



## A Boundary Marker at the Foot of a Calvary Cross

Henri Beraud

*The Trianon Treaty, as we know, chopped off large chunks of Hungary – 71%, to be exact! – to help form the so-called Successor States. It gave away most of Hungary’s natural resources, made main railway lines unimportant, cut off market towns from their sources of supply. The borders were drawn arbitrarily by outsiders, usually thousands of kilometers away. But sometimes it was done on the spot. Lest we be accused of being biased, we quote a Frenchman who here describes the absurdity of one instance of border-drawing.*

Somewhere in the northern part of the great Hungarian Plain, at the end of wheat fields, there is a small village: Tarpa. In this tiny village there are 100 farmers who have no wood with which to heat during the winter or to repair their houses, but they harvest the wheat by the bushelful. Fortunately Providence, knowing people’s needs, placed a market town with forests called Beregszász, where only woodcutters are to be found, within a two-hour ox-cart ride. For over a thousand years, the harvesters of Tarpa brought their sacks of wheat to Beregszász, returning from there with their carts full of logs of wood and bundles of brushwood. When a hundred-weight of wheat, or a cord of wood rolled along the road, the state treasury demanded its own share and everyone was satisfied.

One summer day in 1919, gentlemen arrived there and, pointing to a stone at the foot of a Calvary Cross, told the peasants: “You people from Tarpa, you are Hungarian and you people from Beregszász are Slovak. This stone that you see here is the boundary, and here are two gendarmes who will tell you the rest.” The peasants raised their caps and from then on, neither wheat nor wood is transported

along the road. Since then, the people of Beregszász are hungry, while the people of Tarpa are cold. This is the full story.

*taken from “Le feu qui couve”, chapter 3, pp. 21-22, 1932, Les Editions de France, as quoted in “Trianon” by Yves de Daruvár,*

*translated by EPF*



*Sziki Károly and Judit*

## Remembering Trianon in Fairfield, CT

EPF

*An afternoon of remembering the dictated Treaty of Trianon was held at the Calvin United Church*

*of Christ in Fairfield, CT on Sunday, May 31st, following the Sunday service.*

Guest presenters were Sziki Károly from Eger and his daughter Judit from Budapest. They dedicated the afternoon to Pál László and his wife Róza, who was among the audience, to Egervári Gyula and to Tar Gyula, all of whom had done so much to keep the Hungarian spirit alive and energized in Connecticut. They also paid tribute to Szelecky Zita, the great actress whose 100th anniversary of her birth was observed recently.

In recalling the tragic injustice inflicted on Hungary by the Treaty of Trianon, which **robbed** the country of **71 percent** of its territory, the father-daughter team quoted comments by Western diplomats, who had declared that the terms of that document sowed the seeds of further unrest and turmoil, and they interspersed these with verses by well-known Hungarian poets.

Sziki Károly declared, “It’s not sufficient merely to bewail and mourn; one must also give hope.”

And that hope is rooted within each and every one of us, within our hearts.



*Top: Trianon memorials: Farkaslaka, Transylvania; Kanizsa; Nagykőrü. Middle: Csátlaka; Tiszasziget. Bottom: Zebegény; Celldömölk.*

## Búzavirág a magyar határról

*This poem reflects the post-World War I sentiments of Hungarians in Transylvania, who all of a sudden found themselves under Rumanian rule thanks to the treaty of Trianon.*

## Búzavirág a magyar határról

Reményik Sándor

Túl Váradon, a róna kapuján,  
Ahol a táj a végtelenbe tágul,  
Ahol azóta szomorún aratnak,  
S nóta se száll a lányok ajakáru,  
Ott termett e kis kék búzavirág,  
Onnan hozta egy bujdosó magyar  
És hozzátette: Nincsenek csodák.

Magyar s magyar közt öles szakadék:  
Nekik – ott túl, maradt egy kis hazájok!  
Nekünk itt, semmink, semmink se maradt,  
Csak az, hogy néha gondolhatunk rájuk.

Egy búzavirág a magyar határról...  
És ezt *mi* mondjuk így: *magyar határ!*  
Kiket az Isten egy néppé teremtett:  
Köztünk most véres tilalomfa áll!

Egy búzavirág a magyar határról ...  
Ott nőtt a véres tilalomfa mellett:  
Halálos hűség ő-s-symboluma;  
Aki letépte, annak nagyon kellett.

Aki letépte, nekem hozta el.  
Halkan zizegnek száraz szirmai,  
Belőlük kalásztenger sóhaját  
S szabad szél süvítését hallani.

Halálos hűség symbolumaként  
Eltettem – s a szívem fölött hordom:  
Hogy itt, az idegenné lett hazában,  
Hontalanul is – magyar sors a sorsom.

1920 június 7

*Reményik Sándor (1890 – 1941) was a writer born in Kolozsvár. After the end of World War I, after Transylvania had been given to Rumania by the Great Powers, he continued to write under the pseudonym "Végvári". His aim was to revive drooping Hungarian spirits, rekindle hope and urge perseverance. He was the guiding light of the post-World War I Hungarian literature in Transylvania.*

## Long-Term Effects of Trianon: Szelmenc, a Village Cut in Half

Erika Papp Faber

*When the Treaty of Trianon dismembered Hungary in 1920, giving away 71% of the country's territory – despite the fact that **the Hungarian delegate was the ONLY one who had opposed going to war!** – the borders were drawn arbitrarily.*

*Those lost territories became political footballs that could be tossed whichever way the whim of the great powers dictated. The will of the population – the much-touted "self-determination of peoples" principle – was totally ignored. And those border changes had far-reaching effects on the inhabitants, lasting to our own days, as illustrated by the story of Szelmenc.*

Szelmenc was first mentioned in Hungarian documents in 1332, but

with Subcarpathia, it was returned to Hungary by the First Vienna Award which seemed to rectify some of the injustice inflicted by Trianon. But then, in 1945, the village was partially ceded to the Soviet Union, and **foreign powers drew the border down the middle of the main street!** Nagyszelmenc (comprising about two-thirds), was handed to Slovakia, and Kisszelmenc was given to Ukraine – **a pure Hungarian village now part of TWO foreign countries!**

In 1946, a mini Berlin wall consisting of an 18-foot high plank fence was erected. This "border" was patrolled by Russian, White Russian, Ukrainian, Czech or Slovak soldiers. People were not allowed to cross from one side of the town to the other. Nor were they allowed to call across the border to their relatives and friends on the other side – that was declared **a criminal offense!** Since the patrols did not



*Trianon Monument in Budapest*

developed into a village only in the Middle Ages. Its inhabitants, even today, are overwhelmingly Hungarians: The Magyar population of Nagyszelmenc is 99.9%, while that of Kisszelmenc is 92.5% Hungarian.

Until the end of World War I, Szelmenc was a village in Hungary. Then after the Treaty of Trianon, 1920, it became part of Czechoslovakia. In 1938, together

understand Hungarian, the inhabitants developed a novel way of communication: they sang their family news while working in their gardens.

Just a couple of examples will highlight the hardship division of the village caused for the inhabitants. The day the border was drawn, a 9-year old girl had the flu, and was being looked after by her

grandmother. Due to the division by this new “border”, she was never able to go back to her parents! Also, people were unable to bury their family members who lived on the other side of the fence, or even to visit their graves.

To go from one side of the “border” to the other, people would have to get visas. If people from Kisszelmenc wanted to visit their family in Nagyszelmenc, a distance of 60 feet, they would have to go to Ungvár, some 20 miles away, where they were made to wait a day, or a day and a half. Once they crossed the Slovak border, they returned to almost the exact place from where they had started, after having traveled some 40 miles.

Would they want to visit Kisszelmenc from Nagyszelmenc, the procedure was even lengthier. They would have to travel to Eperjes, to the Ukrainian consulate, a trip of 100 kilometers, or roughly 60 miles. They would hand in their visa applications and go home. Two weeks later, they would have to go back to pick up their visas in Eperjes. Only then would they be allowed to go to Felsőnémeti, the Slovak-Ukrainian border post 80 kilometers (50 miles) south. At the end of the trip they were back where they started from, except that now they were on the other side of the barbed wire.

Should anyone have wanted to contact relatives on the other side of the barbed wire by mail, the letter would go via Kiev and Moscow, through various instances of censorship, and would arrive at its destination – if it ever did! – months later.

Zelei Miklós, a poet and writer, searching for his ancestors, discovered the bizarre situation of Szelmenc and wrote about it in a book entitled “*A kettézárt falu*” (The Village Shut in Two), in 2000. He had to follow the lengthy visa process in order

*Egy Szelmencből lett a kettő, egyesítse a Teremtő!  
Áldjon Isten békességgel, tartson egybe reménységgel!  
Mi reményünk megmarad, összeforr mi szétszakadt.  
Két Szelmencnek kapuszárnya, falvainkat egybezájra.*

(One Szelmenc became two, may the Creator unite them.  
May God bless us with peace, keep us together with hope.  
Our hope remains, what has been torn apart will knit together.  
The gate leaves of the two Szelmenc will close our villages into one.)

to have a book signing in the two parts of the divided village. The publicity he gave to this undertaking drew the attention of many supporters outside the area.

To highlight the injustice of the divided village, a *székelykapu* – a traditional carved gate – was installed in 2003, one half on the Slovak side, the other half on the Ukrainian side of the border. A poem was inscribed on the half that is in Ukraine:

meeting was held on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC with members of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, to which the Slovak and Ukrainian ambassadors were also invited. The film “Szelmenc, the Divided Village” clearly presented to them the absurd situation and provided ample publicity for it. Then in 2005, 70 years after the “border” was drawn, a pedestrian border crossing was finally agreed upon by Slovakia and Ukraine and opened on December 23rd.

Theoretically, the border crossing is open 12 hours a day; however, Kisszelmenc now lives by Kiev time, one hour ahead of Nagyszelmenc, which is on Central European time. This means that when the Ukrainian side of the border crossing opens at eight, the Slovak side is still closed because there it is only seven in the morning. Thus the 12 hours are shortened to 10. But apart from all that - lest one think that “all’s well that ends well”: **visa requirements still exist, and the costs involved can exceed an entire month’s wages!** The barbed wire has been replaced by more subtle bureaucratic obstacles. **Almost a hundred years later, Trianon still rules.**

Where now is the UN Human Rights Council which is “responsible for the promotion and protection of all human rights around the globe”?



In 2004, through the efforts of the American Hungarian Federation, a

Erika Papp Faber is Editor of Magyar News Online.

# When World War II Ended 70 Years Ago

Remig A. Papp

*We had left Budapest as the Germans and the Russians began to fight it out around the capital, and had kept going West “until we find the first American soldier”, which was my parents’ mantra. The American soldiers reached us in a small town named Blankenburg, in the Harz Mountains of northern Germany, after the European phase of the war ended on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1945.*

*Our family of four was assigned one room in someone’s apartment, an apartment where two other families had also been billeted by the authorities. Dad heard of some Hungarians in the town, including a few hospitalized *levente* (members of a paramilitary youth organization).*

*These are a few excerpts taken from my Dad’s diary, June to August 1945.*

Sunday, June 10, 1945

Early in the week, I went to the hospital, to look up the Hungarians. There are six of them. Ensign F. has a leg missing from the thigh, Cadet Sergeant D. lost one arm from his shoulder, the other four have lesser injuries. They – 160 of them – left Hungary with an ambulance train in January, and were brought here to Blankenburg. The rest have dispersed, one group was sent on foot toward Thale before the German defeat. How far these got, they didn’t know. They are allowed to go out very little; they are all getting ready to go home, since their families are there. F. spends his days and nights thinking about his prosthesis, because the technician, from whom it had been ordered, probably lost his shop to fire in Halberstadt (a horrendous air raid of 9 carpets of incendiary bombs had destroyed Halberstadt on April 8th. Trans.) He’s a locksmith, a mechanic, and he wants to get hold of some material. Then he will make the artificial leg himself...

On Tuesday, three of the Hungarian *levente* (the paramilitary youth organization to which some of the ones in the hospital belonged. Trans.) showed up. The Americans didn’t dare take them along, because they were going to their headquarters in Frankfurt. They provided them with food, left them two hundred-weight of nails, and now they live by selling that off, bit by bit. This has made them a little cocksure, because they didn’t accept the full-time work a large farmer offered them in return for lodging, and so they’re loitering in the town. One of them is an apprentice from the Ganz machine works who is widely traveled and is their interpreter. He’s a young rascal, and unfortunately has a negative influence on the behavior of the group.



*A street scene in Blankenburg with castle on the hill.*

Six hundred *levente* started out from home, on military orders, and kept coming as far as Schwarzwedel, through showers of air raids, through collapsing Germany. Only 200 of them arrived there. One young boy is the son of a railway employee who became the victim of an air raid; his mother may be here in Germany. They’ve been carried away by the American atmosphere, by the opulence they have seen, so all five of them want to go to America if possible. Poor, miserable, broken-down Hungary does not entice them back,

only if there is no possible way to get to America.

It’s awful to think of what became of those many hundreds, even many thousands of children, *levente*, who were thus, by military orders, torn from their families and are now tossed about here in Germany. Those who are not under Russian military occupation probably have it good, although these may perhaps get home sooner...

It’s awful to think of what became of those many hundreds, even many thousands of children, *levente*, who were thus, by military orders, torn from their families and are now tossed about here in Germany. Those who are not under Russian military occupation probably have it good, although these may perhaps get home sooner...

...The whole week was spent guessing, are the Russians coming or not? Some reports say they won’t occupy Braunschweig, but only Anhalt and Sachsen provinces. In that case – thanks to the impossible old political borders – Blankenburg would be totally surrounded, within a distance of 5-6 kilometers, because Halberstadt, Quedlinburg, and even the villages between all belong to Prussia. It’s also been rumored that in this case, Blankenburg would be handed over to the Russians on account of provisioning difficulties. (This is exactly what happened a few weeks later. Trans.)

June 16, 1945

We have worried a lot about whether to flee further? And if so, where? ... But if all of Europe is going to be Red within the year, does it make sense to keep running? These are questions without answers, which disturb our sleep and interfere in our lives...

...A knock came on the door, and two uniformed Hungarian officers stepped in. They came from Hannover and Bergen, looking for Hungarians. They have set up a record

office in the Humboldt School in Hannover which registers Hungarians who have fled to Hannover and Braunschweig, with the idea of later transporting them home. It was a great surprise and relief to these gentlemen that I had already recorded the Hungarians of Blankenburg and gave them the list...

They didn't have much good to report about Hungary. There is a new government... Conditions in Budapest are pitiful, 3 ounces of bread, one pound of potatoes per day, 3 ounces of cooking oil a week. The Germans have more or less ransacked the country, particularly lacking are hospitals and hospital equipment which they also took with them. The bridges have been replaced with pontoon bridges, water and electricity are available only in certain sections of the city... These were the first news we have had from home...

In the afternoon I hurried over to the hospital to bring the six Hungarians the good news. It was truly good news for them that the Hungarians are beginning to organize, that they were already registered somewhere and if they are put out of the hospital they will have someplace to turn. They have no other choice but to go home, because their families are all at home, they don't speak the language, and it's very difficult to start a new life with one arm or one leg...

#### June 26, 1945

Unfortunately, we can only listen to the radio for 10 or 15 minutes in the evening, to the 8 o'clock English news, if our landlord is at home and they're not having supper just then. So we've only heard from acquaintances that Hungary, that poor, ransacked, ruined country, has to pay 250 million dollars war reparations to Russia. This piece of news is certainly true; less likely is the other, according to which Austria and Hungary would be evacuated by the Russians who would cede it to American-British occupation. One becomes so elated at such bits of

news, only when one stops to think about it does one realize later that it's very, very unlikely...

One night, G.M. dropped in very late, and very frightened, saying the Duke (Duke Ernest Augustus von Braunschweig) was moving from the castle, in a hurry, to Hannover. A great many moving vans did come and took a lot of furniture, which allegedly had been brought to safety here from his other castles... (Later) It was said that the Duke ... had himself also left. In general, the Duke was the yardstick. The Duke has already left, the Duke is still here. (His son) Prince Christian will marry the English king's daughter, and Hannover-Braunschweig will become a kingdom. Before I knew who he was, I almost introduced myself to him at the tailor's...

Yesterday we held a great Hungarian "war council" in the hospital where, in addition to the four wounded, G.M., W. and I also took part. The boys want to leave the hospital as soon as possible and want to move to Hannover, despite some unfavorable circumstances, such as the (scanty) food supply. They are maimed people whose only aim is to get home as soon as possible...

#### Hannover, August 26, 1945

The most important event of the last 16 days was that World War II officially ended on August 15<sup>th</sup> with the surrender of Japan. Amid our daily concerns, we took note of this earth-shaking event almost with indifference and apathy. What affected us more directly is that they'll be giving us somewhat more bread in the 79<sup>th</sup> nutrition period but our family will have one kilogram less sugar per month (3 instead of 4), and less jam, but almost an ounce more meat a week...

The J.'s have later news from home. They had heard the farewell address of the Nazi government in February, broadcast when Budapest

fell. According to that, there's no more Parliament, no more Fisher's Bastion, no more Matthias Church, Basilica, Gellért Hotel; in other words, all that had been beautiful in Budapest no longer exists. (This was an example of the false rumors which were spread at the time. Since all means of communication had been cut, nothing could be verified, and upsetting rumors spread like wildfire. Trans.)

Allegedly, some 300,000 people, soldiers and civilians died, perished in Budapest during the siege which lasted over six weeks. It's a terribly large number, and we can only hope it's not true. And after the occupation of the city, the Russians executed some 10,000 German sympathizers, Nazis and strongly Right-wing leaders.

We were dumbfounded to hear this news, and we reflected in silence for a long time after the J.'s left. The picture of Budapest, of home, is still before us as we left it, and only at times like this do we suddenly realize, with dismay, that the world at home has also bitterly changed. It's impossible to imagine that there are no bridges spanning the Danube, that the world over the Danube is empty, that the houses along the Danube are probably just as much in ruins as the houses in Hannover, that the people are perhaps ferreting through our own home looking for firewood as people do among the ruins here. And what about our parents, brothers and sisters, relatives, the people we had left behind?...

*Remig A. Papp (1901 – 1985) was born in Budapest, of Transylvanian Armenian stock. He obtained a diploma in Civil Engineering from the Technical University of Budapest, and worked in Germany and France before the Depression. Returned to Hungary, he designed the winter harbor of Budapest, among other projects. He left with his family to escape the siege, and emigrated to the US in 1949, where he worked his way up to Associate in an engineering consulting firm, designing dams and other structures.*

## Molnár Ferenc

By: Olga Vállay Szokolay

*Many love the musical "Carousel", but few are aware that the story was written by the most famous Hungarian playwright of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Molnár Ferenc.*

*...June is busting out all over  
All over the meadow and the hill!  
Buds are bustin' outa bushes  
And the rompin' river pushes  
Ev'ry little wheel that wheels beside  
the mill!*

*June is bustin' out all over...*  
Being an eclectic in music is generally frowned upon by the serious crowd. But I don't care. I enjoy baroque, classical, romantic, modern and opera, jazz and the Beatles. And I shamelessly admit that I can design most productively by listening to musicals, especially Rodgers and Hammerstein. The one that makes my creative juices flow best is probably "*Carousel*".

It relaxes me, moves me, inspires me on several levels. Some of the songs – "June is busting out all over" and "If I loved you" - had been translated into Hungarian and mesmerized me as a teenager in Budapest. And in the summer of 1975, both my children were in the cast of the unforgettable production of "*Carousel*" by the talented Thespians of Rippowam High School in Stamford, Connecticut, employing a city-wide professional level amateur cast. Ever since, "*Carousel*" has been the personal favorite musical of my family and myself.

But there would be no "*Carousel*" without the immortal story of "*Liliom*", the best known play of Molnár Ferenc, the most famed Hungarian playwright and novelist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

He was born into a middle-class Jewish family of German roots on January 12, 1878, in Budapest. His father, Neumann Mór, was a surgeon and also worked as a factory physician. His mother was the beautiful Wallfisch Jozefa.



*Molnár Ferenc*

Ferenc wanted to become a journalist from his high-school years on, at the Református Gimnázium in Budapest. Yet, at his parents' pressure, from 1896 he studied law at the university in Geneva, then in Budapest. In those days he had some of his articles published in the daily papers such as the *Pesti Hírlap*. Concurrently, he was working on literary items and translations of foreign plays. He *Magyarized* his name from Neumann to Molnár (=Miller), justifying it with the fact that among his ancestors there had been some millers.

He started publishing novels in 1901. The satirical "*Az éhes város*" (The Hungry City) was his first, followed by the tragic love story of a 15-year-old girl "*Egy gazdátlan csónak története*" (Story of a Derelict Boat). His first stage

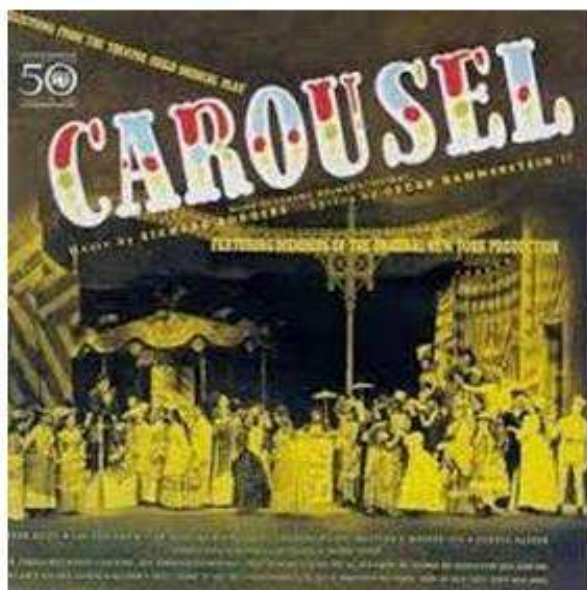
piece, "*A doktor úr*" (The Doctor), was shown with great success at its Vigszínház premiere in November, 1902. Among many of his lesser-known novels "*A Pál utcai fiúk*" (The Pál Street Boys), 1907, stands out as an immortal story of the bittersweet life of kids in the streets of Pest.

In 1906 he married Vészi Margit, the daughter of his editor. After a tumultuous half a year, involving even physical abuse, they separated but divorced only four years later. One daughter, Márta was born from this union.

His first stage success abroad came in 1907 with his play "*Az ördög*" (The Devil). From 1908 on his theatrical works were produced in several foreign cities such as Vienna and Berlin as well as in Italy and in the United States but they were not always received well due to the criticism from pious bourgeois society.

Molnár met his greatest success with "*Liliom*"; the story of a carousel barker. The 1909 opening in Budapest was followed by the Vienna premiere in 1912. With the advent of sound motion pictures, in 1934 Fritz Lang directed a French film of the same title based on the original stage play. The production served as a base for the musical "*Carousel*" on Broadway in 1945.

During the "*Liliom*" rehearsals in Budapest Molnár fell in love with the actress playing Julika: Varsányi Irén, a mother of two, wife of an industrialist Szécsi Illés. One of his workers found Ferenc and Irén "in flagranti" and the event ended in a duel at the Nagykovácsi Woods. Dueling being illegal, he wound up in jail, resulting in his first wife divorcing him. Subsequently, Varsányi went back to her children while he fell into a depression and attempted suicide. When he



*Top row: Molnár Ferenc age progression Middle row: Carousel Plein Air and on stage, Bottom row: Varsányi Irén, Zsazsa in "Cigány Prímás", Darvas Lili*



recovered he even had to face the trauma of hitting a fiacre with his Mercedes, killing the horse...

Molnár Ferenc was one of the first "celebs" whose myth organically grew out of the asphalts of Pest.

During World War I he was a war correspondent in Galicia. His experiences inspired him to write his book *"Egy haditudósító naplója"* (Diary of a War Correspondent), in 1916. In 1922 Molnár married again but... wait a second...the seeming hiatus in his love life is far from representing his romantic ventures!

Twelve years earlier, having met and seeing each other repeatedly at various theater events, he started a rather public, loud liaison with the era's most scandalous albeit monumentally talented actress, Fedák Sári (nicknamed Zsazsa: obvious precursor of the similarly risqué Gábor variety a generation later). The legendary queen of the operetta stage and Molnár Ferenc carried on their relationship before, during and after the war, securing a livelihood for the gossip columnists.

By the early 1920s their flame faded. While Zsazsa toured the United States with huge success, Molnár met a budding young actress, Darvas Lili, 24 years his junior and fell in love with her. Zsazsa, true to her grand diva style, requested that Molnár marry her (not Darvas!) in a "farewell wedding" – as their contemporaries characterized the event. In October, 1922, Molnár and Fedák tied the knot.

After the happy event Molnár almost instantly moved in with Darvas Lili (!!!) but, in the strangest "ménage-a-trois" form, he always appeared at public occasions with his now legal wife, Fedák. This

made for a bizarre scene at the premiere of his play "Üvegcipő" (Glass Slippers) in 1924, starring Darvas Lili, since he had written the characters of the story based on the three of them. The Molnár-Fedák marriage lasted four years. They divorced in 1926 so that he could now marry Darvas. All this constantly in the public eye, in the style of today's tabloids...

Molnár was a heavy smoker and, according to anecdotes, he was an alcoholic and an aggressive person. In the 1920s and 1930s he wrote several easy-flowing plays that rendered him the most popular playwright of his era.

The impending national-socialism forced Molnár Ferenc and Darvas Lili to leave the country and they fled first to France and Switzerland in 1939, then to New York, in 1940. In America, despite his severe depression, he wrote screenplays and drama. His play "Panoptikum" debuted in 1949.

About a dozen of his plays were turned into movies, "Liliom" being one of them. When composer Giacomo Puccini asked for Molnár's permission to turn his 1909 play into an opera, he refused, fearing that it would be remembered more as a Puccini opera than a Molnár play. He also refused Gershwin. But after seeing Rodgers and Hammerstein's hit musical "Oklahoma!", he gave his consent for them to turn "Liliom" into a musical. During the dress rehearsals for "Carousel", he entered the theater to watch. Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II were terrified that Molnár would be very disapproving of the changes they had made in the play, especially the new final scene. Instead, Molnár was ecstatic about the show and declared that he liked the new end-

ing best of all.

Molnár Ferenc became a U.S. citizen in 1947 and lived his last 12 years at the Plaza Hotel in New York, with his secretary and last lover, Bartha Vanda in a separate suite, while his wife, Darvas Lili resided a few blocks away in Manhattan. The Molnár-Darvas marriage being an unconventional one, the two women were close friends and they enjoyed a new "ménage-a-trois" together. When Vanda received the belated news that most of her family had died in Auschwitz, in August, 1947 she committed suicide. This drove Molnár into a deep depression from which he never fully recovered.

He died at Mt. Sinai Hospital on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1952, at age 74, during stomach cancer surgery. Lili had him buried next to Vanda at the Linden Hill Cemetery in Ridgewood, NY.

He is being remembered as an incredibly talented novelist, playwright and colorful individual.

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# The Musical Legacy of Sándor Kemény

EPF

*He started a musical dynasty that has enriched generations of Hungarian-Americans with Hungarian music, and still continues to do so. This is his story.*



*Sándor Kemény with Alexandra and Cheryl.*

In lieu of repaying a loan, someone gave Sándor Kemény's father a violin. And that's how it all began...

Sándor was born in Norwalk, in 1917, and was christened by Gábor Dokus, the well-loved minister of the Hungarian Reformed Church. He recalls reciting a poem at Christmas time, when he was four or five years old:

*Én kicsi vagyok,  
a fogaim nagyok.  
Adjanak kalácsot  
hogy harapjak bele nagyot!*

His parents worked in a factory, and the landlady took care of him. Then his Mom developed TB, and so they went back to Fony, the village from which they came, in 1922. Unfortunately, she died the following year.

While in Hungary, some gypsies borrowed the violin, and in return, taught Sándor to play it. He also took private lessons when he returned to the US in 1935. He organized his own 8-piece orchestra (Kemény Sándor Zenekar) in 1938, playing for Professor Safir who taught ballroom dancing. He studied with Johnny Hajdu who at that time directed the Rákóczi Dalárda. Both he and Johnny were

drafted into the Army at the same time, and served in the same camp with the Transportation Corps, loading troops in Attu, the Aleutian Islands. They were on their way to Alaska when the Japanese bombed the Aleutians. They were then directed to build an air field that was never used because World War II ended. He was discharged in October of 1945, and then came back to Norwalk, where he played his violin at the Hungarian Club.

Under the GI Bill, he received a scholarship to the Julliard School of Music in New York. However, it would take four or five years to get a degree, and he was talked out of it. Instead, he took correspondence courses in small business and building construction. (He later tiled all 5 bathrooms in his daughter Cheryl's Crystal Theater in Norwalk.)

Margaret Agnes Toth's family had emigrated to Saskatchewan, Canada from Pölöske, Hungary when Margaret was seven years old, and they homesteaded on 160 acres, a requirement for staying. She came for a visit to Connecticut, and one day came into the Tokay Restaurant where Sándor played. She and Sándor were married two months later! Margaret was considered a "war bride", which allowed her to stay in the US without following the usual lengthy immigration process. Their first house on Murray Street in Norwalk was built by her father, who could come down from Canada and work for only six months at a time. Sándor learned roofing from his mother-in-law.

Sándor and his band played in Fairfield County, Boston, Poughkeepsie, Schenectady, Wallingford, for weddings and anniversaries, such as the 25th wedding anniversary of our good friend Joe Stiber, now deceased. He used to play at the Semaphore Restaurant in Ridgefield, where they had Hungarian nights, a venue Joe Balogh, our Founder and Editor Emeritus also used to patronize before he met Claudia. He also played at the Hungarian Gardens on Pine Street in Bridgeport and at the

Tokay restaurant in Fairfield. He also substituted for well-known local violinist Rózsika when she was not available.

When band member Lackó died, Sándor's daughter Alexandra took his place as the bass player. Daughter Cheryl, from age 14, played the drums and sang. The band then became known as Sándor's Hungarian Family Band.

Alexandrea obtained a degree in Voice and a Masters in Music Education from Western CT State U & Bridgeport U while Cheryl earned a degree in Voice & Opera from Hartt College, Univ. Of Hartford. They both continued their education at the Liszt Ferenc Music Academy. They later toured as *The Kemény Sisters* for 10 years before establishing Crystal Theatre in Norwalk which they have run since 1987.

Since Sándor could not make a living just playing music, he played only part-time, for dinner dances, and later at the school where Alexandra teaches music in Rowayton, CT.

He "disbanded" his group in 1985, and retired to Florida. Sándor would still play there at the Hungarian Club at Lake Worth, and with his daughters play for New Year's Eve. He and his wife would travel abroad during the winter, and return to Connecticut in the summer.

In 1987, Cheryl started the Crystal Theater with her sister Alexandra and her husband. She has written or co-written 40 shows, including her trilogy "Ellis Island", "Whistleville" and "Hungarian Nights". ("Ellis Island", which may have been inspired by the fact that Sándor's father had come to America through that gateway, has just been performed again at the end of May, while "Whistleville" and "Hungarian Nights" were presented and reviewed in Magyar News several years ago.) Cheryl usually employs local amateur actors whom she teaches the Hungarian lines. Sándor and his wife used to hand out flyers for the shows at streetcorners. After 67 years of mar-

riage, Margaret died this past April 25th, in her 95th year. May she rest in peace!

But just because he no longer plays an instrument in public, that does not mean that he has stopped being active. Far from it! Last summer, when he broke his hip and was hospitalized, he surprised and amused the hospital staff by telling them he had to get out of there because he was in a theater production! Sure enough, we saw him singing on the Crystal Theater stage as an extra in "János Vitéz"! And he is still going strong!

Thank you, Mr. Kemény, for bringing joy into so many lives, and for passing on your passion for music to your daughters! May you continue to be an inspiration to us for many years to come!

**Ellis Island –  
The American Dream  
EPF**

*Many have written about the immigrant experience, but it is unusual to find a musical devoted to the theme. Cheryl Kemény has known how to make it factual yet entertaining.*

First in a "trilogy" of musicals dealing with the immigrant experience, "Ellis Island" was written and produced by Cheryl Kemény, and has just been performed again at the Crystal Theater in Norwalk, CT.

She wrote this musical in 1990, because she thought young people should know what their grandparents and great-grandparents had gone through. It was performed on Ellis Island also in 1992, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its opening as a processing center for immigrants.

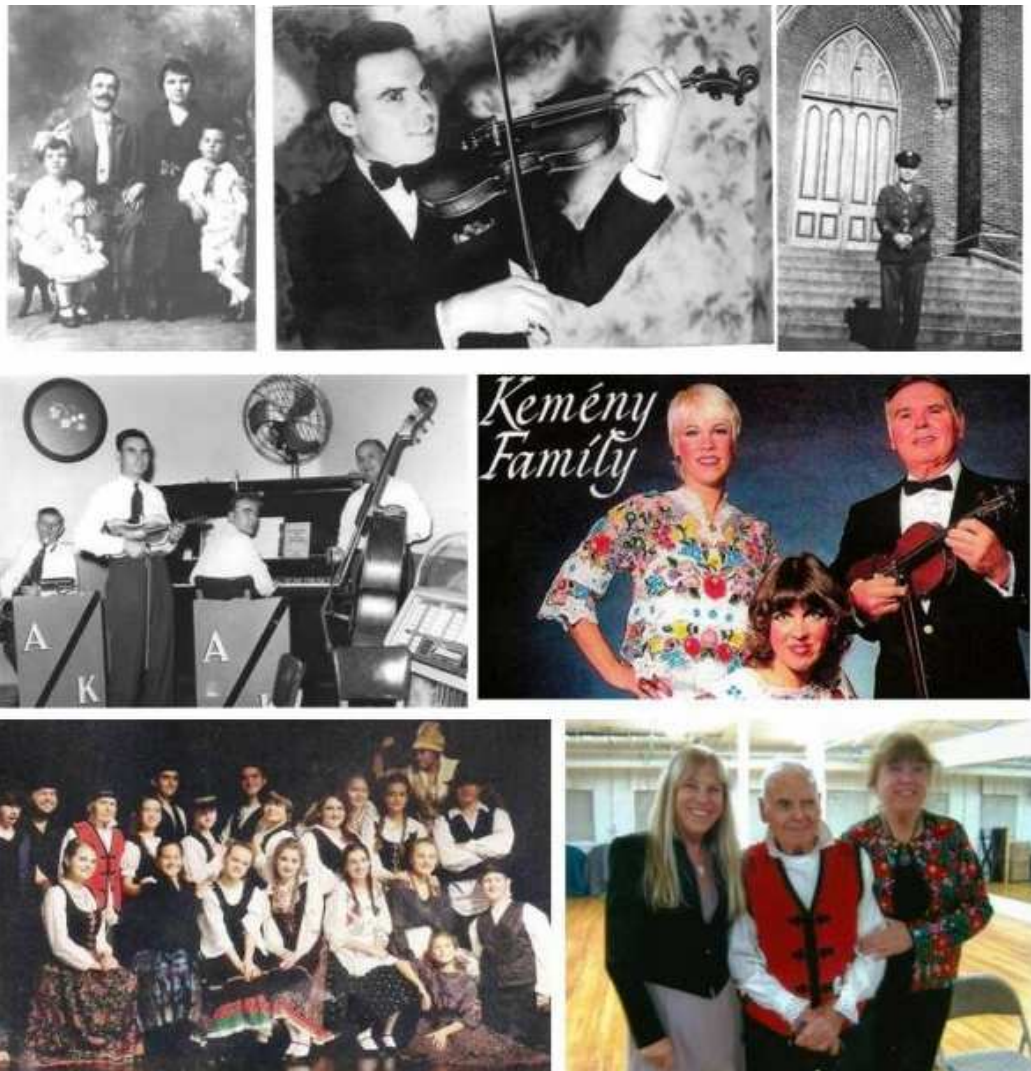
Set in 1907, the peak year of immigration through Ellis Island, Cheryl weaves the stories of several differ-

ent immigrant groups (including a Hungarian mother with her three children) into a seamless whole by spotlighting each in individual, real-life episodes while the entire cast is on stage for the entire first act. Although some situations could turn into tragedy, they all seem to work out to a happy resolution.

This is a performance by students ranging from elementary through high school. Several of the high school students have a chance to shine in the second act in duets and quartets. Many of them have been with the Theater since pre-school days and feel that this is their home. Thanks to their expert trainers, these young people perform in such a professional way that Cheryl

and the Crystal Theater may be very proud!

The musical had received the Moss Hart Award and has been performed around the country and even in Taiwan!



*Caption: Top: Sándor Kemény with sister, Dad János Kemény and Mother Barbara Katona; Sándor with his violin; in military uniform. Center: The Alexander Kemény Band; The Kemény Family Band. Bottom: Sándor Kemény (red vest) with cast of "János Vitéz" last fall; with daughters Alexandra (l) and Cheryl.*



*Waving their one-way ticket to America*

## Stuffed Kohlrabi

Clean fresh kohlrabi, making sure it is not woody. Scoop out the middle and fill.



### Filling:

ground pork, 2 handfuls of rice that had been previously soaked and allowed to swell somewhat, one grated onion, a bit of pepper, salt, one egg, and some sour cream. .

Fill the kohlrabi and put in a pot, together with the scooped out kohlrabi pieces. Cover with warm water and boil. If necessary, add a roux made with sour cream. Add green dill to taste.

## Töltött karalábé

### Hozzávalók:

friss karalábé, darált disznóhús, 2 marék rizs, 1 tojás, 1 hagyma, bors, zöld kapor, kevés tejfel

A friss, nem fás karalábéket megpucoljuk, karalábévágóval kivágjuk és megtöltjük.

### Töltelék:

darált disznóhús, őzöleg kissé megdegesztett rizs, apróra vágott reszelt hagyma, kis bors, só, egy tojás

Ezzel a töltelékkel megtöltjük a karalábékat. A kivájt aprólékokkal együtt lábosba tesszük, meleg vizet öntünk rá és főzzük. Ha szükséges, tejszeles habarékot tehetünk bele. Zöld kappalal ízesítjük.

*This summer recipe is taken from a*



*After all, housewives would simply know how much of each ingredient would be required!*

## Kicsi a világ!

*It's not only the place, but often it's also the timing that has to be right to create a "small world" moment!*

When my Dad obtained his engineering degree in Budapest in 1926, there were very few job openings available for engineers. His first job was with a large construction firm, the Siemens Bauunion, in Berlin. There he worked with another Hungarian engineer, Grünwald Gyula.

Fast forward 21 years, after the end of World War II. By then, we were in Essen, Germany. One day, Dad went to mail a letter at a mailbox on the street. As he opened the flap, someone else was mailing a letter from the other side of the box. That someone was – you guessed it! – Grünwald Gyula!

Another two minutes, and they would have missed each other! But it happened, because – it's a small world!

## Did you know...

*... that we are expanding this category? Instead of mentioning only one item, we decided to run several pieces, since more and more news comes our way. Hope you enjoy them!*

**...that** the traditional pilgrimage to the tomb of St. Margaret of Scotland (granddaughter of King St. Stephen of Hungary) is being revived this year, after a hiatus of 40 years? It will proceed to Dunfermline on June 28<sup>th</sup>.

St. Margaret became Queen of Scotland in 1070, and had a civilizing influence on her husband, "bloody-handed" Malcolm, and on the Scottish court. She remedied ecclesiastical abuses, opened schools, built monasteries, took a keen interest in the education of girls, and since the printing press had not yet been invented, had books copied by hand. She was also responsible for starting the Scottish weaving industry. In addition to raising 8 children of her own, she took great care of the poor for whom she built schools, hospitals and hospices. Both her husband and eldest son died in a battle with the English king in 1093, and she survived them by a mere four days.

The traditional pilgrimage began after her relics arrived at Dunfermline in 1250, and continued until the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It was revived in 1899 and continued until 1974.

**...that** 2 of the 3 Munkácsy canvases comprising the Trilogy are now owned by the Hungarian government? "Christ Before Pilate" had been the property of the Hamilton Gallery in Canada, and was bought in March. Although "Golgota" is already in the Déri Museum in Debrecen, it is still privately owned; however, talks are ongoing, since the present owner, Pákh Imre also believes the three monumental canvases should be kept together.

**...that** the Hungarian banker Lámfalussy Sándor, commonly called "the father of the euro", passed away recently at age 86 in Bel-

gium? He had participated in the discussions leading up to the establishment of the European Monetary Union and became the first president of the European Monetary Institute. It was he who handed the first euro banknote designs to the printer.

...that the annual Belmont, CA *Magyar Örökség Fesztivál* (Hungarian Heritage Festival), begun in 2012 in the San Francisco area was held on May 9<sup>th</sup> this year? In addition to the usual Hungarian dishes and gypsy music, embroidery and dancing, there were exhibits of fine art. According to Dr. Kálmán László, Chief Consul in Los Angeles, this is the largest Hungarian heritage event in the US.

...that the first scheduled bus service in Budapest began a hundred years ago? They ran every 15 minutes from Hősök tere to Vilmos császár út (today's Bajcsy-



*St. Margaret of Scotland*

Zsilinszky út). Two special stamps were issued by the Magyar Posta to commemorate the centennial this spring.

Until the establishment of bus stops, anyone could flag down the buses anywhere. In time, more buses were

added, more routes were opened up.

However, World War I made it increasingly difficult to obtain rubber tires and fuel, and so the bus service was halted in April 1917. It was restarted after the end of the war, in 1921.

...that the space crafts Voyager I and Voyager II, which have been traveling towards Pluto since 1977, carry a Hungarian message into space? It is as follows: "*Üdvözetet küldünk magyar nyelven minden békét szerető lénynek a világegyetemben.*" (We send greetings in the Hungarian language to every peace-loving being in the universe.)

Among the 55 languages in which messages have been recorded for the space craft, Hungarian is ranked 50<sup>th</sup>. (First is Sumerian, said to be the oldest language.)



*Lámfalussy Sándor, Voyager, Munkácsy's Trilogy*