related to my 2<sup>nd</sup> cousin, Frederick (Frici) Grafi via the Dervarics family, i.e., Balázs is a 4<sup>th</sup> cousin of Frici's children. He also researches the Armpruszter family, and hence, I suspect that we are related via the Thulmon family too. Unfortunately, neither of us has enough time to explore everything! Balázs, who was born in 1979 and whose picture I show on the right is teaching in the Department of Psychology at ELTE, Hungary's famous university. His PhD is from Cambridge. He is the father of two little girls, who will probably be teenagers by the time this book is published.



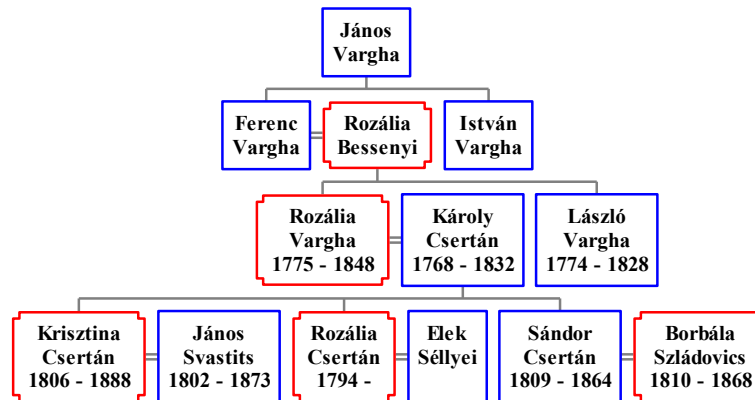
It turns out that in his 'spare time', Balázs also organized Barcza reunions near Budapest, in the old Barcza mansion of Pusztazámor, shown above. He had over 60 adults and 8 children both in 2014 and 2015.

Concerning the Barcza family, I was also in touch with Bulcsú Barcza and Zoltán Nagy, a Lutheran pastor, who responded very kindly to my inquiry. Earlier my mother contacted the Catholic priest, dr. László Burucs of Halimba to inquire about the Barcza crypt there, assuming that her great-aunt, Lidia Berzsenyi was buried there. In his response, Father Burucs informed her that only some of the older people remember the crypt, which was abandoned, and only a small, forested area bears the Barcza name as 'Barcza erdő'. My mother also told him about the book of memories from Lidia's girlhood that was given to her for safe-keeping by a young officer bearing the name Barcza prior to his departure to the front during World War II. Unfortunately, that too disappeared during the war.



## My Bessenyei, 'sintafalvi' Vargha and Csány ancestry

Please recall that one of my great-great-great-grandmothers (in Hungarian, szépanyám) was Rozália Vargha, whom I introduced earlier as the mother of Krisztina, Rozália and Sándor Csertán along with four other children, whom I did not include in the chart below. As I pointed out in the description of my Csertán roots, the Vargha family of Rozália originated from Sintafalva (now Sempte in Slovakia). Hence, my 'assignment' of 'sintafalvi' as if it was a forename, to distinguish the Vargha family of Sintafalva from the Vargha family of Szentlászló & Balatonfüred.



This time I want to call attention to László Vargha, the brother of my great-great-great-grandmother Rozália Vargha, who proved his nobility in Nemesapáti, as shown below in the 1829 nobility registration in the Province of Zala before the old Csertán house burned down – most likely with his nobility papers in it.

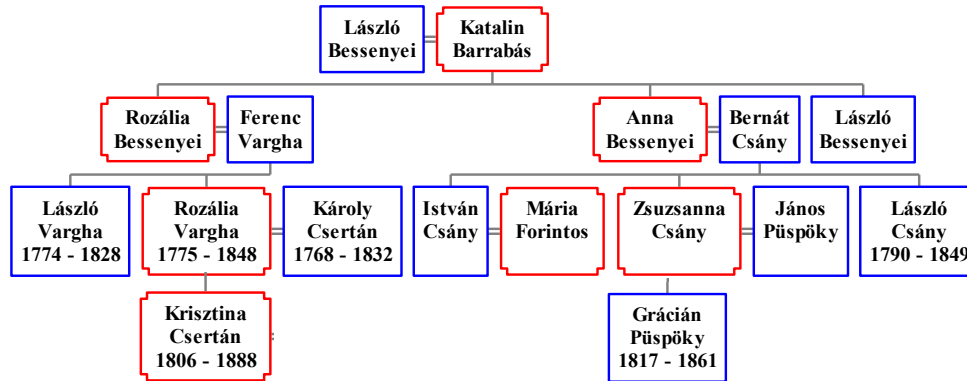


As per the inscription, he was a judge of the Court of Appeals, and the son of Ferenc, who was the son of János. From Piroska Schandl's *Szentpéterúr II, 2001* (pp. 38-39) I learned that his gravestone, shown on the right is the oldest one in the old Szentpéterúr cemetery. Piroska's book tells us that László Vargha also served as a delegate to the Hungarian Congress in 1811-12 and that during the Napoleonic War he was reporting on the movements of the French troops.



I also want to point out that Ferenc was the younger brother of István Vargha, manager of the estates of the Dominican Monastery in Kapornok, in the Province of Zala, and that he married Rozália Bessenyei only after his brother's death. This information is based on the letter by Magdolna Sümeghy to Emilia Séllyei quoted earlier.

Next, I show the descendants of László Bessenyei and Katalin Barrabás, limiting myself to only two of their great-grandchildren, my great-great-grandmother and her second cousin, Grácián Püspöky, the nephew of László Csány.



Grácián distinguished himself by raising the Hungarian flag atop the fort when the Hungarian revolutionary forces recaptured Buda from the Austrians during the 1848-49 War for Independence. He was a volunteer until then, but his bravery earned him a promotion to the rank of Lieutenant. I have also reproduced a painting of the battle along with a sketch of Grácián on the right.



Above on the left, I show a picture of László Csány, who was not only a first cousin of Rozália Vargha (on account of their mothers being siblings), but her ‘milk-sibling’ too, a literal translation of the Hungarian ‘tej-testvér’, meaning that Rozália was also suckled by the mother of László, since her own mother died of childbirth. Below on the right, I show here the statue of László Csány in Zalaegerszeg; I was happy to see it when I was there in 2005. László Csány was a [5,1]-cousin of mine, while Grácián Püspöky was a [5,2]-cousin.

And finally, I have to say at least a few words about Rozália Bessenyei, whose beauty mesmerized even Emperor Joseph II (ruling from 1780-1790) of the House of Habsburgs. Thus it may be most fitting for me to refer to her as my ‘legszebb anya’, meaning ‘most beautiful mother’, stemming from the notion that the Hungarian translation of ‘grand’ is ‘nagy’, of ‘great-grand’ is ‘déd’, of ‘great-great-grand’ is ‘ük’, and ‘great-great-great-grand’ is ‘szép’, meaning ‘nice’. Thus, it may be fitting to go a couple of steps further and use the terms ‘nicer’ and ‘nicest’ in the next generations, i.e., ‘szebb’ and ‘legszebb’, in Hungarian. My reasonable proposal is yet to be accepted universally. Nevertheless, I will use those terms whenever I get tired of typing too many ‘greats’.



## The Szelestey connection

Wanting to know more about Ilona Szelestey, who married into the Berzsényi family, I contacted Attila Szelestey-Polgár, whom I knew via messages for more than 10 years. Attila is a devoted historian and promoter of the Hungarian historical heritage. He is also an excellent painter, and his collection of large hand-painted coats of arms of the various related noble families is close to 100. He exhibits whenever he can. He is also an outstanding researcher of his own alsószelestei Szelestey family and an excellent organizer of family reunions for it. Moreover, Attila is a good writer of historical fiction – often limiting himself to his own ancestry, telling its stories in an entertaining style.



I learned from Attila, introduced via a picture on the right, that Ilona Szelestey is a descendant of the felsőszelestei Szelestey family, which is not related to his – at least in his opinion. They are both named after the village of Szeleste in the Province of Vas, but while one of them is from the ‘upper’ (felső) part, the other from the ‘lower’ (alsó) part, which were separate villages at one time.

At this point, I must digress into some Hungarian history, recalling that by the old tradition of succession, upon the death of the leader the new leader was to be the oldest surviving member of the House of Árpád. And thus, when Géza died in 977, he should have been succeeded by Koppány, who was in charge of the entire region below the Lake Balaton stretching all the way to the River Dráva. However, Géza decided to adopt the Western style of succession, naming his son Vajk (to be renamed István upon his baptism) as his successor. Therefore, Koppány revolted, attempting to take by force what he considered his birthright. Unfortunately for him, by that time István married into the Bavarian imperial Ottovian dynasty, and thereby secured the support of some Bavarian knights from his wife’s homeland, and Knight Veselin of Wasserburg, who became István’s military commander crushed Koppány’s army and killed Koppány. The conflict between the two leaders, István and Koppány shown below is beautifully captured by the rock opera *István, a Király*, which is one of my favorites.

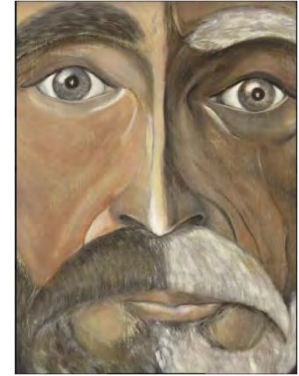


Attila views the conflict between István and Koppány as if it was the origin of the continuing and lasting opposition between factions of Hungarians, and he is establishing a park in his hometown of Veszprém, as “The Island of Peace”, to urge all Hungarians to unite for the benefit of their nation.



His painting, shown below on the right merges the faces of the two antagonists – the younger István on the left and the older Koppány on the right, thereby implying that just like the two of them, the rivalling factions of his people should unite for the good of the nation. Attila is a great believer in national unity and rightly worries about the future of Hungary. I am in total agreement with him.

Interestingly, the alsószelestei and the felsőszelestei Szelestey families were also on opposite sides with respect to the conflict between István and Koppány, since the alsószelestei Szelestey family considers the Knight Veselin as its ancestor, while the felsőszelestei Szelestey family looks upon Bulcsú, as its forefather. Bulcsú was one of the greatest Hungarian military leaders, who died in 955, but his descendants were sympathetic to the cause of Koppány. As a consequence, it was not until several centuries later that the felsőszelestei Szelestey family regained its nationwide importance. By then, they used the names Gosztonyi and Guary after the villages Guar (now Górá) and Gosztony (which disappeared from the maps over the centuries), that were also owned by them, and treated the designation of felsőszelestei as a forename only.



A streamlined version of the alsószelestei Szelestey family tree is shown on the next page on the left, paralleling my own descent from Kálmán Berzsenyi, the first known member of our branch of the Berzsenyis and a skeleton of the felsőszelestei Szelestey tree is shown on the right. Seemingly, the connection to the alsószelestei Szelestey family is via Eufrozina, a daughter of György Berzsenyi, whose earlier nobility was reinstated by the King of Hungary, Ferdinánd I. of the House of Habsburg in 1559. To the right of the tree showing my Berzsenyi descent, I also show our double connection to the felsőszelestei Szelestey family, on which I will enlarge momentarily. At this point, I mainly wish to emphasize that if indeed Eufrozina Berzsenyi is the daughter of György Berzsenyi, then we found in Attila Szelestey-Polgár and his extended family the furthest contemporary Berzsenyi relatives to date. More precisely, since all of the other known Berzsenyi relatives of ours are descendants of Benedek Berzsenyi (1643-1742), in Attila's family we will find 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, not just 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Berzsenyi cousins. While I accept the above-described connections of the Berzsenyi family to the two Szelestey families only tentatively, I am very pleased to have Attila Szelestey-Polgár as a possible cousin, and I hope that we will invite him to our next Berzsenyi reunion and ask him to tell us about his programs and involvements, which are many. All of them are highly commendable.

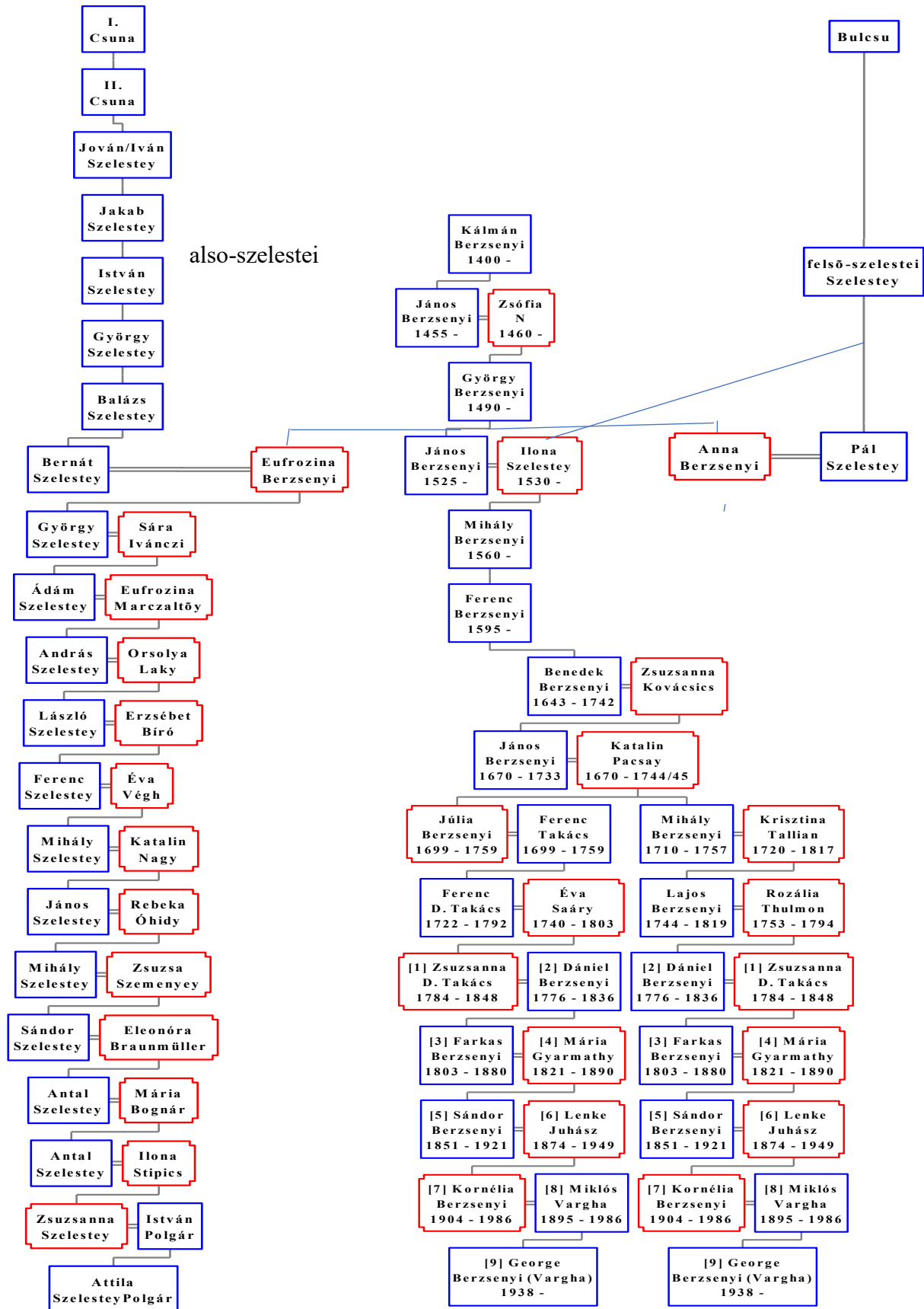
Concerning Csuna I., the first known ancestor of the alsószelestei Szelestey family, there is a document from 1221, according to which his family was given four villages for its support of Hungary's King Béla IV in his Crusade to the Holy Land. His grandson, Jovan/Iván was the first to call himself Szelestey – hence, the use of the name by all of his descendants. According to Attila, all of the presently known Szelestey families belong to the alsószelestei Szelestey family.

As an aside here I must mention that interestingly, it was Gábor Döbrentei (1785-1851), a 3<sup>rd</sup> cousin of Dániel Berzsenyi (1776-1836), who found the last will of Eufrozina Berzsenyi from 1570, where her last name is written as '**Dersenyi**', which is a bit bothersome, to put it mildly. The missing 'z' is acceptable; that's how Dániel Berzsenyi spelled his name also. But writing a 'D' in place of a 'B' will call for further scrutiny. As we will see, similar misspellings of 'Berzsenyi' appear in some felsőszelestei Szelestey documents too, which are similarly bothersome. Hence, my reference to the 'Szelestey connection' as 'tentative'.

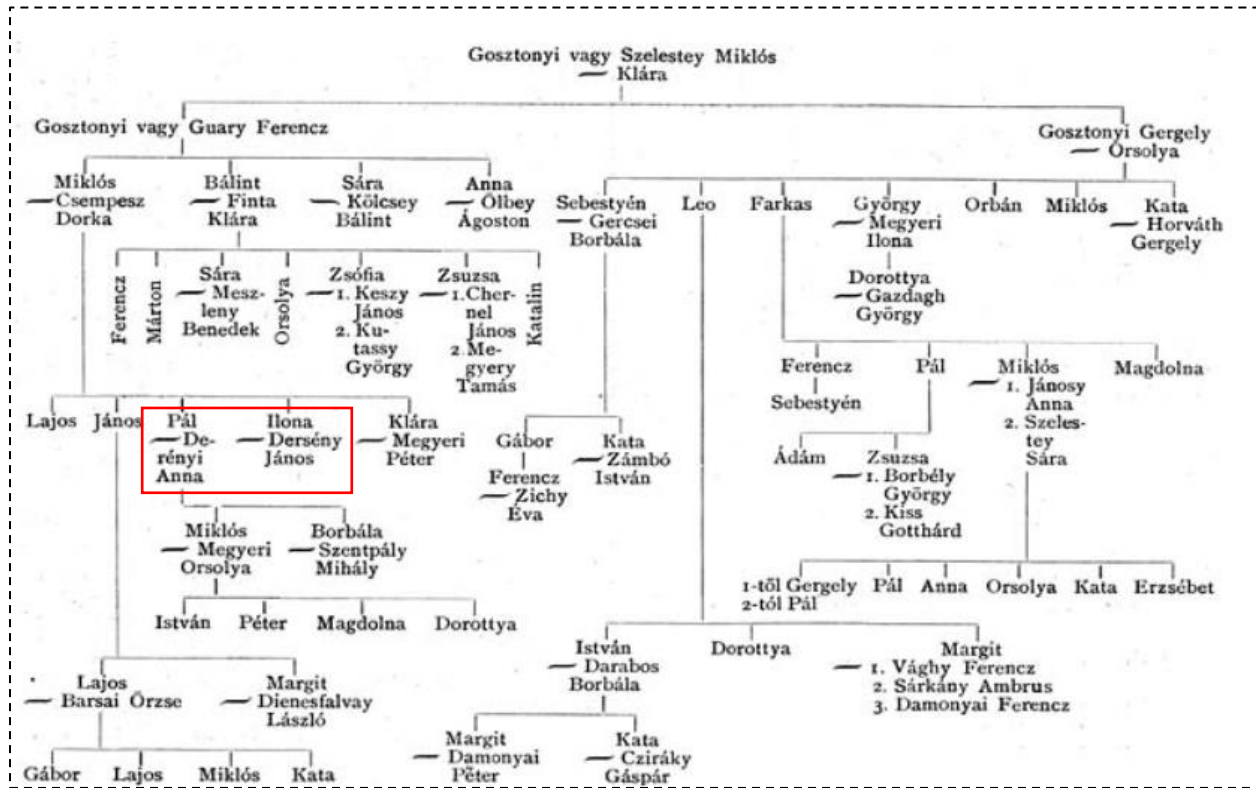
By the way, based on the year 1570, when Eufrozina's last will was written, it is also possible that she was a sister, rather than a daughter of György Berzsenyi. On his website, there is a well-written account of that last will by Attila Szelestey-Polgár.

# Other ancestry

# Szelestej



Next, according to my promise, I display below a more detailed version of the family tree of the felsőszelestei Szelestey family, copied from a writing about the Guary family<sup>1</sup>, the name adopted (along with the name ‘Gosztonyi’) by various members of the felsőszelestei Szelestey family. In it, I marked with a red rectangle the two different misspellings of ‘Berzsenyi’ – as ‘Derényi’ and as ‘Dersény’. Unfortunately, such variations in the spelling of names were fairly common 450 years ago, when the last name of lots of families was still in the process of formation.



Returning to the various activities of Attila Szelestey-Polgár, I must call attention to his painting of family crests. Below I show a few of them, an enlargement of the 5<sup>th</sup>, the Berzsenyi coat of arms and a picture from one of his exhibits.



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.arcanum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/Turul-turul-1883-1950-1/1912-13171/1912-2-13319/vegyes-13455/a-guaryak-csaladi-viszonyai-a-xvi-szazadban-13456/>



Attila created many portraits of historical figures as well, including János Hunyadi, Miklós Zrínyi, Ferenc Rákóczi, Lajos Batthány, István Széchenyi and others.

He was also heavily involved in the celebration of the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the funding of the Szent György church in Ják, whose elaborate entry (shown on the right) was reproduced in 1896 for the Millennium celebrations in Budapest. It is a national treasure, and of particular interest to the alsószelestei Szelestey family, which descends from the 'Ják' branch of the Hungarian nobility.



That activity of his was followed by the celebration of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the Szelestey Arboretum this year, during which he was heavily involved in planting various trees in the nearby villages.

Attila is also an avid bicyclist and a runner with over 50 marathons behind him. Moreover, along with his brother, he created and maintains the first Fun Park in Hungary, the

**Serpa Kalandpark KFT,**

with lots of activities for all ages as one can see from the pictures shown here. For more information, see

<https://www.facebook.com/SerpaKalandpark>





Finally, and most importantly, I must credit him with the organization of the Szelestey family reunions. He started them in 2004 and had the 7<sup>th</sup> of them, shown below, in 2022.





## Finding Attila Tóth

To be honest, I knew nothing about him, and even his name wouldn't have clued me in as to why I needed to find him. However, finding him made a world of difference with respect to my research of my father's Vargha family, since Attila covered more than a third of the ground by the time I made his acquaintance. The missing thirds were covered by our cousin, János Bánfalvi Jr. and me, though a sliver of uncharted territory is still waiting for us.

Attila surfaced most unexpectedly when I finally got the telephone number of

### **Bea Baán,**

whom I tried to reach for several years by then. She is a Thulmon relative of mine who studied not just the Thulmon, but a bunch of related families and served until recently as the editor of the *Füredi História*. I learned about Bea from

### **István (Pista) Varga,**

who was a reporter for the *Somogyi Hírlap* and wrote an article about me there in 1987. We met in 1988 and exchanged occasional letters and later e-mail messages, especially after he joined the staff of the Berzsenyi Society<sup>1</sup>. In particular, I learned from Pista that Bea was interested in contacting me on account of our connection via the Thulmon family<sup>2</sup>. I also learned from Pista that Bea was from Balatonfüred, but at that time I was not even thinking about my Vargha roots originating from there. And even later, when I recognized my need for a connection to that city, others came to mind, and not Bea.

In fact, while I always knew that 'balatonfüredi' was one of the forenames of the Vargha family, it didn't occur to me that we might still have some relatives living there until

### **Klári Borók,**

the wife of my cousin Gyula (Gyuszi) Kovács gave me a copy of a letter that was written to Ili néni, Gyuszi's mother by someone named Jolán Kasza from Balatonfüred. It was obvious from the letter that Jolán was a relative, who knew my father too, as well as the other siblings of Ili néni. Jolán Kasza also sent a drawing of a family tree attributing it to a relative named Sándor Varga<sup>3</sup>. Seemingly, she was a bit uncertain about her place in the tree; as was the custom nearly everywhere, the tree was limited to the male descendants, and hence left a lot of information out.

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<sup>1</sup> Its complete name in Hungarian is Berzsenyi Dániel Irodalmi és Művészeti Társaság. Pista's article was prompted by one that I wrote for the Canadian-Hungarian *Krónika*, welcoming the rebirth of the Berzsenyi Society.

<sup>2</sup> The mother of Great-great-grandfather Dániel Berzsenyi, i.e. one of my great-great-great-grandmothers was Rozália Thulmon

<sup>3</sup> It later turned out that he was the father of Bálint Varga, one of my favorite Varg(h)a relatives, who is also into genealogy. For that matter, Bálint's collection of family photos is excellent.

**Jolán Kasza**

also included a comment concerning her father Pál, who died at the age of 91, and gave me a glimmer of hope of locating the Kasza family in Balatonfüred through him. Surely, there could not have been other Kaszas who lived to such a nice age. Since Pista's father-in-law, though in poor health, also lived in Balatonfüred, I wrote to him too, as well as to a well-known local historian, not knowing that he died earlier. Thus, when Pista finally managed to give me Bea's telephone number, I was ready to inquire about Pál Kasza, but as I introduced myself, telling her that my name was originally Vargha, she cut in to tell me that she happens to work on an article about a Varga family, and in part on a Varga family tree for the *Füredi Historia*, which she was editing. At that point it was my turn to cut in with the question 'Is there a Sámuel in that tree?'. When her answer was positive, and we verified a few more agreements between her tree and the one originating with my father, I asked her about the author of that article. That's how I learned about

**Attila Tóth,**

whom I called soon afterwards. When the article was published, he sent me a copy of it, and lots of Vargha-related materials during the coming years. All-in-all I sent him over 80 postal letters and he responded similarly. We also exchanged hundreds of e-mails over the years and collaborated in the organization of the first Vargha family reunion in 2005. At the outset the idea was mine and I wanted to have it in Nemesvita, where I was already in the process of organizing a Berzsényi reunion, but Attila convinced me to have it in Balatonfüred.

I first met Attila, as well as Bea, when we were in Hungary in 2003, and you, Daniel took us to Balatonfüred for a visit. We worked well together on and at the 2005 Vargha reunion, but I had to skip the 2010 Vargha reunion due to a terrible fall into a window-well the previous year. In 2015 we had our 3<sup>rd</sup> Vargha Reunion and they had the 4<sup>th</sup> one in 2022 – again, without me.

Attila was of great help to me not only by taking me to Komarno, Slovakia, but also in taking me to visit various friends and relatives. Consequently, we invited him for a visit here in 2014, and I continue to collaborate with him on a variety of issues. In particular, I asked Attila to purchase some books for me, to pick up the Vargha document I managed to purchase via an auction house, and to have the Vargha seal made for us using the led original bequeathed to me by my father. He also managed to have a plaque prepared for the tombstone of Vargha Lajos and Imre and takes care of the Vargha graves in the old Lutheran cemetery of Balatonfüred. He also saw to it that the old Vargha house that is presently used as a school of music, should have a plaque indicating that it was ours at one time. The 2015 and the 2022 Vargha family reunions were also organized by Attila, who continues to be a central figure in all of our Vargha affairs.



## Finding Edwige Zedtwitz

To be honest, I didn't even know of her at the time, and hence I didn't look for Edwige von Zedtwitz at all. Instead, I was looking for her father, remembering the story that he was in Cuba at a time, and I was curious whether he was still there, or did he manage to get out after Castro emerged as the leader of that country. I knew of him as the son of Alíz néni, who was the daughter of Gábor bácsi, my father's guardian.

More precisely, when my Vargha grandfather died and left my Fritsch grandmother with eight children, a distant cousin of his, Gábor Vargha emerged, and saw to it that my father and probably his older brother, Laci bácsi were accepted into military school, thereby lifting some of the burden from the shoulders of Gomika (as we called our Fritsch grandmother). As a consequence, my father remained loyal to Gábor bácsi, who was his witness at his wedding too, and hence it was natural for my mother to make friends with Gábor bácsi also. In fact, I have copies of two of the cards Gábor bácsi wrote to my mother and one card he wrote to my father after the war (i.e., World War II). And I even have some vague memories of visiting Gábor bácsi (and Vali néni) in Szentgotthárd with my father.

### Jóska Kiss and Laci Polesznyák

As it turns out, I had a Hungarian fiend, Jóska Kiss, who also hailed from Szentgotthárd, a small town near the Austrian border, and remembered Gábor bácsi fondly. Jóska was a few years older than me and has been my friend ever since our earliest times in St. Louis, and in fact, Jóska used to work for the same rural school as my father for a couple of years. It turns out that Jóska's parents are buried near the place where Gábor bácsi's grave is, and hence he noticed that the Vargha grave is kept up nicely too. Upon inquiries, I learned that the person doing so is someone named László Polesznyák, whom Jóska knew. After contacting Polesznyák, I learned from him that the cost of the upkeep was covered by Gábor bácsi's grandson, Franz Zedtwitz, for whom I was originally searching. Thus, I wrote to Franz upon learning his address from Polesznyák.

### Franz von Zedtwitz

Unfortunately, my letter was too late for Franz to see it; he died just a while before my mail was delivered to him. And then it took a bit longer before his daughter, Edwige reacted to it. Clearly, after losing her father there were more urgent matters to which she had to attend, but it is also true that she wanted to wait for the arrival of a friend, whose Hungarian was more up to the task of dealing with the letter. In due course I learned from her more about her father, as well as about her mother, her brother and family, her Vargha grandmother (Alíz néni), as well as about Alice von Zedtwitz, a goddaughter of Alíz néni, who was able to send me some photos and share with me more information concerning the Zedtwitz family.

**Alice von Zedtwitz**

She was a most wonderful correspondent, who not only sent me photos of her cousin Franz (i.e., we were cousins of cousins', a nice connection!) and Alíz néni, as well as her wedding (showing my father among the celebrants too), but told me about the Zedtwitz brothers, Max and Peter (?) too, who maintain an extensive Zedtwitz family tree on the internet. That tree was of interest also on account of another Zedtwitz marrying into the Vargha family<sup>1</sup>, as well as recently, when I wanted to get in touch with Edwige's estranged brother. Moreover, due to my connections to them, I became a member of the family tree of that distinguished Austrian family too.

**Edwige von Zedtwitz**

Returning to my story of Edwige, I must add that she was thrilled to be found and to be connected to her Vargha roots again. She enjoyed joining us at the 2005 Vargha reunion, and made excellent friends with Attila Tóth, your 4<sup>th</sup> cousin. Later that year Kay and I met Edwige and her husband, Bertrand Renaud in Paris, and they got to know Daniel and Ági too. That was the last time I saw them.

A couple of years later, when I got to know the Bánfalvis, that is, the older and younger János, I learned from János Sr. that in April of 2006, when Attila and Edwige visited them, they visited the old Vargha house in Szentgotthárd, where the head of the local police department, Major János Végvári showed them around, treated them to refreshments and gave Edwige a brochure about Szentgotthárd. Concerning the ownership of the building, they made an inquiry in Körmend at the 'Körzeti Földhivatal' (regional center for land records), where they were told that those records were lost. How convenient!

Then, in 2007 Edwige and Bertrand visited Attila Tóth again, who drove them to see the original hometown of the Zedtwitz family too. Subsequently, only Edwige showed up at the 2018 celebration of her great-grandfather's life and accomplishments. I am no longer in contact with her on account of her poor behavior prior to and during those celebrations. Nevertheless, I am glad that I found her and reconnected her with her Vargha connections. I owed that much to Gábor bácsi.

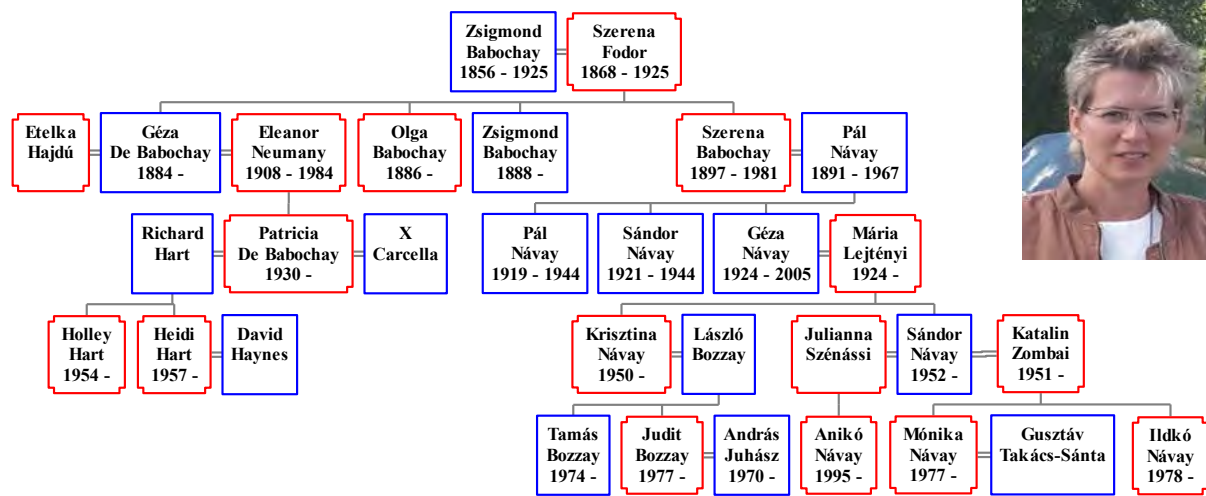



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<sup>1</sup> Georg von Zedtwitz (1806-1871) marrying my great-grandfather's sister, Kornélia, a marriage that didn't last long

### Finding the descendants of Géza Babochay

The search for Géza was initiated by **Judit Bozzay**, a great-granddaughter of Szerena Babochay, who grew up hearing only some vague references to her great-uncles Zsigmond and Géza Babochay. As she was growing up, she learned that her great-grandmother never talked about her brothers, and hence, she delved into family photos and correspondence to find out more about them on her own. After we got to know one another, she shared with me her findings, and urged me time and again to help her in her quest. The family tree shown below was completed after our search ended successfully; it is complete (except for some dates, including the death of Patricia De Babochay in 2022) up to and including Judit’s generation, whose picture is shown on the right.



Judit told me about the marriage of Géza to Etelka Hajdú, about the affair Zsigmond had with a married sister of Etelka, and that when István Hajdú, the brother of the Hajdú sisters challenged Zsigmond in a duel, Zsigmond killed him. Subsequently, Zsigmond committed suicide – thereby escaping his creditors as well and explaining why his sister didn’t want to talk about him. The two brothers, their sister and parents are shown in the picture on the right.



Concerning Géza, I learned from Judit that he was a lawyer who left for America on account of some large debts he could not pay. He and his brother started an insurance company, which was not successful. Later we learned that he divorced his wife, who returned to Hungary, and Judit wanted to know whatever happened to Géza. That’s when Kay and I entered the scene, with Judit remaining on board and urging us time and again to keep on searching.

Little by little we found that Géza married again on January 29, 1930 – this time to Eleonor Neumany (23), the daughter of Hungarian immigrants. As we later learned, her father was a well-to-

do grocer. Géza claimed to be single (which may have been a misunderstanding since he was divorced) and his name was ‘butchered’ to ‘Doctor Gezade Babochay’, where the ‘de’ should have gone with his last name, writing it as ‘de Babochay’, indicative of his noble birth. In other places that didn’t come out well either, altering his name to ‘Debabochay’. Yet elsewhere, his name also appeared as ‘Guy Babochay’, clearly trying to ‘anglicize’ Géza, which is an old Hungarian name (the father of Saint Stephan) with no English equivalent. (By the way, when he gave his name as Guy on the U.S. Social Security Applications and Claims Index, he also gave his date of birth as 1896.08.18 (rather than the correct 1884.6.30) for some reason. His picture on the right was taken in Hungary prior to his coming to America. He arrived here on of 8-19-1929.



Next, we located him in Brunswick City, NJ on the 1940 US Census, along with a daughter, Patricia, who was 9 years old at that time. She turned out to be a 3<sup>rd</sup> cousin of mine, making me related on finding her. And of course, the search was now on to locate her and to learn about her family. That’s where Kay’s membership in Ancestry.com became useful, as illustrated by the tabulation on the right, from which we learned that Patricia got married to Richard F Hart, by whom she had a daughter, Heidi Susan, born on 9-28-1957. At this point, the extended version of the former ‘White pages’ became useful, and after a few false starts, right before Christmas of 2015 I have been on the telephone with Géza’s daughter, my newly found 3<sup>rd</sup> cousin, Patricia.

ancestry	
<b>Heidi Susan Hart</b> in the North Carolina, Birth Indexes, 1800-2000	
Name:	Heidi Susan Hart
Gender:	Female
Race:	White
Event Type:	Birth
Birth Date:	28 Sep 1957
Birth County:	Burke
Parent1 Name:	Richard F Hart
Parent2 Name:	Patricia G Debabochay
Roll number:	NCVR_B_C014_56002
Volume:	68
Page:	189

I learned from Patricia that she had a second daughter too in Holly, who was actually 3 years older than Heidi, and that Holly will come and pick her up to take her to Heidi’s home so that the four of them, Patricia, Holly, Heidi and Heidi’s husband, David Haynes can spend Christmas together. Hence, I sent my introductory materials on the family to Heidi’s place for all of them, hoping that Judit and I will get to know them better and may even talk them into coming to our first Juhász Reunion in 2017.

In closing this account, I want to brag with the fact that Holly, shown on the right did join us, and we were very happy to get to know her. Later we learned from her more about her grandfather, who struggled a fair amount trying to find his niche in this country, just like I did some 30 years later.



In addition to Judit, her mother, **Krisztina Návay** deserves credit too; she is one of my favorite relatives. I was introduced to her by my 3<sup>rd</sup> cousin, **Hédi Fodor**, the foremost researcher of the Juhász family. Krisztina’s father, Géza Návay and his brothers were also 3<sup>rd</sup> cousins of mine, along with **Patricia de Babochay**.

## My cousin, Hugi

In Hungarian the term “húg” means “younger sister”, which was indeed the case since she was the younger sister of Gaston Ungár. It is also true that younger sisters often acquire the nickname “Hugi”, and that others start calling them so regardless of whether they are older or younger. Though I was younger by a couple of years, that’s what happened to me too, and in fact, that’s how I have called her ever since I remember.

Hugi had a hard life even as a kid. She was often neglected in favor of Gaston, who was sickly, and hence spoiled by their parents. She barely finished elementary school when her family was deported on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 1951, which meant daily work in the fields in spite her tender age for the next 3 years from March to December. When deportation was over, she was the first to leave and find factory work in Kőbánya, operating huge cranes at Ganz-MÁVAG, Hungary’s huge railroad machinery manufacturing company that employed more than 3000 workers. She stayed there for 40 years, working with the cranes for 21 years and then in the office for 19 years after getting her high school diploma and completing a program in office management by attending night school. She remembers proudly of the building of Budapest’s bridges, and she is happy that she made excellent use of the times, when her load was kept in place. She read a lot of Hungarian history and literature, making up for the lack of formal education.

She married three times, first to a policeman named Sándor Bihari, Laci’s father, then to István Makai, Zsolt’s father, divorcing both of them before marrying Kálmán Németh, who was a teacher. Kálmán and Hugi spent 20 years together, doing a lot of traveling both within Hungary and abroad. Those were Hugi’s best years. Unfortunately, Kálmán died in 2004, and my dear cousin is alone since then.

Her older son, Laci lives in California and is the father of Jessica, while her younger son, Zsolt lives not far from Hugi, but both him and his son, Dani work very hard and don’t have much time for anything. Zsolt’s younger son is autistic and very close to Hugi. Unfortunately, he can do only very simple shopping for her.

Lately, Hugi had a number of health issues, including painful arthritis in her hands, and hence she can’t write. But while she could, other than my mother and two friends, she was my best correspondent over the years. I still have most of her earlier letters intact in a huge stack but cut out the beautiful flowers pasted onto the left upper corners from her more recent letters. They are beautiful, and I will have them as part of this writing with the motto

### **“Each flower represented a wonderful letter”**

for others to see. The idea and the technique for such preservations originated with Kálmán Németh, Hugi’s third husband. Later Hugi mastered the procedure, as you will see.

Nowadays I call her just as often as I write to her. I also send her photos – mostly of our kids and grandkids. She knows all of them, at least via the photos, and we always make a huge effort to visit with her and her son, Zsolt, whenever any of us is in Hungary.

The next page will display my bouquet of flowers which decorated her wonderful letters during recent years.





## More about Laci bácsi

### Air mail service from Budapest to Vienna



was established on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June 1918, with Laci bácsi, my father's older brother being the pilot. Thousands gathered at the airfield of Rákosliget, speeches were made, and there was a nationwide celebration of the fact that after Italy, Austria and the United States, Hungary was the fourth country to start such a service. The next picture shows Laci bácsi with Hungary's Minister of Commerce, as Laci bácsi was about to get into his plane, while the third one shows him as he was ready to take off with fellow officers waving him their farewells. He was chosen for the assignment since he was well-liked, a man of honor and one of the most decorated 1<sup>st</sup> lieutenants of the



fledgling Air Force of the Monarchy. To show the significance of the event, I feature two more pictures below from two other papers. In the first one, he is shown with reporters and various officials; the second one shows him with dignitaries, who were important enough to have their names recorded (hence the circled numbers on the photo), while the



while the third one shows Queen Zita, the king and their three children welcoming him to Vienna.



### The last and best Habsburgs

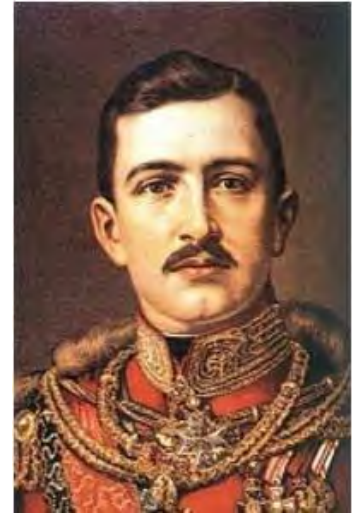
Earlier, Laci bácsi was already singled out by Charles IV, the last king of Hungary to take up his son, Otto in his plane for a ride; on the next page I will show some newspaper clippings commemorating that event. **Otto Habsburg** was the crown prince of Austro-Hungary, with well-guarded aspirations for the throne of Hungary throughout his life.

To introduce Hungary's 61<sup>st</sup> and last king, **King Charles IV** properly, I should start by telling you that I share my birthday (August 17) with him; albeit, he was born 51 years earlier. I must also tell you about the injustices to the man and his family committed by history, as well as by the 'gracious' winners of World War I. He was the ruler of the Austro-Hungarian Empire only for the last 2 years of the war (from 1916.11.21 to 1918.11.13), and had no part in starting that brutal conflict, which he opposed throughout his rule.

In fact, he was the only European leader who sought peace, approaching the allied powers with that intent. Nevertheless, he was exiled to the island of Madeira for the rest of his life, which was cut short by the dire living conditions imposed on him. He died of the Spanish flu on April 1, 1922 at the age of 32, leaving behind the well-loved **Queen Zita** and their 8 children, of whom Otto von Habsburg was the oldest and the Crown Prince. He is shown in the next picture with the Royal Couple at their coronation. I will tell you more about the Prince, but first a few more words need to be said for the King, who was a gentle, family loving man, who considered his oath as binding to God, and hence cannot be taken back.

He accepted his fate as the 'deposed king', "renounced participation" in state affairs, but did not abdicate. He spent the remaining years of his life attempting to restore the monarchy until his death in 1922.

Following his beatification by the Catholic Church in 2004, he has become commonly known as **Blessed Charles of Austria**. A statue of his is shown on the right. It is in the village of Monte of Madeira; unfortunately, I didn't know about it when we were there in 2014. Naturally, I would have wanted to see it.



Finally, here is a picture of Otto Habsburg (1912-2011), who became an outstanding European politician with a doctorate in Political Science and hopeful throughout his life of becoming King of Hungary. He spoke Hungarian, German, English, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian, served in a variety of important positions in the European Union, and interestingly, he died on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. His son, Charles (born in 1961) is recognized in royalist circles as the legitimate successor to his grandfather's Throne of Hungary, but I doubt that anything will come of it. There is not enough wisdom for it among the Hungarians.



**Otto Habsburg's first flight**

At this time, I want to go back a bit more than a century, when my uncle, Laci bácsi was still around and Otto was just a boy. The four pictures shown below commemorate the first flight of Otto Habsburg under the tutelage of my uncle. Otto might have been 5 or 6 at that time.



Here I show one more picture from a newspaper article of the royal couple with their eldest, Otto. Clearly, Laci bácsi was a trusted member of their entourage. Hence, I am certain that the Vargha, and maybe even the Habsburg family's future would have been greatly altered had he lived.

However, unfortunately,

### Laci bácsi was killed in a crash on July 14, 1918.

Please recall that World War I was still raging at that time, and in fact it ended only on **November 11, 1918**, called **Armistice Day** back then in honor of the veterans of World War I, and it was only some years later that it was renamed **Veterans Day** to honor veterans of all wars.

It was on the 9<sup>th</sup> day of air mail service between Vienna and Budapest that his plane crashed to the ground, killing both him and his Austrian copilot. Their bodies were found near the small village of Tüski, in the Province of Moson, as they were flying towards Vienna. He, who could not be killed in fierce air battles during the war, became the martyr of peace, when he turned around to offer his services to progress.

Numerous articles, like the ones listed on the right were written about the tragedy and his funeral, recalling that barely 2 weeks earlier thousands gathered at the airfield of Mátyás-föld, wishing well to the piloting first lieutenant.

His sword and decorations, including the Medal of Honor twice, along with the German Iron Cross were placed on his coffin at the Catholic cemetery of Rákoskeresztúr, where he was laid to rest. The wording on his headstone is also shown on the right. The articles

also report on his fellow officers saying their tearful farewells, the various representatives of the government and of the military establishment present at the funeral, as well as about my frail Gomika being surrounded by her seven remaining children, with one of them, my father, in military uniform. The only other relative in attendance was Gábor bácsi, a distant Vargha cousin, who became my father's guardian following the death of my grandfather.

There were also some speculations about the possibility that his plane was sabotaged, but it is much more likely that his plane was probably damaged several times already during the war, and hence was in poor repair.

(I am thankful to my 2<sup>nd</sup> cousin Miklós Péterfia for sharing with me some of the materials shown here, as well as to Attila Tóth, who came with me to Komárom to hear my invited address at the annual László Rácz roaming conference of Hungarian mathematics teachers in July of 2011, and then went with me to Esztergom to see Miklós. Attila's mother was a 3<sup>rd</sup> cousin of mine.)

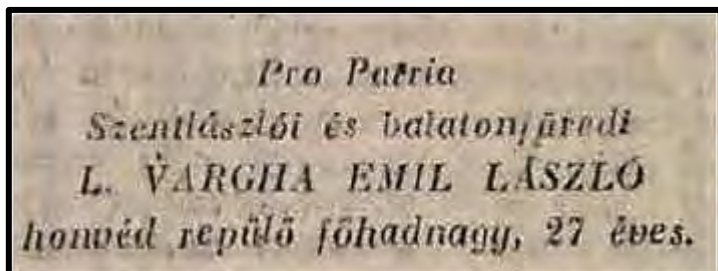


*Az Újság*, 1918.07, pages 212-213

*Pesti Napló*, 1918.07, page 178

*Új Idők*, 1918.2, pages 44-45

*Világ*, 1918.07, page 214



## Postscript

After making inquiries at the Military Archive in Budapest, I learned that Laci bácsi was indeed a highly decorated officer in the Hungarian army during World War I. The recommendations for his decorations were filed under the following numbers,

**12924, 16561, 26232, 40690 and 40596**

and the appropriate documentation was found for me by my Vargha-cousin, Ágota Gombás. Copies of them are in my files. They included the following:

Katonai Érdemkereszt III. Osztálya	08-06-1916
Bronz Katonai Érdemkereszt	10-29-1916
Ezüst Katonai Érdemkereszt	12-03-1917

in addition to the

Ezüst Vitézségi Érem I. Osztálya	1914
Vaskereszt II. Osztálya	

I purposefully didn't translate the names of the decorations since it would be impossible to match them to the ones given in the USA, but I know that the one given in 1914 qualified him for some land and that it was hereditary in that not only him, but he and his descendants could have put 'vitéz' before their name, signifying extreme valor in war.



Their images are shown above, with the 'vitéz' insignia on the right and larger than the others.

From the information sent to me I also learned that Laci bácsi was injured twice – in October 1914 and in February 1915.

After his tragic death, he was buried on July 18, 1918, with full military honors in the Kőbányai Központi Temető (Central Cemetery of Kőbánya, which is a part of Budapest) in the 16<sup>th</sup> Section, 1<sup>st</sup> row, 8<sup>th</sup> grave, but that part of the cemetery was plowed over some years ago, and hence we can no longer pay our respects at his grave. I asked Márti to do so in our name too, but I was too late with my request.

Originally, he was in the Army, but on December 15, 1917, he was listed as a member of the newly formed Air Force of Hungary. He was promoted to 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant on October 1, 1915.

We cherish his memory.

### More about Mariska néni

Let me start with a picture of hers from her younger years since in nearly all of the others she is covered up much too much to see any features of hers.

While I don't know anything about her sisters and brother Lajos, I know that Mariska néni graduated from the Ferenc József Nőnevelő Intézet (Institute for young women – named after Franz Joseph) in Székesfehérvár, whose impressive building is shown below her photo.

I also know that her portion of the land (which was probably 600 acres after the death of her remaining sister, Kornélia – half of the original 1200 acres of Dániel Berzsenyi) – was probably managed by her brother, Sándor, my grandfather, since upon his death, his widow, my grandmother managed it along with the 70 laborers, who worked in the field. In addition, she had a cook named Juliska and a maid called Margit, who were very devoted to her, as well as a coach man, who was at her service whenever she wanted to go anywhere.

In the 1940s, and probably before that too, she was a frequent visitor at our house at the other end of the village. The pictures below testify to that. The first one was taken some time before 1933, since my Emilia Svaszits great-grandmother was still alive, while the second one was taken some time after 1943, since my brother is also in it.



We also visited her often at her home, the house that was built by her grandfather, Dániel Berzsenyi in 1812. I remember those visits well, since she had a huge Komondor, named Bodri, of whom I was afraid. (The Komondor is an ancient brand of Hungarian sheepdog.)



The first picture above shows her house in 1936, while the one on the right shows Mariska néni with Bodri in front of the house, with the huge pine trees in the background. Those trees may have originated from Count György Festetics of Keszthely, who sent the saplings as a gift to Dániel Berzsenyi. Maybe even the trellis was still around when that photo was taken. I only remember being told about its location marking the place where the old Thulmon house used to be. That is where Dániel Berzsenyi and his family stayed when they first moved to Nikla, and only after its partial collapse in a storm, did he build the house, which became Mariska néni's and then the Berzsenyi Museum.

Typical of the simplicity of his lifestyle, even that house was first covered with a straw roof, and only during one of his absences did his trusted relative, Sándor Korenika, who took care of his estate at such times, covered his house with a reed roof. Seemingly, it was covered by tiles only when László lived there. László also enclosed the open corridor that used to extend from one end of the house to the other, and had a smaller veranda built in the center of the house.

Probably soon after moving into the house, Mariska néni invited her similarly unmarried cousin, Margit Gyarmathy, to become her companion, a position usually offered to poorer relatives by the well-to-do. She stayed with her a number of years and then later someone named Lonka Müller filled that position too. Naturally, when her sister, Kornélia became widowed in 1907, they kept company to one another – at times in Budapest, other times in Nikla. Even after the death of Kornélia (Nelli néni in 1914), Mariska néni often spent the winters in Budapest since the family didn't sell Nelli néni's house until much later. At other times, prior to the end of WWI, Mariska néni and her companion would visit Hungary's favorite Adriatic resort in Abbázia.



Mariska néni was also a gracious host to a number of relatives, including the painter Tihamér Gyarmathy and his bride on their honeymoon; that's when he painted the picture of Dániel and Farkas Berzsenyi. As you probably remember, Dániel's is now at the entrance to the Museum in Nikla, while the one of Farkas somehow ended up as a property of the Köllő family. It has a tear, which needs to be fixed better than I did in the photo shown on the right. I suspect that Tihamér painted it after a photograph, but no such photo survived in the family's possession. Neither did I see any photos of Nelli and Ida néni nor of Great-grandmother Mária Gyarmathy.



In fact, I know nothing about them since when I had a chance to ask about them from Mariska néni, I kept asking her about her grandfather, Dániel. In 1952-'53, when I was in Grade 8 in Nikla, there was a stretch of some wintry evenings when she would sit at our table and relate to me the various stories that were told in the family about her grandfather, not even suspecting that one day she too would become the subject of legends and wonderings. At the time she was telling me the stories about her grandfather she was already ninety years old, but still very clear in mind and having an excellent memory. As an ambitious youngster, I was dreaming of publishing my collection of stories about my famous great-great-grandfather, but later I learned that Mariska néni told the same stories to others as well, and hence they were already well-known. Nevertheless, I am still proud of the fact that I was working on such a serious project at such a young age.

One of her early visitors was 19-years-old Vilma Mányoky, who wrote a story about it in the *Somogyi Hírlap* (9-2-1911, p. 2). She was there with her father, whose article about our common ancestor, József Bárány was most informative. Vilma became a teacher and a scholar of the Finnish language.

Later Zoltán Berzsenyi and the Végh sisters, Szeréna and Irén, shown in front of her house, also visited her.



Zoltán Berzsenyi became the organizer of the Berzsenyi reunions of 1940 and 1941, while the Végh sisters were Gyarmathy relatives and my 3<sup>rd</sup> cousins.

The plaque on the house seen in the photo on the right was unveiled in a huge ceremony in 1926 by Archduke Albrecht of the House of Habsburg with Mariska néni and my grandmother, the widow of Sándor Berzsenyi serving as hostesses. It says that Dániel Berzsenyi lived in that house from 1804 to 1836, where the first date is off by 8 years. 1926 marked the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth.

Mariska néni and my grandmother were also present in Celldömölk and in Kaposvár in 1836, when he was remembered on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death. Moreover, Mariska néni was there, when the Berzsenyi Bench was unveiled in 1939 in the beautiful park adjoining the high school in Csurgó, where both Laci Köllő and I went to school. I show a picture of that bench below.

István Hársházi (1905-1980), the chronicler of Nikla, also recalled in his book, *Niklai Hagyományok* (Nikla's Heritage), Kaposvár, 1978), how much he was inspired as a young student upon hearing Mariska néni's stories, when his teacher took his class over to the old Berzsenyi house for a visit.

Next, I show two more pictures of Mariska néni borrowed from articles published about her; the first was taken in 1936, while the second in 1948. Both were taken in front of the veranda; nowadays, that's where one enters the museum.



I also have a picture that supposedly shows Mariska néni in her salon with the vitrine that used to contain the few memorabilia of Dániel Berzsenyi: his decorative belt made with heavy gold and silver strings, the heavily decorated shirt he wore at his wedding, and his watch and ring along with his favorite pipe from Selmec. His pipe and rings, along with a meter-long gold chain were put in his coffin in 1921, when my grandfather was buried, and Dániel Berzsenyi and his wife were put into the same coffin.



Unfortunately, the Berzsenyi Crypt was vandalized during WWII, the coffins were thrown askew and the bones of the 15 members of the family buried there were scattered. Only after appeals by Mariska néni to various governmental agencies were there funds allocated for securing the expert help of Professor Enz of Pécs to identify at least some of the bones, for their reburial, for refurbishing the crypt, and for some much-needed reparations to Mariska néni's house.

Next, I also show a picture of Mariska néni at the outdoor mass conducted in the cemetery in 1948 upon the completion of the work. She is seated in front next to Jenő Barákovics, the Governor of the Province of Somogy.



The celebrations continued in front of the house, and I also have a picture of Mariska néni with the most prominent poets and writers of Hungary, who were instrumental in securing the funds for the projects, along with an honorary pension for Mariska néni.



Her extremely small stature is in the center of the photo, while Bandi bácsi, whom I will introduce next, is off to the side by himself. A second photo taken in the cemetery should convey how huge the celebration was in 1948.



Of the three great-granddaughters of Dániel Berzsenyi, Piri néni married first (in 1928), followed by my mother (in 1935), and Babi néni, the eldest (in 1939). They all married military officers, though in different branches of the service. Piri néni's husband, Károly Ungár was in the Army, my father, Miklós Vargha was in the Artillery, while Babi néni's husband, András (Bandi) Köllő was in the Gendarmery, the police force in the countryside.

Being the eldest, Babi néni was probably closest to Mariska néni, and I think that it was a natural consequence that Babi néni was to inherit Mariska néni's house. Piri néni was happy with her choice of a totally rebuilt Fisher House, which became the Cultural Center for the village and serves as the Apiary Center now, while my mother was happy to keep her father's house. I think the three sisters, as well as Mariska néni were happy with these choices.

Of the three sons-in-law (of my grandparents), Bandi bácsi's personality was the most 'winning'. He tried harder than my father, and there was no question of his sincerity. Therefore, when WWII's front was moving towards Nikla, and it became necessary for all of us to leave, Mariska néni came with us to Szombathely, along with Babi néni and her family. More precisely, she attached herself to Babi néni and Bandi bácsi (and Laci, who was not yet 3 years old), and moved with them to Torony, near Szombathely, where they rented a small apartment, while the Ungár family (Piri néni, Károly bácsi, Gaston and Lenke, whom I always call Hugi), moved in with Grandmother and us into our larger apartment at József Vass körút 28.

As the front moved closer to Szombathely, Bandi bácsi suggested that we all escape with them to Germany, rather than risk capture by the Russians. Since my grandmother didn't want to go, Mother decided to stay in Hungary too. But Mariska néni chose to go with the Köllő family since she trusted and really liked Bandi bácsi.

Mariska néni returned to Nikla with the Köllő family in the Fall of 1945 or a bit later, and joined us in her old house, which was still partially occupied by some Russian soldiers. Eventually, the Köllő family took the first room of the present museum, Mariska néni the second, and my family the third room. We moved out of there as soon as my father returned from Germany and managed to make the other Berzsenyi house livable, but had to go back in the Spring of 1949, when the communists evicted us.

Both Bandi bácsi and Mariska néni died in the spring of 1953 – Bandi bácsi of a heart attack, while Mariska néni of old age. She was getting visibly weaker during her last couple of years, her eyesight was failing, and she lost her zest for living in a hostile world. Since she was already bedridden when Bandi bácsi died, we didn't tell her about his passing. But I am sure she knew, and that loss may have contributed to her demise.

It may be poetic justice that Mariska néni, who kept the spirit of her grandfather alive through her stories, would become the subject of legends too. I realized this for the first time when I was approached in the Fall of 2003 by a young Hungarian novelist, Erika Vasvári, the founding editor of *The Hungarian Monthly Forum* (in Hungarian: *Havi Magyar Fórum*), published in Budapest. She was planning a novel about Mariska néni and wanted to learn more about her. She learned somewhere that someone proposed marriage to Mariska néni even when she was in her eighties, and that fascinated Erika. She recognized that in her lifetime, Mariska néni lived through some of the most turbulent times of Hungarian history and wanted to capture the spirit that guided her heroine.

In writing to Erika, I had to admit that I never heard about the marriage proposal mentioned by her, but I did read some other anecdotes about Mariska néni, and I shared them with her. One of them (in the February 15, 1961, issue of *Nemzetőr*, a Hungarian literary publication edited by the poet Tibor Tollas in emigration) claimed that she stayed in Nikla, during the fighting there in 1945, and hid in one of the storage rooms of her house. Another gave her all the credit for the renovations to the crypt after WW II. Indeed, when we returned to Nikla, we were shocked to find that someone had broken into the tombs, and all the bones were scattered. It may have been Mariska néni who called the attention of the leaders of the Berzsenyi Society to that fact, but I doubt that she could do much else. Since she left the country in 1945, she didn't get any of her land back, and hence her first concern was survival. Thus, when she was granted a small stipend by the Society, as she had no other income, she happily accepted it – contrary to another legend, according to which she turned the stipend down for the benefit of young poets.

The year after Mariska néni's death, the Berzsenyi Múzeum opened its doors in Mariska néni's house, and my mother became its first guide and the family's guard of the spiritual inheritance of our great ancestor – but that's another story.

To close this piece, I show a recent wide-angle picture of the Museum with the bust of Dániel Berzsenyi in front and a picture of the house from the back in order to appreciate its size.



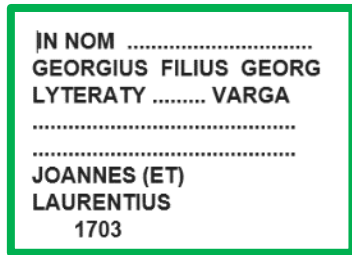
### More about Gábor bácsi

#### Preliminaries

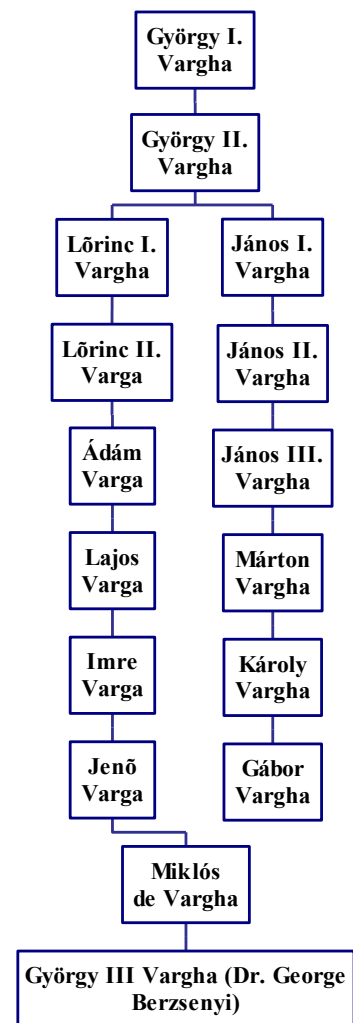
Dr. Gábor Vargha of Szent-László and Balatonfüred (aka Gábor bácsi) was the first-born child of Károly Vargha (1826-1907) of Nemesapáti and Klára Takács (1841-1869) of Andrásfa in the Province of Zala. I emphasize his parents' places of birth, since in 1849 after our War for Independence it was in Nemesapáti, where my great-grandfather, Imre Vargha found sanctuary at the home of Gábor bácsi's grandparents, who probably treated him like a son since Károly and Imre were of the same age. In reality, they were only 4<sup>th</sup> cousins, as one can observe via the descendant tree shown below the picture of Gábor bácsi, but in those days many families maintained closer ties. Their great-great-grandfathers, János and Lőrinc, respectively were brothers and first-generation Hungarians, since their father came to Hungary from Erdély (Transylvania), which was separate from the rest of Hungary, which was liberated from the Ottoman Empire right around the time they were born. The Vargha family of Erdély considered itself székely (Sekler), descending from a tribe of Hungarians, who settled there long before the Conquest of 895.



György Vargha II died in 1703 and was buried by his two sons there. The stone marking his grave was recently rediscovered by your 4<sup>th</sup> cousin, Attila Tóth and moved back to the Vargha gravesite in the old Reformed Church Cemetery on Siskey út in Balatonfüred. The inscription was deciphered by Attila to the extent shown on the right.



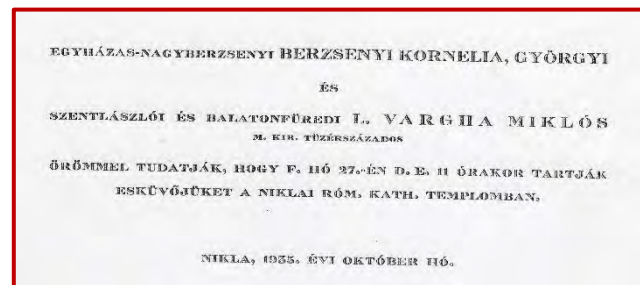
János and Lőrinc were also in unison, when they petitioned for the status of nobility, which was granted to them by Charles III of the House of Habsburg in 1713. That sheepskin (shown on the next page along with the seal) was kept by various descendants of Lőrinc, while the original Transylvanian documents granting the title of 'lófő' (the equivalent of baron) in 1635 by Prince György I Rákóczi to György I Vargha, the grandfather of János and Lőrinc were passed on to the descendants of János generation after generation.





Interestingly, it must have been János, who inherited his grandfather's military leanings, since he served as a captain in the emperor's military, while Lőrinc must have carried on his grandfather's literary inclinations, who also received the 'lyterary' title in 1635. Accordingly, Lőrinc served as presbyter of the Lutheran congregation of Balatonfüred, who recorded the vital information there.

Later my father, as well as his brother, László used the 'L.' abbreviation of 'Lyterary' on their name cards. Its original meaning was 'a man of letters', which was certainly true for many of the Vargha descendants, who included several published poets and writers. On the right I show my parents' marriage announcement, showing the use of the 'L.'



The two branches reversed roles some generations later, when Great-grandfather Imre (who wrote his name without the traditional 'h') and his two brothers served as officers in the Hungarian revolutionary army. Imre was a major in Klapka's contingent and a defender of the Fort of Komárom. Along with the entire contingent of Klapka he received clemency when they finally gave up the fort. Nevertheless, during the Austrian terror following the revolution he felt safer in Nemesapáti.

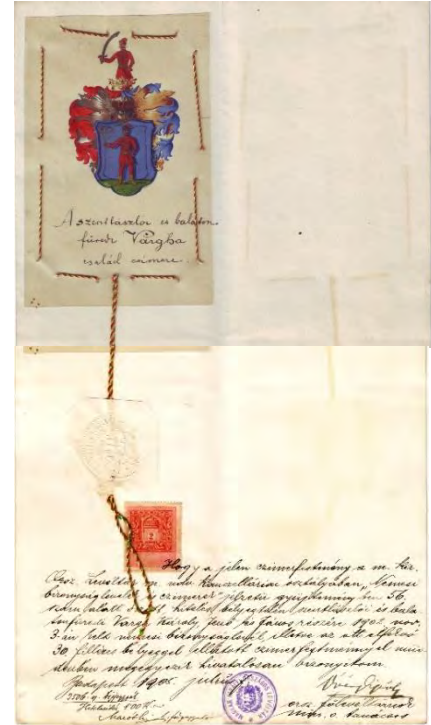
After the Compromise of 1867 Imre returned to military service and was a colonel at the time of his death in 1894. Consequently, he was no longer around when in 1902, Károly Vargha, the father of Gábor bácsi decided to petition the Hungarian Ministry of Interior for the recognition of the family's earlier elevation to nobility and the double forenames of 'szent-lászlói' and 'balatonfüredi'. In addition to the proper documentation (that is, the sheepskin of 1635), Károly took along my grandfather Jenő and his brother, as well as János Varga of Balatonfüred (also of the branch of Lőrinc), who had the 1713 documentation with him. As evidenced by the 1905 document shown below, their petition was successful, and even the spelling of the name with an 'h' was accepted. By the way, I bought this document at a virtual auction, to which my attention was called by a dear friend, Zsolt Zsigray. It is presently in the 'shadow-box' I made for you, Adam. Take good care of it for many a generation to go!



The closeness of the branches of János and Lőrinc was further demonstrated in 1908, when my grandfather died unexpectedly at the age of 42, leaving behind 8 children of whom the youngest was still a baby. By then Gábor bácsi was a highly respected representative to the Hungarian Parliament and hence he had the influence to assure the appointment of my father and his older brother, László to military schools in the Monarchy. He also became my father's guardian, admirably fulfilling that role throughout his life.

In particular, Gábor bácsi was my father's witness at his wedding to my mother. Via subsequent correspondence, Gábor bácsi became close to my mother as well, and even my mother's aunt, Mariska néni appreciated his friendship.

In the picture below, next to my father is his brother, Gábor (Gabi bécsi, wearing a hat), then his mother (Gomika), and then Gábor bácsi; they were the only ones representing the Vargha family.



Years earlier, Gábor bácsi was also present at the military funeral of my father's brother, Laci bácsi, whose plane, carrying air mail from Budapest to Vienna crashed in 1918. According to a newspaper article describing the event, he was the only relative there with my grandmother and the remaining seven siblings. Therefore, it is natural that my father always spoke highly of him.

I also have some vague memories of my father taking me to visit with Gábor bácsi and his wife, Vali néni when I was 4 years old. Unfortunately, I remember only Vali néni's smile as she told

me not to worry as I tried to sit on the couch without my shoes touching it. And I also remember Gábor bácsi's voice as he was talking with my father.

### An aside

In the tree on the first page, I also wanted to 'show off' with the fact that my father chose the name "György" for me in honor of our first known ancestors. Upon changing my last name to Berzsenyi, I rudely turned down that honor, while I also negated my mother's intentions by dropping my middle name, which was Sándor (Alexander) in honor of my maternal grandfather, Sándor Berzsenyi. Thus, I am doubly sinful --- but only in America. Since the official change of my name is not yet registered in Hungary, there I am still Vargha György Sándor.

### Musings on 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and more distant cousins

Nowadays when you ask people about their cousins, they usually think only of their first cousins and may not even succeed in naming all of them in spite the fact that few people have as many children as their ancestors had. When it comes to second cousins, relatives with whom you share a pair of great-grandparents, probably only those of us can name them, who delved into genealogy to some extent. But the attention is often on the male line, because it is easier to follow that. Much too often the mothers were not even named when births were entered into the church records. Therefore, neither is it surprising that few people can name all of their great-grandparents either.

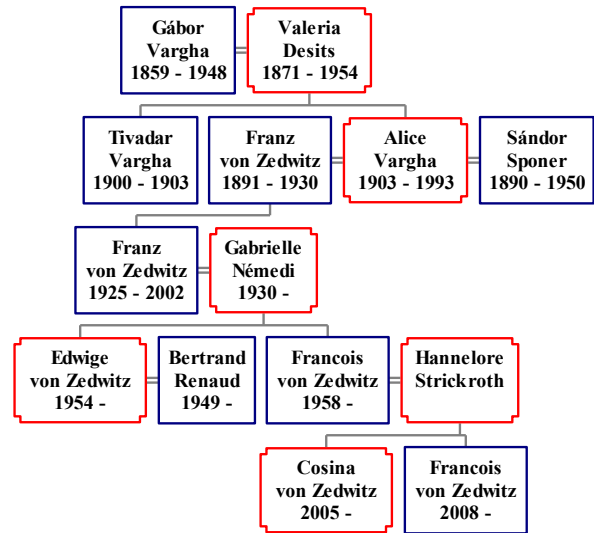
The situation was not much different in the past either, except in the case of the nobility of Europe. In their case, even in my parents' generation, most people had extensive family trees, and members of the older generation kept track of who was who in the neighboring noble families too. Thereby they could assure that their sons and daughters would marry into families similar to theirs.

Another reason for keeping up with one's relatives stemmed from the fact that time and again one had to document his/her nobility, and hence needed to know the location of the family's 'sheep-skin'. In our case, the descendants of János I Vargha had a relatively easy situation, since even my great-great-grandfather Lajos Varga, the great-grandson of Lőrinc I Vargha lived throughout his life in Balatonfüred (even when he served as a District Judge, with Tapolca as its center). Conversely, Lajos Varga must have known where his 3<sup>rd</sup> cousin, Márton lived, since it was probably him, who recommended to his son, my great-grandfather Imre Varga to seek refuge at Márton's place in 1849.

Nevertheless, it was quite a feat for Gábor bácsi to learn about the death his 5<sup>th</sup> cousin, my grandfather, and come to the rescue. The fact that he assumed guardianship of my father was nevertheless an unexpectedly noble act on his part. On the right I show a picture of Gábor bácsi along with the only one I have of my grandfather, Jenő Varga; they are facing one another, with my grandfather on the left. Clearly, the family resemblance is undeniable!



After finishing his schooling in Kőszeg, Sopron and Szombathely and getting his degree in law in Budapest, Gábor bácsi practiced there for 2 years before getting his doctorate and moving to Szentgotthárd in 1888. He married 11 years later the daughter of Gyula Desits, who was granted nobility a year earlier for his constructive work in the community. Below I show a picture of the married couple and next to them their descendant tree.



### His political and industrious career

started soon after moving to Szentgotthárd, which was just a sprawling, big village at the time with a mixed population of Slovenians, Austrians and Hungarians.

As a young friend, follower and protegee of Kálmán Széll, who was originally from Szentgotthárd and later became Prime Minister of Hungary, Gábor bácsi served the district as a Representative in 1910-1918, 1922-1926 and 1927-1936 and as a Member of the Upper House from 1943 to 1945. His political clout served him well in establishing various factories in Szentgotthárd, like the



Tobacco Factory



Scythe Factory



Watchmaking Company

and the  
**Silk Factory**



each of which provided jobs for the community, brought in additional tradesmen and experts in various fields and revenue for the city for improvements all around.

To control proper financing for his ventures, Gábor bácsi made sure that the city's bank, called the 'Vargha Bank' by the locals was supportive of them too.

Yet another new institution in Szentgotthárd was the School/Sanatorium for children with tuberculosis. At the time of its establishment, the city was surrounded by a pine forest, and its clean air and higher elevation were most beneficial to the children, whose instruction was paralleled with the treatment of their disease. Thousands of children were cured there from all around Hungary.

However, the new high school, where instruction was conducted in Hungarian, was probably an even more important and significant achievement of Gábor bácsi since it helped a lot in peacefully replacing the German language, which was prevalent in the community by Hungarian. Consequently, it may have been the deciding factor in leaving Szentgotthárd with Hungary rather than turning it over to Austria at the time of the Trianon Dictate after World War I.



It was a typical gesture of Gábor bácsi to have a fence put around the school at his own expense when he saw the need for it, and similarly, it was totally unexpected for him to establish a scholarship fund for poorer students in memory of his son, Tivadar, when he died at age 3.

Gábor bácsi's **work through various associations and clubs** was essential to his successes. He provided leadership in **civic affairs**, ranging from the **Volunteer Fire Departments** (not just in Szentgotthárd, but in nearby communities too) to the city's **Beautification Program**, and from the **Singing Club** to the **Book Club**, as well as the **Ice-skating Activity**, the **Bikers' Association** and the **Gym Users Group** --- in all of these he was an active participant too.

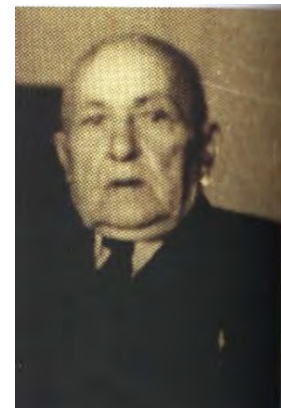
Most of these were under the auspices of the **Szentgotthárdi Magyar Asztaltársaság**, which was an informal association of likeminded civic leaders of the community. They met regularly to chart the course of action for the city. For example, in 1903, when a Hungarian 'Korona' was worth the same as an American Dollar, they collected over 3600 Korona to help the poorer students with clothing --- of that, the Cistercian abbot gave 2000, while Gábor bácsi 700. During and after World War I, they also organized collections to help soldiers who were injured in the war as well as the families of such soldiers. They also organized civic and patriotic events; for example, in 1906 as many as 34 of them. Many of the speeches were given by Gábor bácsi, who was excellent at it.

And yet, in return for all that he did for Szentgotthárd and its people,

**both Gábor bácsi and Vali néni died destitute.**



Their huge house shown above, which was part of the dowry of Vali néni was confiscated by the local police and they were given a small room and a kitchen somewhere else. They had nothing to eat other than some potatoes, as Gábor bácsi told my mother in a postcard written in February 1946. He wrote two more cards full of despair during that year. Gábor bácsi died in 1948 as an old man of broken spirits. I show a picture of him toward the end of his life on the right. Vali néni outlived him by nearly 6 years, but they were extremely difficult years too. After the death of Gábor bácsi, someone else wanted their modest place and hence she was moved to a room at the convent, but when the various religious



orders were dissolved by the communists and the nuns were deported, Vali néni was taken to the Poor House. A couple of years later, when the Tobacco Factory was made into a rehabilitation center, she was taken there and was cared for till she died.

### Acknowledgements

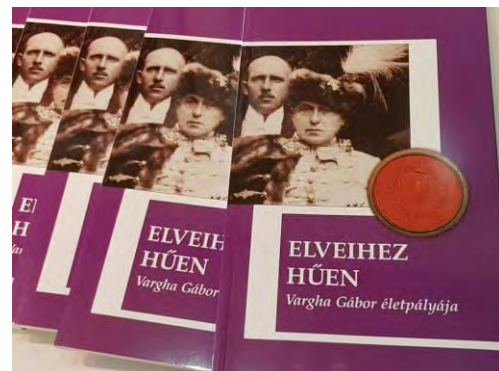
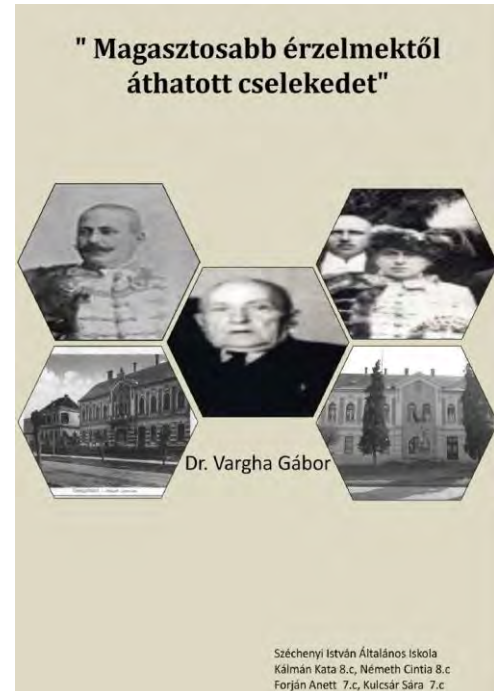
Much of what I learned about Gábor bácsi comes from János Bánfalvi Jr. and Ágota Gombás. János provided the genealogical background, while Ágota shared with me the literature she located concerning Gábor bácsi. In particular, she called my attention to the 9-page booklet shown on the right.

It was an award-winning document about Gábor bácsi, written by four young ladies of tender age. I corresponded with one of them, Anett Forján, encouraging her and her friends to return to their topic and contribute to the 2018 celebrations of Gábor bácsi's life and accomplishments organized by the City of Szentgotthárd. They were willing to do so, but unfortunately, in spite my continuing efforts to include them, they and their pioneering work were ignored by the organizers.

I felt for them and appreciated their disappointment since I received somewhat similar treatment by not being credited for much of my input into the exhibit and the book prepared by Ferenc Csuk for the occasion. Consequently, I felt justified in using some of Csuk's material in preparing this page. Credits are also due to Alice Boeck, a 2<sup>nd</sup> cousin of my 7<sup>th</sup> cousin Ferenc Zedtwitz, Gábor bácsi's grandson., who provided me with some of the pictures used, as well as to Max and Peter von Zedtwitz, who maintain a Zedtwitz website and who shared with me Francois's address.

The picture on the right shows Csuk's book – more precisely, a display of several of them – prepared, to great extant at my urging, for the 2018 celebrations, which I will describe elsewhere. It is written in Hungarian with the title *Elveihez hűen*, which is best translated as 'True to his principles'. I bought 20 copies of this 88-page book for Attila Tóth to distribute them among the Vargha / Varga relatives at our next reunion or earlier.

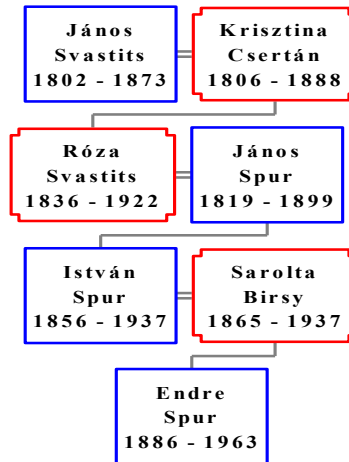
To close this passage, it seems appropriate to quote from a 1913 newspaper article, which described Gábor bácsi as follows: *There is no cultural or beneficiary institution or organization in the city, which he didn't fund or support. He was a tireless worker with a truly unselfish attitude for every noble cause.*



## More about Endre Spur

He was a great-grandson of János Svastits and Krisztina Csertán, just like both of my parents were, and hence he was a second cousin to both of them. Nevertheless, I doubt that either of them knew him or knew of him. Below I show his descendance, as well as a picture of him from 1905, soon after he received his degree in law and a picture of him from 1953.

For a long time, I knew nothing about him except for a very sweet poem that he published in 1944<sup>1</sup> along with an article about our famous common ancestor, János Svastits, which claimed that Dr. Endre Spur was in the process of writing a comprehensive study on the musical contributions of János Svastits, and that he already revealed portions of it along with some compositions of his great-grandfather in his popular radio programs. The article also told us about a musical program organized for charity by Endre Spur in Hévíz, where Spur read his poem as part of the program.



The article also told me about a couple of other writings about János Svastits, which I managed to locate. However, I never managed to find Endre Spur's writings about him. Hence, my interest in him waned too, and it was not until January 2016 that I thought of him again upon receiving an inquiry from Gergely (Gergő) Loch. Gergő was preparing a monograph about Endre Spur. He read my article about my Svastits – Csertán ancestors in *Matrikula* and in it my commentary on Spur's poem and wondered whether I knew more about him.

I love that poem. I like the way Endre recalls the generosity and loving nature of his great-grandfather, who didn't bother with the management of his holdings and hence nothing was left of his estate upon his passing. His love of music was of much greater importance to him. That's what he bequeathed to Endre, who thanks his ancestor for the gift, which also means a lot more to him than the land. In the poem he recalls how he reaches for his violin to bring peace and enjoyment back into his soul, when he is depressed by his circumstances.

<sup>1</sup> Keszthely és Vidéke, 1944 szeptember 2, page 3)

Unfortunately, I had to disappoint Gergő with my nearly total lack of knowledge about Endre Spur, but tried to make up for it by sharing with him some of the sheet-music of János Svastits that I collected over the years. He kindly reciprocated by sharing with me more of the same, as well as lots of information about Endre Spur, which I will utilize in the present piece.

Endre's grandfather, János Spur was a lieutenant in the Hungarian revolutionary army in the 1848-49 and spent the rest of his life as a government employee in the general Accounting Office. Endre's father distinguished himself in World War I. As an engineer, during the 1920s he also served as the first Chief Administrator for the region surrounding the Balaton, which is often referred to as the Hungarian Sea. Later he was in charge of the extensive holdings of the Széchényi family and hence, it was natural for his son, Endre to become the chief administrator of the holdings of László Széchényi, when he and his American wife, Gladys Vanderbilt settled in Hungary in the 1930s.

Endre traveled extensively both for his studies (law in Budapest and Leipzig; composition and violin in Paris, Budapest) and to learn about the music of related people (Estonia and Finland). He also spent years in France, England and Italy, where he practiced law while studying music. His interest in music was very many-sided and included gypsy music in addition to electronically produced sounds by newly developed instruments. In both of these areas he became one of the foremost experts not only in Hungary, but abroad too. He wrote extensively in both areas, not just in Hungarian, but later in English as well.

Below I show two pictures of Endre and his wife, Mária Magdolna Margit Olga Bárdos-Féltoronyi, who went by the name Magda but was called Dussy within the family. The first one shows them in 1908, when he proposed to her, while the second one was taken at their last Christmas together.



Interestingly, neither Endre nor his sister, Sarolta had any children, and thus Roza's branch of the Svastits family has only one descendant in István Soha, the son of my 3<sup>rd</sup> cousin Gabriella Bocsáry, whom I have not yet managed to locate.

Returning to the Spurs, I learned that Dussy was just as well-traveled, accomplished, ambitious and active as Endre. She was involved not only in her family's business interests, but also in a variety of cultural and humanitarian affairs. After receiving her degree in history, she obtained



further certification in Paris and spent some time in America, where she became familiar with the Soroptimist service organization<sup>2</sup>, which she established in Hungary upon her return. However, there is no evidence that she obtained a doctorate as she must have claimed in order to get a professorial appointment or to have it displayed on her tombstone.

Her refusal to abandon contact with her western counterparts, as well as her other organizational involvements (in which she followed the example of her mother-in-law) brought her into conflict with the communists. She was arrested and it took much of the family's jewelry to gain her release, upon which she and her husband immediately fled to Italy. From there, they came to America in 1951, where they settled in Pittsburgh. Reviving his connection to the Vanderbilt family, Endre secured some assignments, while Dussy, claiming to be 10 years younger, managed to get a faculty position at Duquoin University, teaching there for the next 20 years. She is shown on the right in her professorial garb.



I close this section with a much earlier photo of Endre from 1934, when he was appointed as the editor/evaluator/censor of the gypsy music played on the radio. He is the person seated on the right.



Many years earlier, our great composer, Ferenc (Franz) Liszt, wrote an enthusiastic but flawed account of Hungarian Gypsy music. It had to be corrected. Endre Spur did so in a number of articles both in Hungary and later in the United States.

Since I am also fond of the Gypsy interpretation of Hungarian songs and aware of the frowning of professional musicians at such music, I am pleased to have Endre in our family.

I also have a picture of their headstone from Pittsburgh's Calvary Cemetery via the well-known findagrave.com. Most of the other photos are from an interesting book<sup>3</sup>, some of whose pages were sent to me by Gergő.



<sup>2</sup> Soroptimist International is a worldwide service organization for women. They are committed to a world where women and girls together achieve their individual and collective potential, realize aspirations and have an equal voice in creating strong, peaceful communities worldwide.

<sup>3</sup> Búza Péter, *A Kossuch ház: Képek egy pesti polgárcsalád albumából*, Budapest, 2004

## More about my great-great-grandparents

Most people cannot even name any of them and even among those, who can name all of them, there are few who can write more than a sentence or two about any of them. I am fortunate that I have only 7 pairs of them, and I can name them all, but unfortunate that other than naming them, I am almost totally ignorant about 4 pairs of them. On the other hand, I am fortunate to know a fair amount about the other 3 pairs thereof. In this introductory passage, I will share with you my ignorance about the ones I don't know and prepare the ground for telling you about the 3 pairs about which I know more.

Concerning **József Fritsch**, I know that he was a coachman in the employ of Price Eszterházy of Kismarton (now Eisenstadt in Austria), which was a step up from his father, who was just a servant there. I know even less about his wife, **Anna Mayherr**, except for the fact that I found her parents as well. Typically, in case of simple peasants that is a huge accomplishment. It speaks highly of them that three of their sons, József, Károly and János were able to leave behind their peasant background and join the middle / merchant class.

In case of **József Hudeček** and **Anna Prachár**, my knowledge is limited to the fact that Hudeček was leasing a tavern, while Anna's father, Ignac was the owner of a tavern. I also know with less than certainty the names of the parents of József, and I know about Anna that she was still around in 1894, since she was the godmother of my father's sister, Mariann (Mici néni). It speaks highly of them that their daughters married well.

Concerning **János Gyarmathy** and **Mária Bárány**, all I know is that they came from old Hungarian nobility, but nothing more about either of them personally. I know a lot more about Mária's brother, Boldizsár and his life and progeny, as well as about their parents, József Bárány and his fate and Anna Barcza and her second marriage to István Berzsényi. And I know a bit about Anna's mother, Julianna Thulmon, who was very close to Boldizsár and probably, Mária too, who must have been dramatized by the murder of her father.

With respect to **János Juhász**, I know that he was leasing land near Kiskomárom and that he hailed from Esztergom, but thus far, we learned nothing reliable about his parents, grandparents, etc. I also know about the first marriage of his wife, **Franciska Pretszinszky**, and that János brought up her son from her first marriage. We know about Franciska's parents and paternal grandparents too.

That leaves

**Lajos Vargha and Jozefa Etényi,**

**Dániel Berzsényi and Zsuzsanna dukai Takách,**

and

**János Svastits and Krisztina Csertán**

as the three pairs of great-great-grandparents about whom I know a lot more.

In the present section, I will write about them separately in addition to having further commentary concerning the music of János Svastits in an **Add-On** to this volume and about the life, the poetry, and the reputation of Dániel Berzsényi in **Part 2B** of these volumes.

## More about Great-great-grandfather

### Lajos Varga

He was consistent in writing his name without an ‘h’ – hence I will do the same in writing about him, but in general, writing about my father’s family, I resort to writing Vargha in place of Varga. Lajos was born on June 16, 1801, as the third child of Adam Vargha and Zsuzsanna Horváth; his older siblings, Anna and Gábor died as infants.

Unfortunately, we know nothing about his youth except for the fact that he grew up in relative prosperity in the house that his father bought from Adam Horváth of Pálócz<sup>1</sup> in 1811. It had 8 rooms on the first level with a kitchen and storage room and two rooms on the second level and was one of the largest houses in Balatonfüred at the time. With the water of Lake Balaton at a much higher level then, the house was almost on the shore. Adam Vargha also bought the smaller house of Horváth; that became the home for his granddaughter, Jakobina and her family, and hence, eventually for the grandmother and her siblings of your 4<sup>th</sup> cousin, Attila Tóth.

The town of Balatonfüred is an ideal place too. Its climate is nearly Mediterranean, with several springs (14, to be exact according to my source) bursting to the surface with medicinal water. The water contains carbonic acids that can be used both internally (drinking it<sup>2</sup>) and externally (in the thermal baths of the town). The minerals in the water are good for the treatment of intestinal and stomach problems. Bathing in it is good for the skin, inhaling it helps with blood flow and hence beneficial to those with heart problems.

Bathing in the Balaton is also ideal in Balatonfüred, and the views, especially toward the lake are magnificent. Thus, it became the first town by the Balaton that was frequented by visitors both for vacationing and for the cure provided by its drinking water and mineral baths. Indeed, the thermal baths of Balatonfüred have been frequented by others as well, including another one of my great-great-grandfathers, Dániel Berzsenyi, who wrote about it most enthusiastically, while a third great-great-grandfather of mine, János Svastits wrote some beautiful music in memory of his visit to Balatonfüred. Lajos Varga and János Svastits were almost of the same age, while Dániel Berzsenyi was closer to their fathers’ age; the three of them could have met, but there is no record thereof. The well shown on the right was named after Dániel Berzsenyi.



<sup>1</sup> In Hungarian, he was known as Palóczy Horváth Ádám, a ‘Renaissance man’, who was an engineer, a poet, a collector of folk music and an early advocate of women’s rights. The house was built according to his own plans.

<sup>2</sup> When I visited with Attila Tóth in 2005, he made me drink an entire liter of that bitter-water (in Hungarian, ‘keserű víz’) every day.

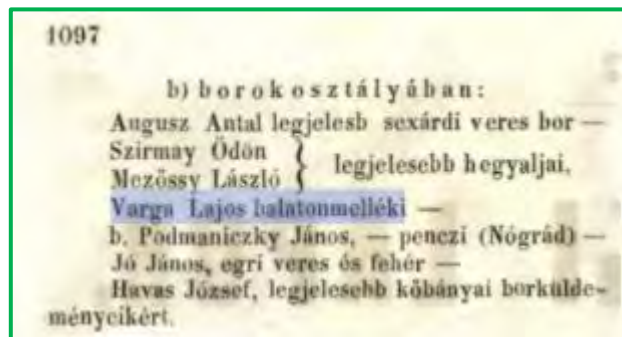


**Lajos Varga (June 16, 1801 – February 18, 1864)**

Prior to writing more about my great-great-grandfather, I must also mention yet two more attributes of Balatonfüred: it had a theater, and its soil was excellent for the cultivation of grapes.

The founding of its theater was due to the efforts of the celebrated lyric poet Sándor Kisfaludy, a contemporary of Dániel Berzsenyi, who challenged the townspeople of Balatonfüred to put together the funds for its erection. It is to his credit, as well as to the citizenry that the first theater of Transdanubia (i.e., West of the Danube in Hungary) was built in Balatonfüred within a year. It was directed by Sándor Kisfaludy until his death in 1844, and eminently served his aim of enriching the culture in the region.

When it comes to the vineyards, the Vargha family owned 5 acres thereof, spread between their house and Lake Balaton, and hence Lajos Varga had an opportunity to gain expertise in the cultivation of different varieties of grapes. In fact, he traveled throughout Austria and Germany and learned first-hand about their practice of wine making. In particular, he experimented with some root stock from the Rhine Valley and as a result, his wine was recognized as one of the 7 winners in the entire country at the first Nationwide Competition in Agricultural Produce in 1851, as shown in the clipping on the right.



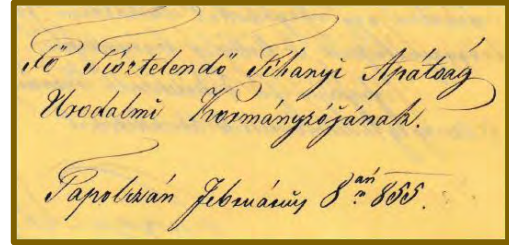
The clipping is from the 1097<sup>th</sup> column in the 47<sup>th</sup> Issue of the *Gazdasági Lapok*<sup>3</sup>, published in 1851. He also wrote a 2-part article of more than 12 pages (25 columns) in the same publication<sup>4</sup>, giving a detailed report on the vineyards of the County of Tapolca, which included the region of wine growing areas North of Lake Balaton. His expert opinions and recommendations were based on serious studies conducted by him, and his recommendations were taken seriously. His expertise was highly valued by the people who knew him, and hence those in Balatonfüred, where he was sought for his wisdom in other matters as well, but in governmental circles he was ignored in spite of his high position as the Judge Superior of the County of Tapolca. The parting words of his article were: *If my recommendations are heeded, we will surpass the countries of Western Europe in two decades, but if not, we will find ourselves twentyfold times worse off.*

As a Judge Superior, he was the chief administrator of the law in the county of Tapolca, regardless of the political situation of the country. Hence, in particular, he didn't take sides during the 1848-49 War for Independence in spite of the fact that all three of his sons were fighting against Austria during that time. He remained in his position, carrying out the directives issued. Thus, for example, in 1848, as the army of the Croatian Jellasics was invading the Hungarian countryside, he recruited a national guard of 1200 volunteers to take part in the defense of the country, and he personally led them to their gathering place in Nagykanizsa.

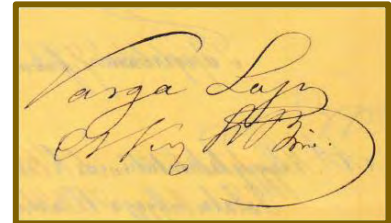
<sup>3</sup> In English, *Agricultural Journal*. Interestingly, not its pages, but its columns are numbered; there are 2 columns per page.

<sup>4</sup> *Gazdasági Lapok*, 1851, Issue 46, pp. 534-537 and Issue 47, pp. 550-552

According to a collection of biographies<sup>5</sup>, Lajos Varga was first appointed to a judgeship in Balatonfüred on June 14, 1847. Seemingly, he advanced quickly to become the Superior Judge of the entire county of Tapolca, a position he kept until his death July 12, 1860. He saw to it that during his tenure the educational system of his county was the best in the Province of Zala.



In particular, he revived the presence of overseers in every school and pressured the Monastery of Tihany to establish a Catholic school when he recognized the need for it in Balatonszőlős. I have a copy of that letter of his from 1855 and reproduced the salutation and his signature in it to show his penmanship.



Interestingly, the operation of the National Theater was also under his supervision, and he did his best to engage the best group of actors, hold on to the décor and stage settings needed, and keep the building itself in good shape. He managed to whatever extent he could, but soon after his death it was necessary to recreate the theater both in spirit and in substance several times. Presently, there are two theaters in Balatonfüred, one of them is of the ‘open-air’ variety.

Finally, I want to comment on the fact that Great-great-grandfather Lajos Varga was not only

- a highly respected expert of the various varieties of grapes and vineyards, as well as of the production of excellent wine,
- an outstanding administrator of justice as well as of other civic affairs within his county,
- a true Hungarian, but he was also an Austro-Hungarian, since his son, Imre was in military school in Graz, his son, Izidor married an Austrian Baroness Rottenhoff and daughters Emilia married an Austrian Baron Wuesthoff, while Kornélia married an Austrian Count Zedtwitz.
- a wise and highly respected man within his community<sup>6</sup>,

but he was also

- a respected scholar and orator as evidenced by the fact that at the celebration of the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Benedictine Monastery of Tihany, he was the main speaker, reflecting on the history of the monastery in spite of being a devout Lutheran.

Thus, I am properly justified in being proud of him and his contributions.

Note: I read the talk of my great-great-grandfather given in Tihany at the Monastery and found it most fascinating. Later I also did some ‘digging’ into the history of the Monastery and learned that while its founding document is written in Latin, it contains many Hungarian words and even some phrases – the first written evidence of our language.

<sup>5</sup> Kertész Károly, *Tapolcai életrajzi lexikon, 2*, Tapolca, 2003, p. 136

<sup>6</sup> Reading excerpts from the diary of László Écsy (1807-1895), I learned a lot about my great-great-grandfather and his family. Écsy was a lawyer who served as the Director of the Medicinal Baths of Balatonfüred, an important position in the town under the auspices of the Monastery, from 1836 to 1889. His detailed diaries, covering the events in Balatonfüred were recently published.

**Addenda:** A postcard from the era of Lajos Varga of his house, which served as his official headquarters (it is possible that he is the person shown in the picture) and a map showing his vineyard. The source for them is a manuscript by András Séllyei about the Teasdale family written on October 30, 2018, in Budapest. I found it on the internet at <http://www.szechenyiforum.hu/fileok/1/Teasdalek.pdf>



## More about Great-great-grandmother Jozefa Etényi

Unfortunately, I don't have a picture of her even though I have pictures of some of her daughters. Neither do I know much about her life, except for the fact that she was a Roman Catholic, and hence her grave is in the Catholic cemetery adjacent to the old Lutheran cemetery in Balatonfüred. And thus, every time we visit the Vargha graves there, we also go over to visit her lone grave near the remnants of an old church.

The inscription on it is shown on the right; translated into English, it says that she died on May 3, 1869 after being a widow for 5 years, but her memory is still alive for her children, Sándor, Imre, Camilla, Izidor, Jakobina and Cornélia.

Itt alussza örök álmát  
Néhai  
Varga Lajos ur özvegye  
ETÉNYI JOSEFA  
született 1805.  
Öt évi özvegysege után meghalt 1869 Mártius 3 án  
Gyermekei  
SÁNDOR IMRE CAMILLA  
IZIDOR JAKOBINA-CORNÉLIA  
emlékében é!



I also show one more picture of the old Vargha House below, which she sold upon her husband's death and purchased for herself an arrangement with a local woman for lodging and meals for the rest of her life. Clearly, she valued her independence and didn't want to be a burden to her kids.



The above sketch is from 1878 and was taken from page 159 of Issue 3/1971 of *Műemlék*. By then, the house was somewhat restructured and was known as the Teasdale House.

Interestingly, Dániel Berzsenyi knew Ádám Pálóczi-Horváth, the original designer and occupant of the house, who hosted János Kiss and Ferenc Kazinczy, two of Berzsenyi's closest associates in his house. Berzsenyi spent some time in Balatonfüred too – hence, he could have met Lajos Varga. That is, they barely missed one another and a third great-great-grandfather of mine, János Svastits. By the way, Berzsenyi wrote a poem, while Svastits wrote a melody about Füred.



## More about Great-great-grandfather

János Nep. Svastits

He was the great-grandfather of both of my parents, and yet neither of them ever mentioned his name. I had to wait until the 1980s and visit Márta néni (Márta Juhász, the only 1<sup>st</sup> cousin of my mother) in order to learn about him for the first time. She gave me my first Svastits family tree, with its roots (i.e., the earliest ancestors) and several of its branches on 5 additional sheets of paper and even some addresses, which I didn't even notice at that time. But I saw the note written on one of the sheets claiming that in Keszthely's Helikon Library there is a folder that contains a book entitled

*'Hungarian compositions  
by János Svastits  
for the piano  
a property of the author  
Lith. Aust. V.C. Wegelein, Wien'*

At that time, I was still too busy with mathematical activities like running the USAMTS, writing various columns, teaching and department chairing to pay much attention to the rest of those notes, but when I finally got into genealogy, during my first visit in November, 2000 to Iluska Svastits, my very first question to my cousin, was: Do you by any chance have some musical scores by our great-great-grandfather? She did, I copied the pieces she had and shared them with Imre (Jimmy) Svastics, a very distant cousin, who also left Hungary in 1956 and settled in Los Angeles. Jimmy happened to know a pianist who made a recording of the 11 pieces I copied. Now we have them, as well as some other pieces of János Svastits, on a CD. I am enjoying his wonderful melodies as I am writing about him.

Unfortunately, the only picture I have of him is from a necrology that appeared on the first page of the picturesque weekly entitled '*Hungary and the World*', whose header is reproduced below. That picture is reproduced on the next page.



He died on the 14<sup>th</sup> of December 1873, and the article gives a wonderful account of his life and of the popularity of his compositions. I will rely heavily on that article in the present writing.



**János Svastits (May 20, 1802 – December 14, 1873)**

Apart from his half-brother, Lajos, who was born nearly 3 years earlier from his father's first marriage, János was the oldest<sup>1</sup> son of Antal Svastits, a landowner in Szentgáloskér and Jozefa Dóry, about whose ancestry I wrote a separate piece. His brother, Károly, who was barely a year and a half younger, joined the priesthood and became a Benedictine priest and later the abbot of the monastery of Hahot<sup>2</sup> with his own parish in Keszthely.

Unfortunately, I know nothing about the formative years in my great-great-grandfather's life, and hence in particular, I don't know how he became a virtuoso on the violin, but it is clear that his love of music must have been overwhelming. Not only did he compose beautiful melodies, but at some point, he went so far as to have his own Gypsy band on his estate, housing them and hosting them year-round. In those days he was also fond of inviting the neighboring nobility to his place 'mulatni'<sup>3</sup>.

He married Kristina Csertán from Szentpéterúr when he was 26 and they had 9 children between 1829 and 1840, including triplets in 1832. Of them seemingly only Károly survived.<sup>4</sup> Their six surviving children, shown in the family tree below, all married and had families too. Their spouses, except for Ilona and Emilia, are not shown. Ilona was my great-grandmother on my father's side, while Emilia was my great-grandmother on my mother's side of the family.



Returning to János Svastits, his estate was located between Somogyvár and Somogy. There is a Svastits location for the family's reunion my distant cousin, Dóra Svastits the participants. It was not until



estate was in Szentgáloskér, Kaposvár in the Province of mansion there, which was the in 2003. I was not there, but sent me pictures and a list of 2005 that I finally joined them.

Returning to Great-great-grandfather János Svastits, there was a story about him, which shows his lack of concern for his estate. Supposedly, he encountered a wagon pulled by a couple of horses, which were in very poor condition, and so was the wagon. Seeing it, he told his coachman to stop and asked the driver of the wagon which landlord was the owner of such a dilapidated outfit. He was surprised to learn that he himself was the landlord in question.

<sup>1</sup> Originally, there were three of them, but the youngest brother died when he was barely a month old.

<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, the monastery was destroyed during the struggles against the Turks in the 1500s, but there was still a coterie of priests assigned to it.

<sup>3</sup> A typical Hungarian style of merry-making with lots of singing accompanied by Gypsy music and lots of drinking.

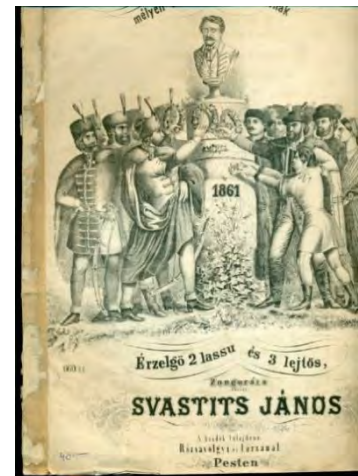
<sup>4</sup> The other two were named Hugó (in view of the fact that their first-born Hugó didn't survive) and János Nep.for his father. Earlier, the first Hugó was born in 1829 but died a week before the birth of the triplets.

Indeed, he paid little attention to his holdings and hence, he didn't manage to hold on to his estate. Thus, in his older years he lived in Keszthely at his brother's place in total seclusion except for some charity performances in support of humanitarian causes. At such times he would happily display his virtuosity and play some of his favorite compositions for his audience.

They included his popular *Ida csárdás*<sup>5</sup>, *Nefelejcs*<sup>6</sup>, *Szigligeti emlék*<sup>7</sup>, *Győri kézfogó*<sup>8</sup> and 30-some others, whose music (and sometime its words too) he composed. I have the sheet music for nearly all of them and managed to buy at an auction even one of his songbooks (the one copied earlier) and a separate song of his. They were published by Rózsavölgyi és Társa<sup>9</sup>, Hungary's largest publisher of musical notes, as well as of records, CDs, etc. Their popularity is shown by the fact that at least 6 editions of them appeared. A picture of it is shown below. I am also showing a picture of yet other compositions of his, which I purchased similarly. Unfortunately, I have no other picture of him, and of course, I don't have any of my great-great-grandmother,

Our ancestor's music ranged from the slow and majestic pieces to fast and lively *csárdás*. The former reflected the somber and disillusioned mood of the country after the loss of the 1848-49 War for Independence, while the latter paralleled the renewed enthusiasm which was widespread following the Compromise of 1867, accomplished by Ferenc Deák and his companions.

Some of Svastits' pieces are dedicated to Deák, and it seems that he once played at Deák's mansion in Kéhida when Vörösmarty, the great poet was there visiting too.



Some of his songs are dedicated to other patriotic Hungarians among his contemporaries, including the *Kálmán csárdás* to another songwriter, Kálmán Simonffy, who visited him in Keszthely and wrote about his visit<sup>10</sup> and told us about the superb piano playing of the composer's daughter, Miss Mili (Emilia, my great-grandmother) also. She was indeed excellent and was well-known for giving charity concerts later in her life.

Simonffy's report is full of praise for his friend's compositions, which he found deeply Hungarian in comparison to many other composer's pieces that are full of foreign elements.

<sup>5</sup> The *csárdás* is a traditional folk dance in Hungary. Its name is derived from 'csárda', the Hungarian name for a tavern. Its music is in 2/4 or 4/4 time, and it can be slow, fast and very fast.

<sup>6</sup> In English, forget-me-not

<sup>7</sup> In English, Memories of Szigliget, a place in Hungary

<sup>8</sup> In English, Engagement party in Győr, a city in Hungary

<sup>9</sup> Established in 1850 by Gyula Rózsavölgyi and Norbert Grinzwil, who is his companion ('társ' in Hungarian).. Gyula was the younger son of Márk Rózsavölgyi (earlier, Rosenthal, 1789-1848), a contemporary of János Svastits and a noted composer.

<sup>10</sup> *Szépirodalmi Közlöny* (in English, Literary Reports), 1858, pp. 2127-2129 and 2151-2152

Later several other compositions of his surfaced, but their number is still only 23, in addition to the 5 ‘verbunkos’<sup>11</sup> (Numbers 91, 96, 107, 111 and 127) published by another composer of his era, Ignác Ruzitska<sup>12</sup>. Many of his pieces were adapted for the piano, and I found one that was adapted for the guitar too. Therefore, at times other names appear with his as if they were the composers (like the name of V.C. Wegelein in the display on the first page of this account).

Unfortunately, I have none of his musical inheritance except for the fact that my musical tastes are probably similar to his. By contrast, Endre Spur, a great-grandson of his received a lot of it as I described in my note about him. It turns out that in addition to Great-grandmother Emilia, mentioned in Simonffy’s report, her brother, Benő was an accomplished musician too. He was first instructed on the piano in Vienna and then at the Academy in Budapest by Hungary’s supreme composer of operas (as well as of our national hymn), Ferenc Erkel. Time and again, Benő would accompany his father on his benefit concerts. Simonffy mentioned meeting him too during his visit. And of course, he mentioned meeting Károly, the abbot, who was also well-known for his generosity. I learned, for example, that he would set aside one day each week to treat 20 beggars to a meal and give 2 Forints to each of them.

I must also mention two of the granddaughters of János Svastits, Eugenia, the daughter of Benő and my maternal grandmother, Lenke Juhász, who were also gifted musically. Eugenia was a teacher of music and a celebrated mezzo-soprano singer, who appeared in most of the cities of Hungary in programs of her own. I have a clipping from the *Budapest Hírlap* (newssheets) from 1912 (November 26, p.17) describing her popularity in more detail. On the right I reproduced an advertisement for one of her concerts, spelling her name with ‘cs’ in place of ‘ts’. When it comes to my grandmother, she limited her piano playing to her home and played mostly for my grandfather, who loved her interpretation of Hungarian songs on the piano.



Finally, I must mention here his great-grandson Endre Spur, who also inherited the musical gene to such an extent that I wrote a separate piece about him in this volume.

Returning to the music of Great-great-grandfather János Svastits, I am still looking for the score of the ‘Győri kézfogó’, mentioned earlier. There were two other songs<sup>13</sup> mentioned by Endre Spur in his talk<sup>14</sup> of 1944 in Hévíz about our common ancestor, and some more might surface in the future. I will definitely be interested in them, but I would be even happier for a new CD of his known songs, featuring a Hungarian-born pianist. While I was happy with Boswell’s performance, I would probably prefer someone Hungarian playing the Svastits melodies. Klári Olasz neè Kovács, the older daughter of my late first cousin, Gyuszi Kovács, seemed to know someone to perform the music, but with Covid being rampant, everything will have to be postponed a bit.

I want to take this opportunity to express my thanks to a number of individuals for helping me gather information about my great-great-grandfather and the musical scores of his compositions.

<sup>11</sup> Stems from the German word ‘Werbung’, meaning receiving, welcoming, music that was played during the recruitment of soldiers.

<sup>12</sup> Magyar Nóták Veszprém Vármegyéből (Hungarian songs from the Province of Veszprém), reprint edition in 15 booklets, found for me by my Juhász-cousin Hédi Fodor.

<sup>13</sup> ‘Kitették a holttestet az udvarra’ and ‘Elátkozott engem az édesanyám’ – see no need for translating them into English until we have the notes for them

<sup>14</sup> *Keszthely és Vidéke*, 1944 September 2, p.3

They were Ilona (Iluska) Török neè Svastits, Egon and Imre (Jimmy) Svastics, Margit (Mandy) Svastits neè Borókay, Klári Olasz neè Kovács, Hedwig (Hédi) Szabó neè Fodor and Gergely (Gergő) Loch.

While nowadays nobody remembers him or any of his contemporary composers of Hungarian music, like János Bihari, Ignác Ruziska, Antal Csermák, Márk Rózsavölgyi and János Lavotta, back in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, they not only provided entertainment, but kept the spirit in the Hungarians following the loss of the 1848-49 War for Independence and the subsequent Austrian oppression. I am proud that my noted ancestor was among them.

And now, most importantly, I must say at least a few words about his wife, since it is true that behind every successful man, there is a woman who makes it possible for him to succeed. In his case, it was

### Great-great-grandmother Krisztina Csertán

She was born in Nemesszer to Károly Csertán (1768-1837) and Rozália Vargha of the Vargha family of Sintafalva, about which there is a separate section in this volume. Below I reproduced the baptismal registration of her triplets, a rare occasion in those days.



As mentioned earlier, she was a brave woman who made a personal appeal to Franz Joseph on account of her brother, Sándor, whose death sentence was reduced to 6 years of imprisonment in the prisons of Komárom.

According to Simonffy, she was a genteel person. She had to be most understanding and forgiving too in order to tolerate her husband's merry-making and obsession with music even to the extent of having a band of Gypsy musicians living on his estate. Though I don't know for sure, I suspect it was originally Csertán land, but in any case, it was irresponsible of him to lose it all and end up dependent on his brother in his elderly years.

My dear friend, Piroska Schandl was close to being obsessed in her search for Krisztina's burial place. We knew that there was a new Csertán crypt and that her remains were put there but couldn't find the crypt. Eventually, Piroska found its location after learning that during the communist rule of Rákosi, part of the cemetery was eliminated and that there are no records of the eliminated graves. Fortunately, I have a lengthy description of her funeral in Zalaegerszeg, which was very nice.

**ADD-ON: MUSICAL PIECES BY JÁNOS SVASTITS**

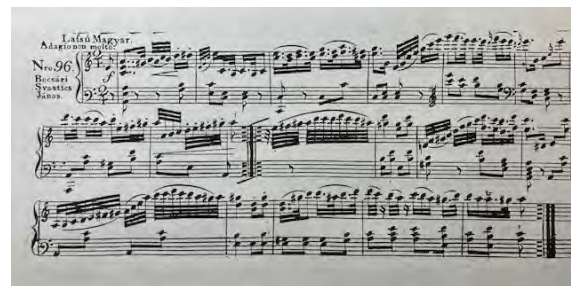
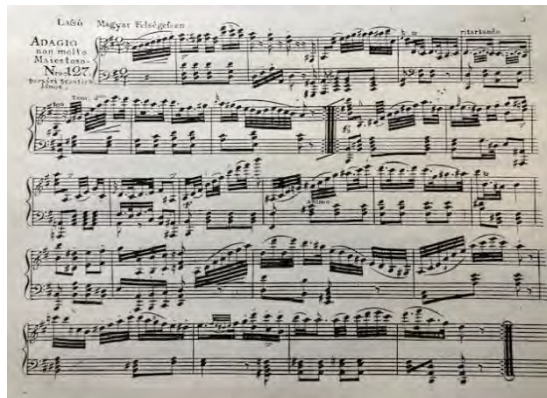
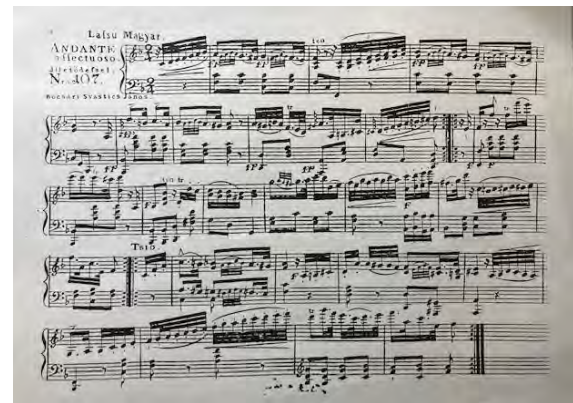
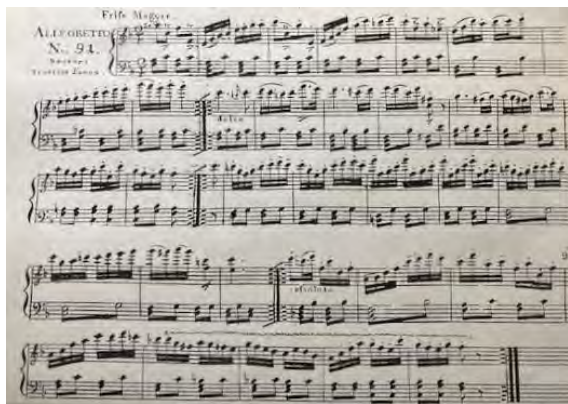
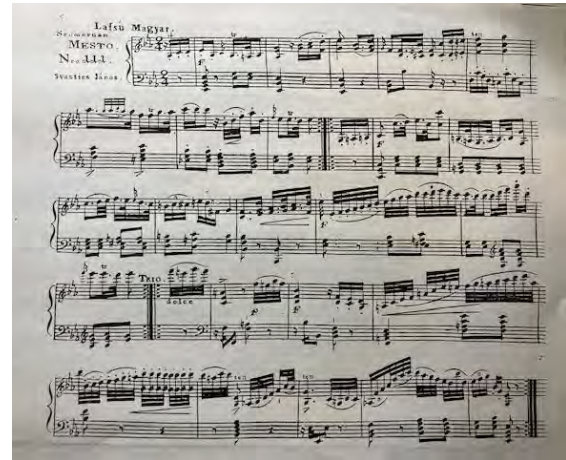
91	
96	
107	
111	
127	
Balatonfüredi emlék	Memories from Balatonfüred
Baltavári emlék	Memories from Baltavár
Barátkozzunk	Let's be friends
Bokázó	Klicking heels
Emlékhangok a távolból	Memories of vices from afar
Enyelgő	Temptations
Érzés hangjai	The sounds made by feelings
Füredi magyarok	Hungarians of Füred
Hangbokréta	A bouquet of sounds
Honfi álmai	Dreams of a patriot
Huszár csárdás	Huszár csárdás
Ida csárdás	Ida csárdás
Kálmán csárdás	Kálmán csárdás
Kedélyes	In a good mood
Kemenesaljai emlék	Memories from Kemenesalja
Kesergők	Lamentings
Kustyáni emlék	Memories of Kustyán
Magyar induló / Keszthelyi emlék	Hungarian march / Memories from Keszthely
Nefelejts	Forget me not
Récei emlék	Memories from Récs
Széplaki emlék	Memories from Széplak
Szigligeti emlék	Memories from Szigliget
Üdvözlő	Greetings

Győri kézfogó  
 Elátkozott engem az édesanyám  
 Kitették a holttestet az udvarra  
 Kerekes András

I have the scores for the first 5 pieces, the 'verbunkos' on the next page; the scores for the other are available separately. Most of the others are on the CDs commissioned by Jimmy Svastics; I have some copies of them also.

There are several more pieces attributed to him, but I don't yet have the scores for them. They are listed in red above.

## ADD-ON: VERBUNKOS PIECES BY JÁNOS SVASTITS



These 5 ‘verbunkos’ – music played during recruitment procedures into the army – were not recorded on the CD along with the other Svastits music. The scores appeared in the book whose title is displayed above on the left.



## More about my Great-great-grandfather Dániel Berzsenyi

Our distinguished ancestor is widely recognized as Hungary's most eminent classical poet. As Adam Makkai<sup>1</sup> summarized it, "he is viewed today as the unsurpassed master of classical verse forms (the hexameter, distich, and Sapphic and Alcaic stanzas, along with the lesser-known ones) in Hungarian, and as the creative genius of the concise poetic idiom." He wrote many wonderful poems with nearly unparalleled pathos. Several of them are still celebrated, and most learned people in Hungary can recite at least a few lines from them. His portrait on the third page is a typical representation of him, based on the one painted by the famous Hungarian artist, Miklós Barabás.

Dániel Berzsenyi was born in Hettye, in the Province of Vas, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May 1776, as the second child of Lajos Berzsenyi and Rozália Thulmon. His father was a lawyer, who chose not to practice; instead, he was overseeing his estate, jealously guarding his rights as a nobleman. His love of the classics, as well as his royalist loyalty enhanced with deep Hungarian patriotism were inherited by Dániel, who also inherited his father's retiring nature, which led to melancholy in his later years. His mother was gentle and loving, but clearly of much weaker constitution. Both of his parents were probably still in shock after the loss of their daughter, Rozália at age 2 shortly before the birth of Dániel, and hence they were especially cautious in his upbringing. Therefore, they delayed his schooling until later, with his father teaching him to read only at the age of 10.

Most of his biographers claim that as a child he was weak and that's why his schooling was delayed, but I doubt it. Indeed, his parents were cautious with him after losing their daughter, but when it comes to schooling, Daniel did the same with his children, claiming that it is wrong to subject the children earlier to reading and writing since at age 10 they can master those skills in just a few weeks. More than likely, his father learned about that theory and passed it down to Daniel. In any case, Dániel could not have been a weakling if his parents allowed him to roam around with the peasant boys, riding horses bareback wherever they found them until the horses foamed up. (Needless to say, the owners were not pleased, and hence Dániel was 'in trouble' time and again.)

In preparation for Dániel's formal education in Sopron, he started school in neighboring Somlyó, where he was instructed by István Polgár. At the completion of those studies in 1788, Polgár could testify to the fact that he found Dániel to be 'considerably talented'. Thereupon he was enrolled in the Lyceum in Sopron, shown on the right, where he was struggling mostly with discipline after all the freedom he enjoyed during his youth. Thus, his teachers were not pleased with him, and were clearly unaware that he learned German as well as Latin by listening and osmosis rather than via books.



<sup>1</sup> Adam Makkai (editor), *In quest of the miracle stag*, Atlantic Centeur (Chicago) & Corvina (Budapest), 1996

Nevertheless, he read a lot, and he was probably right when he claimed that once his attention was drawn to larger issues, he could no longer deal with lesser ones.

While his mother was around, she intervened on his behalf and softened his father's attitude towards him, but she died in 1794. Dániel stayed one more year in Sopron after that, but in August 1795 he joined the military only to learn that it was not to his liking either. Thereafter he escaped and spent 4 months with his uncle, János Thulmon in Nikla, who took him back to Hetye. In a subsequent letter he recommended to Dániel's father to marry off his son and set him up with an estate of his own. He assured his brother-in-law that Dániel would be a good manager of his own estate.

Lajos did so, turning over the Berzsenyi lands near the village of Bánd, but continued to be unhappy with his son's behavior, who was reading and writing late into the nights. He must have known that his son was writing poetry, which he considered inappropriate for a nobleman of sufficient wealth.

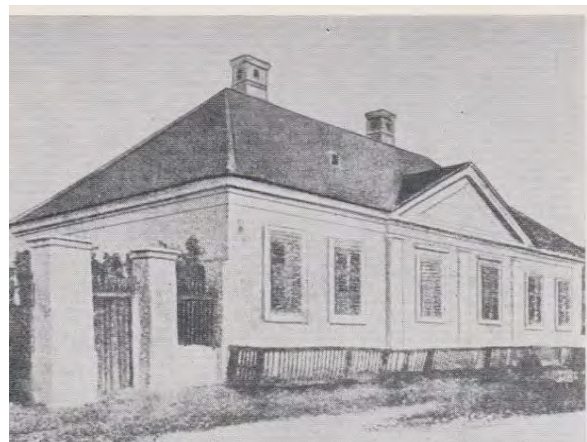
Dániel escaped from his father's house and the continuous arguments between the two of them by marrying his second cousin, Zsuzsanna dukai Takách in May of 1799.

More precisely, according to family lore, at first, Dániel was interested in one of the older Takách girls. However, after his visit the girls laughingly discussed him and found him too self-conscious and stiff, upon which Zsuzsanna burst into tears and defended him, saying that she really liked him. Thereafter, when Daniel learned about it, he started courting Zsuzsanna in spite of her young age.

One must remember that back then Dániel was not yet an important poet. Only his father knew or at least suspected that he wrote some poetry, of which he didn't approve. On the other hand, probably everyone in their circles knew that he was an undisciplined high school drop-out, who tried soldiering, but escaped from there too, and his father had to prove that due to his poor health, he needed his son to help him manage the estate. It was also probably known that he and his father got along poorly, that he regularly stayed up at night (to read and write, but that was not necessarily known by everyone), and hence he was tired during the day and not much help to his father. There was probably enough gossiping going on for all of these to be known in the Takách family too.

Therefore, it is very likely that when the 22-year-old high school drop-out expressed an interest to marry his 14-year-old little sister, Ferenc dukai Takách, who was 25 years older than Zsuzsanna (and soon to be named Judge Superior for his county, just like Lajos Varga was in the County of Tapolca) told the young man **NO!** The marriage took place only because Zsuzsanna was in love with him and was just as stubborn as her older brother, whose attitude towards Dániel was probably shared by the rest of the Takách family.

Fortunately, Zsuzsanna's mother was more understanding, and so the couple moved to Kemenes Sömjén to live with her there. Their house in Sömjén is shown on the right; it is no longer standing, but a plaque on the house occupying its



place bears a marker concerning Dániel Berzsenyi.

Equally important is the winecellar on the outskirts of Sömjén and the marker near it, where in Berzsenyi's days an old cherry tree used to stand. They are shown below, with the cellar about twice as large as it used to be.

The marker claims that this is where Berzsenyi wrote his famous odes (that is, under the old cherry tree that used to be there). The marker also claims that the Berzsenyis stayed in Sömjén until 1808, which is not the case.

While still in Sömjén, his friend, the Lutheran pastor János Kis discovered that Dániel wrote some poetry and found his poems excellent. Since he himself was into poetry, he knew Ferenc Kazinczy, the well-recognized leader of literary life in Hungary at the time, and with Dániel's permission sent him 3 of our ancestor's poems. Kazinczy was most complementary of the poems and encouraged him via Kis to continue writing.



In his book<sup>2</sup>, Noszlopy claimed that Dániel paid for the wedding with the money that his father put aside for un-mortgaging Dániel's inheritance from his mother - but that is unlikely. Without Zsuzsanna's family, there were few relatives around, and hence it was probably a small wedding and most of that money remained intact.

In Sömjén, Dániel was managing the land inherited by his wife, he was writing some of his best poetry on the side, and they had an idyllic life. When János Kis first visited them there, he found Zsuzsanna pretty and noted it in his diary.

Their daughter, Lidia was born in Sömjén in 1800 and so was their first son, Great-grandfather Farkas 3 years later. The following year Zsuzsanna's mother died. They leased the inheritance of Zsuzsanna to brother-in-law János Ajkay, sold some other things to Dániel's childhood friend, Jakab Kunos, and after releasing from mortgage Dániel's maternal inheritance, they moved to Nikla, probably in 1804.

There may have been some controversy concerning the way Dániel handled the dissolution of his wife's property; it is nearly impossible to pass judgement without knowing all of the details. Even after reading Hetyéssy's excellent reflections<sup>3</sup> on the situation, I cannot see clearly in the matter.

<sup>2</sup> Tivadar Noszlopy, *Berzsenyi Dániel és Családja*, Kaposvár, 1910

<sup>3</sup> István Hetyéssy, „Adalékok és dokumentumok Berzsenyi Dániel életrajzához”, *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények*, 5(1969), pp. 604-613

The animosity between the Takách family and my great-great-grandparents was increased by Zsuzsanna's oldest sister, Sára, who died without any children in 1811 and labeled Zsuzsanna (and Dániel) irresponsible in the 1805 version of her will. Upon dividing her property evenly among her six siblings (Ferenc, Márton, Lidia, Anna, Eszter and Zsuzsanna), she specified that Zsuzsanna should receive only the interest of her share of 15,000 Forints, which should be used in support of her children.

To make matters even worse, Zsuzsanna and Dániel were not invited to the opening of the will but were told only sometime afterwards about its content. This insulting behavior towards them and their disregard for the law prompted Dániel to sue them, resulting in 7 years of legal arguments and finally a verdict against him. Needless to say, he was not happy with the outcome, which didn't help his tendency towards melancholy. All of that was later, after they were settled in Nikla, and to be more precise, after they were stuck there. An explanation of that follows – but only later in this narrative.

Upon arriving to Nikla, they first moved into the old Thulmon house, which was located somewhere in front of the present Berzsenyi Museum, much closer to the street. It was just on the other side of the sign in the picture on the right. Only after its roof almost collapsed in a huge storm, did he embark on building the present mansion. He planted 13 fir trees in front, leaving a small alcove with benches where the old Thulmon house used to stand. The benches were no longer there, but I still remember remnants of the alcove.



After they settled in Nikla, my great-great-grandparents had two more sons, Antal and László, just like we did after moving to Beaumont – similarly, for a total of three sons and a daughter. But their Lidia was the oldest of the four and your births were 2 years apart; in their case there were 3 years between the kids. But I better get back to Dániel, who turned out to be a good but domineering husband, loving father, well-loved and respected by the villagers and a fairly good manager in spite of the fact that time and again he was caught deep in thought working on his poetry even as he was walking around his estate. The villagers referred to him as ‘Dani Uraság’ and found him just in his dealings with them. For that matter, there were no complaints registered against him at any time at any level.

Back in the years 1804 -1811 his life in Nikla was simple, and nearly idyllic. His management of the estate of 1200 acres of land and 40 acres of vineyard in nearby Gomba was exemplary and he enjoyed his successes. He made annual trips on horseback and later by carriage to Hetye to visit his father; on a couple of them he also saw the daughter of a first cousin of his, the poetess Judit dukai Takács, who wrote about those visits most enthusiastically, relating how much they enjoyed each other's company and how much they laughed during those visits.

He continued writing poetry, though seemingly, he didn't share that aspect of his life with his wife. In reality, she was probably too busy with the struggles of daily life to pay much attention to his literary activities, except for the fact that he continued to use lots of candles for his work at night.



**Dániel Berzsenyi (May 7, 1776 – February 24, 1836)**

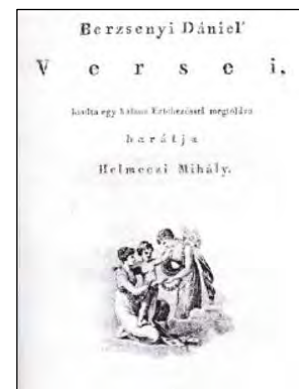
Due to his diligence back in Sömjén and then during the first few years in Nikla, by 1808 Great-great-grandfather could send a total of 77 poems to Kazinczy via Kis. He intended to publish them after making various corrections and adjustments based on the advice of Kazinczy, with whom he maintained frequent correspondence from then on. Much of that correspondence survived and has been published many times; their letters are among the best sources of information about the life of Dániel Berzsenyi.

Otherwise, back in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century all was well with him and his family, except for the fact that he was really homesick for the Kemenesalja, the region in the Province of Vas, where he spent his youth. Therefore, he was putting aside his funds little by little to take out of mortgage the land back in the Province of Vas and move back there. One of his nicest poems is about his leaving that region; the picture on the right was taken at about the place where he might have looked back for the last time and said his farewell. Part of the poem is displayed behind my oldest grandchild, Christopher (who likes the name Kristóf too) with the Hungarian T-shirt and myself in 2007. That was our first trip with one or two grandchildren over the years.



In 1810 he went to Pest to meet with the writers of Kazinczy's inner circle, to finalize and to arrange for the publication of his first book of poems. They found him morose, reserved, awkward and provincial. The truth is that indeed, he was not used to their pretentious style, which struck him as less manly, and refused their friendly kisses, excusing himself by calling their attention to the pipe in his mouth. He was probably tired of listening to their chatter, having listened to it for some days already. Since he paid for their dinner (and lunch and breakfast earlier), he didn't feel obligated to hang around them, when Bihari, the country's most famous musician was playing. He was also aware that every move of his, every word of his were closely watched, and that he was being tested and evaluated. That can be tiring too. One of my favorite authors, István Nemeskürty eloquently defended him<sup>4</sup>, though I am sure he needed no defense; he knew that his writing spoke for him well enough.

Unfortunately, the following year, 1811, turned out to be an extremely poor year for him since his home, the old Thulmon house nearly collapsed, the construction of his new house was costly, the devaluation of the Forint took place that year, and a hailstorm destroyed most of his crops. That put an end to his hopes of moving back to the Province of Vas, and he no longer had the means to publish his poems either. That's when a group of Catholic seminarians came to the rescue of the devout Lutheran poet and put together the necessary funds for publishing his book of poems, whose cover page is shown on the right.



The devaluation of the Forint to one fifth of its previous value was most devastating and forced our ancestor to give up on his dreams of moving back to the area of his youth, which he missed so much. He looked upon Somogy as a place of exile even after his fame – based on the circulation of handwritten copies of his poems – reached the leading noblemen of the province and he was appointed 'táblabíró', a judicial post just above the level of a

<sup>4</sup> István Nemeskürty, *Tűzes józanság* (meaning, fiery seriousness), Budapest, 1993

provincial judge. He was also recognized openly as the distinguished poet of Somogy at the annual gathering of the leading dignitaries of the Province in Kaposvár. That marked the beginning of the friendly rivalry between the provinces of Vas, where he was born and Somogy, where he lived most of his life and where he died. His celebrations in the Province of Vas on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May, his birthday, and in the Province of Somogy on February 24, when he died, are annual events and are huge in certain years (as they were on the 100<sup>th</sup>, 150<sup>th</sup>, and 200<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of those events).

His book of poems finally appeared in 1813 and was well-received throughout the country both by the younger and the older generations. It was so popular that all its copies were sold, and Dániel had to make plans for a second edition thereof. That was published in 1816 with some new poems in it; it was also a ‘best-seller’. In the meantime, he met, totally unintentionally with Count György Festetics in Keszthely, paving the way for him to send a copy of the 1816 edition of his book to Count Festetics and plant the idea of a Weimar-like celebration in his cover letter. In response, Count Festetics created the Helikon celebrations in Keszthely, where he treated our ancestor as the most honored guest in 1817. By the way, it was Count Festetics, who established the high school in Csurgó which I attended and from which my cousin, Laci Köllő graduated, as well as the Georgikon in Keszthely, where my brother got his first degree. Unfortunately, Count Festetics died in 1819 and with him the Helikon celebrations too. The latter were revived recently by the Berzsenyi Society<sup>5</sup> in Kaposvár, and they usually focus on some aspect of the poetry and teaching of Dániel Berzsenyi.

In 1814, Gábor Döbrentei, Miklós Wesselényi and Wesselényi’s mentor, Mózes Pataki visited Dániel Berzsenyi in Nikla, and they planted two chestnut trees and a beam<sup>6</sup> tree. They were still bearing fruit when I was a child; now only the chestnut tree planted by Dániel is alive. It is featured in a book about famous trees in Hungary<sup>7</sup>. Below I show a picture of it from that book, along with a picture of the row of cornel berry trees that were also planted by Dániel Berzsenyi (also from that book). I made several jars of jam from the cornel berries when we were in Hungary in 1978.



His only frequent visitor was István

<sup>5</sup> Its full name in Hungarian is Berzsenyi Dániel Irodalmi és Művészeti Társaság; i.e., it is a society of literature and the arts. Formed in 1904, it had to be restarted in 1925, 1946 and 1985 due to wars and communism.

<sup>6</sup> In Hungarian we called it berkenye, but I am less certain about its English name

<sup>7</sup> Kapocsy György, A magyarság nevezetes fája, Helikon Kiadó, 2000

Barcza, the husband of Zsuzsanna Gömbös, Dániel's 1<sup>st</sup> cousin from nearby Pusztakovácsi. Otherwise, he lived such a solitary life that some referred to him as the Diogenes of Somogy.

Unfortunately, in 1816 when he was riding in a carriage with his relative, István Berzsenyi, the carriage turned over when the horses were frightened by something. As a consequence, his shoulder was dislocated, and he suffered with it for a year until at the advice of friends he called upon a folk-healer from the village of Sámson who succeeded in manipulating his arm into its socket. Hence, it added to his melancholy, a Thulmon inheritance that plagued him throughout his life. He complained about his inability to write and wondered whether his poetic vein had dried up.

The following year turned out to be even worse, since that's when Kölcsey's harsh criticism of Berzsenyi's book of poems appeared in the publication of the National Academy of Sciences. Up until then, he was only praised, but now he had to defend his works. He suspected that Kölcsey was Kazinczy's stooge or that at the very least, Kazinczy knew about the attack and encouraged it. I agree with my great-great-grandfather, and I also recognize the reason for it: Kazinczy's well-justified jealousy.

He was deeply hurt by both the content and the tone of Kölcsey's criticism. Thereafter he spent a lot of time and effort to defend himself. In preparation, he took advantage of the excellent library of Kaposvár and later of the Lyceum in Sopron, where he set up a household for himself for at least a couple of years while his younger boys were enrolled in school. His presence assured that both of his boys completed their studies. By then, Farkas was in Law School in Győr, and hence, he was of no concern.

His defense against Kölcsey's criticism appeared in 1825, the year his daughter got married – to a member of the Barcza family. The wedding was a happy occasion for a reunion of the various relatives. Afterwards Lidia moved to Halimba, in the Province of Veszprém, which turned out to be a 'safe haven' for her parents in 1831, when they joined her for 6 weeks due to rumors of a possible peasant uprising in Somogy.

Whenever he was away from Nikla, he turned over the management of his estate to his relative, Sándor Korenika, but he was in correspondence with his wife too.

In fact, several letters of his written from Sopron to his wife survived in testimony of his controlling attitude and downright stinginess when it came to finances.

At one time, he wanted to sell the horses his wife was using but backed off when she complained.

In another letter, he promised to buy a dress for her if he was successful in selling some cattle well – as if it was such a big expense for a rich landowner to do so. And then he had the audacity to claim in a letter to Kazinczy that it is her who is content with simpler dresses than her sisters!

At yet another time, when he learned that one of his sons bought some silver spoons, he wanted to sell them, saying that spoons made of tin are good enough as long as one has food to eat. Susi (his endearing name for his wife) must have loved him very much to put up with such stinginess! Admittedly, his own clothing was simple and well-worn too, but whenever he left his estate, he always put on his festive Hungarian dress uniform and his sword and adopted the persona of the proud noble man – one of several personas he created for himself - more about them later.





Rather than enlarging the seal on this document, I found another document by Farkas and pieced together the fragmented seal on the right to give my readers a closer look at it.

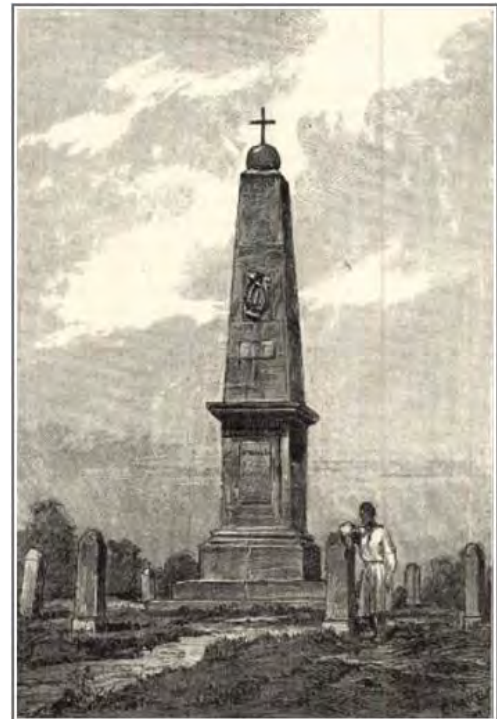
In **Part 2C**, I will describe the various coats of arms used by the Berzsenyi family over the years.

Moreover, in **Part 2B**, I will also have a **Berzsenyi Dániel Gallery** to show the many different portraits, statues, and other representations of Dániel Berzsenyi that are around.

And then, of course, I will also have a lot more information on his poetry. Moreover, I will also have a piece entitled **Anecdotes from the life of Dániel Berzsenyi**.

While it is true that his health began to decline, it is also true that between 1832, when it first opened, until his death in 1836, Dániel Berzsenyi was the most prolific borrower of books from the Library of Kaposvár, making the 80-kilometer (50 miles) roundtrip by coach every two months. His last trip there was on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January – hence his death was sudden barely a month later, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February.

He was buried at a spot chosen by him earlier, overlooking the region, not far from the furthest point of his huge orchard. According to the stories passed down by the people of Nikla and collected by István Hársházi, he often walked to that spot and gazed from there towards the Balaton beyond the nearby marshland. He wanted a simple funeral with only his family and the serfs in his employ attending it. Accordingly, in spite of the extremely cold winter, 16 of his most faithful men carried his casket to his resting place, all of them wearing a traditional bodice and billowing white shirts. The present crypt was constructed at the same time as the obelisk, in 1859. The sketch on the right is from 1884. The marble slab with the names engraved was added in 1895 by my grandfather, Sándor Berzsenyi, who had Dániel's bones transferred to a strong oak coffin.



In closing this part, I want to return to my claim that our famous ancestor created several different personas for himself. I mentioned one of them, the proud noble man with appropriate attire – that pride was probably inherited from his father though I doubt that his father was concerned with appearances since he managed to gain a reputation of being an excellent lawyer in spite of rarely practicing his profession.

Dániel was indeed, very proud of his ancestry. As he once claimed (again, in a letter to Kazinczy), he had Nádasdi, Gyulafi and Zrinyi blood in his veins (of which the first is true, the others I have not yet verified) and csebi Pogány Ilkó and Magdolna Török (who was reputed to bathe in a tub made of silver) among his foremothers (which is also true). In another letter, he claimed to be related to Kazinczy's wife, and yet in a third one to Döbrentei, Wesselényi and Szentmiklóssy (all true, except for the last one).

Dániel was also very self-conscious about his appearance in the picture that was to accompany the first publication of his poetry, wanting to hide the fact that he was stout, and assuring everyone that his measurement was much larger in the chest than in the stomach area. Thereby he negated one picture in favor of another and was also fussy about the way his festive jacket's buttons appeared. Seemingly, he had a mental image of himself as the great poet (which he was) and tried to mold himself accordingly. With respect to his appearance, I am sure he would have liked the images based on the painting of Miklós Barabás.

In one of his first letters to Kazinczy, he also claimed to be 29 years old, whereas in reality, he was already 33. Clearly, he felt too old to declare himself as an admirer and somewhat a follower of his – maybe hence the deception. He also claimed to be ignorant of the rules of poetry, and yet of all the poets of his era, he turned out to be the most versatile master of metric verses. He taught himself rather than being taught, since he probably paid no attention in class.

Projecting himself as nearly super-human in strength was yet another persona he wanted for himself. Claiming that jumping over a table was child's play for him and that he threw a dozen Germans into the lake – they are clearly exaggerations, stemming probably from his shorter stature and the need for proving that it did not deter him. Claiming (in the same letter to Kazinczy) that his first lover fainted in his arms is another outlandish story.

The many different names in his love poems suggest that he was popular among the girls of Sopron, which is probably true, but once again, he may have gone overboard. I am inclined to agree with László Németh, who claimed that Berzsenyi was in love mostly with the idea of love. There was probably a girl, possibly Judit Perlaky, to whom he wrote many of his love poems, but it would be hard to verify that claim.

And yet another manifestation of the contradictions in his life was that wherever he went by carriage, the horses pulling it were pitiful in comparison to the 70-80 horses in his stud farm. There is an anecdote about that, which I relate later.

Concerning Zsuzsanna, he claimed in his letter to Kazinczy that she was 14, while she was past 15 when they got married. He also claimed that she was average in everything and that he chose not to elevate her from the simpleminded state in which he found her. He went on to say that while her sisters lived in manor houses and painted rooms, she was satisfied with the two rooms they shared, and she did not complain when he purchased cattle in place of a fancy dress for her.

In other words, he created a persona for her too. I will question its accuracy soon, but first I need to introduce her more properly.

As a preliminary I must assume that while to the outside world he didn't want to admit it, he must have confided in Susi (his nickname for her) his woes and joys; if for no other reason, there was no way for him to hide them. Moreover, I would like to think that in spite of some appearances, he was a loving husband towards her, appreciating her love and sacrifices for him.

I certainly cannot imagine a happy family life otherwise. Since all four of their children grew up to be outstanding members of society and productive too, I must believe that they came from such surroundings.

### Great-great-grandmother Zsuzsanna dukai Takách

According to our records, she was the youngest of 12 children born to Ferenc dukai Takách (1722-1792) and Éva vámosi Saáry (1740-1803) and was born on February 26, 1784. Four older sisters and two older brothers of hers also reached adulthood. As in most other well-to-do noble families, the girls were probably instructed by a governess, who taught them reading, writing and arithmetic, as well as piano playing and maybe some language(s). As the youngest of the five girls, Zsuzsanna probably learned not only what was taught to her but most everything that her sisters learned also.

Her older brother, Ferenc became Judge Superior for his county, just like Lajos Varga was in the County of Tapolca. His inheritance and his salary of 200 Forint per year made him a rich and powerful man. He never married but stayed in the house shown on the right, and hence when Dániel made his first visit to the dukai Takách family, he was there, along with his mother and his three younger sisters, Anna, Eszter and Zsuzsanna who were not yet married.



When it comes to Zsuzsanna, some biographers of Berzsenyi, following his false assertion, claim that she was only 14 when she married him, but clearly, on May 21, 1799, the day of the marriage, she was already almost 3 months past her 15<sup>th</sup> birthday. Back then mar-

rying at a young age was more common. In comparison, when my Fritsch grandmother married my Vargha grandfather close to 100 years later (on February 17, 1890), she was barely a month past her 16<sup>th</sup> birthday.

As it is evident from their marriage record shown below, the only witness to it was Dániel's friend, Pál Káldy. He and his wife, Borbála Wittnyédy were among the godparents of their first two children, Lidia and Farkas. They were joined by a couple of further Takách relatives and Judit Perlaki in case of Lidia and János Kis and his wife in the case of Farkas, but none of the siblings of Zsuzsanna were included. Nor did they appear as godparents for their sons, Antal and

1799.	Vőlegény	Menyasszony	Bizonyoságok
Die 21 Maji.	Hetyei Tek. N. és Vzlő Egyházas Bersenyi Dániel Ifju Ur 22 eszt.	Semgyéni Néhai Tek. N. és N. Dukai Takács Ferentz Urnak haj. árvája Susánna, 16 eszt.	Tek. N. N. Alsó-Káldi Káldi Pál Ur
			Nemesdömölkön, 1893. febr. 5. Nagy Sándor, ev. lelk.

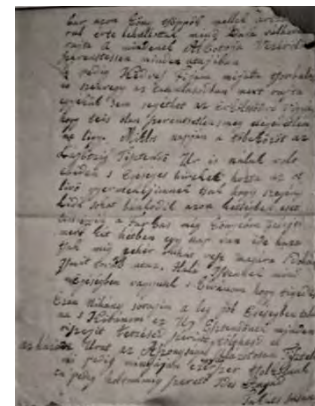
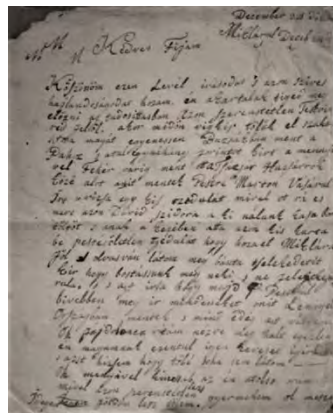
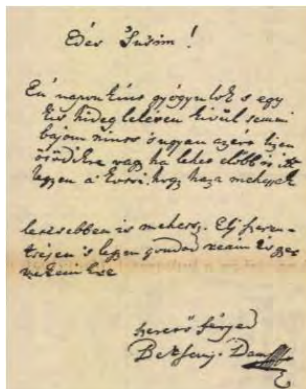
László, born in Nikla some years later. Clearly, Zsuzsanna must have loved him enough to marry him even against her family's approval.

In Nikla, Zsuzsanna was most appreciated by the people and fit in perfectly as the lady of the manor house, who looked after the orphans and the sick and made sure that there would be a midwife assisting the women of the village when they gave birth to their children.

Concerning the upbringing of her four children, I have no doubt that while her husband may have taught them how to read (and write?), it was she who shaped them culturally, preparing the boys for the Lyceum in Sopron. I have no idea where Lidia went to school, but she learned German and French somewhere since she translated literary works from those languages. Did the children have German-speaking governesses as they were growing up? After they moved into the manor house that is home to the Berzsenyi Museum now, there was enough room to have such a person. There was also space for a piano. In 1936 there was an article claiming that a piano was located which had belonged to the family of Dániel Berzsenyi, according to my grandmother. When they moved into the manor house Lidia was at the right age (12) to learn how to play.

We are told by Noszlopy and others that Lidia wrote poems, as well as Farkas and László. It is highly unlikely that their mother would not have known about it, and hence, by extension about her husband's successes and frustrations. She must have seen Dániel's books of poetry, and if nothing else, knew what caused his husband's gloomy moods.

Thus, I strongly believe that while she may not have been his literary partner, she knew about his achievements and took pride in them. Below I reproduced a brief letter of Dániel's to her and a longer one by her to their son, László. While it is obvious that she used the pen only occasionally, her letter is a testimony to the fact that she was his capable and loving partner in life, far more than the persona of his creation.



These are the only letters of hers that survived, but Noszlopy quoted from another one, also to László, in which she complained about the dismal mood of Dániel, Farkas and Antal, saying that their faces would be in pain if they happened to crack a smile. I appreciate her humor.

# Notes





## Notes