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The Holy Crown of Hungary

A capsule history of the most sacred symbol of the Hungarians

By: Rev. Iván Csete

The Crown of Saint Stephen of Hungary has a special significance not only for the Hungarian nation, but to the whole Christian world. As a student at the Sorbonne in Paris, the writer of these lines heard an excellent French professor starting his lecture with these words: "When the Kingdom of Hungary was established, the eastern borders of Europe were secured and civilization could start in the rest of the continent." The symbol of this kingdom was the Holy Crown of St. Stephen.

This crown was given to King Stephen - not a saint yet - in the year 1000 by Pope Sylvester II, as an inscription on the walls of the Lateran Basilica in Rome testifies to this day. Stephen requested his crown explicitly from the Pope, the spiritual leader of Western Europe, rather than from the Holy Roman Emperor, because he had been resolved to raise Hungary to the status of a Christian kingdom on equal footing with other strong European states, like England or France, not owing allegiance to the Empire. He was crowned with it on Christmas Day, 1000 AD, a remarkable date!

The national coat-of-arms with the crown has an apostolic cross with two horizontal bars, which signifies that the foundation of the state coincided with the conversion of the nation to the



Christian faith. Stephen was not only a king, but also an apostle, like Saint Patrick to the Irish, who led his people to Christ. Thus, Hungary was called an "Apostolic Kingdom" for a thousand years.

After World War II, the Communists, bent on destroying the country's Christian past and present, outlawed the emblem and replaced it with the symbols of their own brand, the red star and the hammer and sickle. But, it didn't last too long. The old emblem was immediately restored during the free days the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, without the crown yet, and 33 years later, at the fall of the Soviet Empire, it was restored for good in its integrity, with the Holy Crown on the top. The fact that in 1990 not only the seal, but also the crown was restored in its place indicates that the Hungarian crown symbolizes the nation itself and not only the monarchy, which was abolished during the Soviet

occupation in 1946 and was not restored even after the fall of communism...

The Holy Crown is made of gold bedecked by enamel pictures, precious stones, genuine pearls and almandine. It has two parts, the upper "*corona latina*" with intersecting bands, and the lower "*corona greca*," the lower diadem. It has a cross on the top, which is tilted. (It was damaged while hidden, buried in the ground at one time.) It was the upper crown which was given by the Pope,

the lower one was a gift from the Byzantine Emperor almost two centuries later, during the reign of King Béla III, who, as a youth was brought up in the Byzantine court. This combination of the two crowns is in itself a good illustration of the geopolitical status and religious character of the country in the heart of Europe. "Eastern Europe" really begins east of Hungary. Poland and Hungary represent Western, Roman Catholic or Protestant Christianity, while east of them begins the Greek Catholic and Orthodox Christian world.

(As against this commonly accepted theory, a group of 4 goldsmiths, led by Csomor Lajos, together with an artist, was authorized in the 1980's to study the Holy Crown in great depth and detail. Their findings were published in a book entitled "*Magyarország Szent Koronája*" – Hungary's Holy Crown, first published in 1985. They concluded that, based on the type of work, the

identical proportions and measurements of both parts, as well as other characteristics, the Holy Crown had been designed originally as ONE piece!

(Other astounding findings of the goldsmith study group included the great probability that the crown sent by Pope Sylvester II is NOT the crown we know as the Holy Crown. According to this theory, kings had more than one crown: one for ceremonial and public events, and another for "home" use. The group presents a strong argument that the "Holy Crown" was St. Stephen's ceremonial crown, and that the papal crown had been taken in battle and returned to the Pope by the German emperor after St. Stephen's death. There is written documentation to back up this theory. Ed.)

The Holy Crown has a turbulent history, like the country it represents. It was hidden, stolen, lost, recovered and taken abroad many times. It was kept at first, during the founding Árpád Dynasty (1000-1301) in Székesfehérvár, then in Visegrád, Pozsony (present-day Bratislava, Slovakia), Buda, Munkács (now Mukacevo, Ukraine). It was buried with the coronation jewels in a wooden box in a forest in Orsova, Transylvania (now part of Romania). At the end of World War II, it was given to the US Army by the Crown Guards for safekeeping from the Soviets. For much of the Cold War, the crown was held secretly at Fort Knox, KY. It was returned to the then relatively lenient communist government of János Kádár on January 6, 1978, which kept it at the National Museum as a relic of the past. After the fall of Communism in 1989, it finally gained its worthy place in the beautiful Parliament Building on the Danube. It was reincorporated into the national coat-of-arms a year later, in 1990, the National Assembly choosing the pre-war authentic seal with the crown, in preference to the crown-less Kossuth emblem of 1849, even though the country is not a monarchy anymore.

As is the case in all the Christian monarchies in Europe, the crown symbolizes a halo which means that the king rules by the grace of God and not by any other

authority. Before he died on August 15, 1038, the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Saint Stephen offered the crown to the protection of Mary, Mother of God, to seal a divine contract between her and the nation. After this, "Nagyboldogasszony" – the Great Lady – became not only the "patrona", the patroness of Hungary, but also her "regina", her queen. This contract empowered the crown with divine force to help the nation through the vicissitudes of history. The doctrine of the Holy Crown has the notion that the crown itself has personhood and as a legal entity is identical with the State of Hungary. It is superior to the person of the ruling monarch, who rules only in the name of the crown.

This beautiful association between the Heavenly Queen and the Hungarian nation through the Holy Crown kept the patriotic Christian spirit alive in the hearts of the people and gave them strength and support to face the severe challenges and trials that they had to endure throughout the centuries. If you go to a Catholic Hungarian church today anywhere in the world, such as St. Stephen of Hungary Church in New York, there is a good chance that you will see a painting or a stained glass window representing St. Stephen offering the crown to the Blessed Virgin. May her powerful protection extend to all those in the world, whose faith or lives are in mortal danger by the onslaught of the forces of evil.

Rev. Ivan Csete is a late vocation. He began to study medicine in Szeged, then had to leave Hungary on account of his participation in the Revolution and Freedom Fight of 1956. He came to the States, finished his pre-med studies, but became a French teacher because medical school was too expensive. With the encouragement of Cardinal Mindszenty, whom he credits for his priestly vocation, Ivan Csete was ordained in 1981. He worked in various parishes in the Archdiocese of New York and was Navy Chaplain in Georgia before serving as Pastor at St. Thomas Aquinas Church in Forestburgh, NY for 16 years. (For a fuller biography, see Magyar News Online, March 2012 issue)

August/Augusztus

By: Karácsony Emmy

Szívemben még dobban az élet
De halkulnak a dallamok.
Bús öregek ösvényét járom...
Most már lefelé ballagok.

Ritkul a fény a kertek mélyén,
A napok múlnak, egyre múlnak...
Csendesülő öreg szívemben
Augusztusi csillagok hullnak.

Although she still feels the rhythm of life, the author finds that she is now walking the downward path of old people, and that, in her heart, the stars of August are falling.

Karácsony Emmy (1896 - 1980) was a painter in Transylvania who studied at the famous Nagybányai artist colony under Thorma János and Krizsán János. She had one-man shows and exhibited together with others as well, in Kolozsvár, Nagybánya and Budapest. She also wrote prose and poetry. Her first husband was the sculptor Botár István; her second, geology professor Török Zoltán. Her home was the gathering place of Transylvanian artists, writers and public figures. She was the aunt of our Editorial Board member Éva Wajda.

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Farewell to Mihály "Michu" Mészáros

viola vonfi

Best known for his impersonation (???) of "Alf" (short for "Alien Life Form"), Budapest-born Mihály "Michu" Mészáros died on June 13th in Los Angeles. He was hospitalized after he had been found unconscious in his bathroom a week earlier. He was 76 years old.

The Hungarian actor, acrobat and stunt man, billed as the "Smallest Man in the World", was best known for his impersonation of "Alf", the late 80's science fiction sit-com. Or rather, for his **full-figure impersonation** of Alf. Because for all scenes in which Alf was sitting, the character was a puppet moved by a puppeteer. All scenes were dubbed.

Mészáros stood a mere 2'9" (83 cm) tall, 6 inches shorter than his parents, and 9 inches shorter than Barnum's famed Tom Thumb. According to one source, he was the 7th of 9 siblings, and studied juggling, acrobatics and pantomime at a circus school in Hungary. He began performing when he was 14, and worked for the Hungarian National Circus.

He was discovered by Kenneth and Irving Feld of the Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus who brought him to the US in 1973. A government agent followed him, to make sure he didn't defect. But he did, in 1980, together with his Hungarian guard, and gained resident alien status in 1984. He became an American citizen in 1990.

Billed as "The Mighty Michu" in 1982, he was a star with the Ringling Brothers Circus for 12 years, and leader of the other Small People. (He preferred the term "Lilli", for "Lilliputian".) He trained and performed with poodles, which stood taller than he, an act that was very popular. Mészáros also took part in the Circus' 200th anniversary production in 2011.



Michu and Alf

He also appeared as a guest on "David Frost Presents the Guinness Book of World Records" program in 1973. Two years later, he did an interview with Madarász Géza for NBC, then worked for that channel as an assistant. Other TV shows in which he appeared were "H.R. Pufnstuf" and "Dear John". His last appearance was in the short comedy, "Death to Cupid" in 2015.

Although he had roles in several movies ("Waxworks", "Freaked", "Big Top Pee-Wee", "Warlock: the Armageddon"), he returned to the circus in 2000, performing a double balancing act with a clown. In addition to films, Mészáros also appeared in over a dozen video clips, and made commercials for Pepsi with Michael Jackson.

One source indicates that among his hobbies were drinking scotch and smoking giant cigars. In the 1980's, the shortest street in Hawthorne, California was named for him. In 1997, he was named Honorary Mayor of Hawthorne for his fundraising efforts on behalf of orphans in former Eastern bloc countries.

Never married, Michu went through the motions in an elaborate circus number in 1977, when a wedding was staged with a "Lilli" named Juliana, but she returned to Hungary at the expiration of her contract.

Eight years ago, Mészáros had a stroke and thereafter suffered from various health problems. News of his passing was confirmed by his long-time manager, Dennis Varga.

"Michu" Mészáros, may you rest in peace!

Gulyás Cook-off

viola vonfi

The courtyard of the Magyar Református Egyház in Fairfield, CT was the perfect venue for this taste-ful (!) event. I'm glad I was assigned to cover it!

The Magyar Református Egyház / Calvin United Church of Christ in Fairfield, CT held a *gulyás* cook-off on June 18th. Competitors had 3 hours to prepare their *gulyás* in a cauldron (*bogrács*), including starting the fire. Ten competitors vied for the votes of the guests who were able to taste each one's offering.

Garnering 44 votes, Tamás Kántor won first prize of a \$150 gift card. Second place, meriting an apron and a \$100 gift card, was garnered by András Bene and Vilmos Toth, a couple of chefs from Torrington. A wooden spoon and a \$50 gift card went to 3rd place winners Norbert Győri and Sándor Szerbia, also from Torrington.

Simon János, Edit, Sándor Magyar and Anikó Soltész provided the much-appreciated *halászlé* (fish soup) and *túrós csusza* (the Hungarian version of mac and cheese).

Dance music was provided by Pető Zsolt. There were baked goods and Hungarian embroideries and other folk items available under the awning. The weather was gorgeous, and as the cliché says, a good time was had by all.

viola vonfi is our associate in Stamford, CT.



Sándor Tarics (1913 – 2016)

Judith Eőry Colby

Here is a biography of Sándor Tarics, mentioned in our "Did you know..." section of the last issue. May we say he had an earth-shaking career?

The world's oldest Olympic champion died at the age of 102 in San Francisco on May 21, 2016. Sándor Tarics was a water polo gold medalist for Hungary at the 1936 Berlin Games. In a 2012 interview, he said that it seemed like he was walking into a German military boot camp when he arrived at the Berlin Games. "There were swastikas everywhere, and all these uniformed soldiers. And Hitler." Tarics and his team won the gold, pushing the Germans into second place, to Hitler's dismay. Tarics trained for the 1940 Olympics, but Hitler's invasion of Poland caused the 1940 Games to be cancelled.

Tarics attended the 2012 London Olympics as the oldest living Olympic champion, and when he was asked whether he would be in Rio for the 2016 Games, he said: "We will see, it is hard to plan things so much forward."

Tarics studied engineering at the József Nádor University of Technology in Budapest, and received his diploma in 1936. In 1941, he was awarded a scholarship to spend several months in the United States. Encouraged by his professor, he began work on his PhD thesis. He returned to Hungary and enlisted in the army in 1942, and was fortunate enough to avoid both the German withdrawal and capture by the advancing Russians.

Tarics was invited by Indiana University in 1948. He left Soviet-occupied Hungary in 1949 to settle in the United States. He was a professor in Fort Wayne for two years, then in 1951 he began to teach at the California Institute of Technology. He earned fame in his new home country as a designer of



earthquake-proof building technologies. He also served for a period as the UN's earthquake advisor.

He established a successful architecture and engineering practice in San Francisco where he specialized in re-designing buildings for earthquake safety during his 37-year career. He helped develop the "base isolation" shock absorption system, which is used on many structures to protect against earthquake forces, including San Francisco's City Hall. Tarics said that his inspiration came from *Dobos torta* to create the earthquake absorbing layers of rubber and steel. The technology is used in new structures, as well as in retrofitting existing buildings.

His scientific work has been recognized around the world. Tarics received the Goethals Medal in 1984 for research into earthquakes over several decades. He was also granted a golden diploma by the University of Technology in Budapest in 1986 in recognition of his work over the course of half a century. He was honored in both the USA and his native Hungary.

He was married three times and had three children. One of his daughters died in a car accident, but he had three grandchildren from his son, and two grandchildren from the other daughter.

At the age of over 100, Tarics still drove his car with California license plate "GOLD36". He swam, worked on solving mathematical problems and monitored sports news in Hungary.

To quote April Dembosky's article in the June 9, 2012 issue of FT Magazine: "The balance between fighting and play has been an ongoing theme for Tarics. Despite the atrocities he has witnessed, the many wars he has lived through, he is upbeat, cracking jokes, and putting hopeful twists on sad tales. He is op-

posed to the interference of politics in sports, but open to the influence of sport over politics. 'The creator respects us when we work, but loves us when we play,' he is fond of saying. If everyone would sing, dance, and play ball, there would be no war."

Judith Eőry Colby is a cousin of our Editorial Board member Éva Wajda, and lives in North Vancouver, Canada.

Raspberry Syrup / Málnaszörp

2 lbs raspberries
2 lbs sugar (adjust amount according to taste)
juice of 1 lemon

Wash raspberries and drain. Place in enameled pot and crush. Cover with a cloth and place in a cool spot overnight. Then strain through cheese cloth.

Stir in the sugar and lemon juice, and boil for 10 minutes, careful to stir constantly. Pour into jars and cool. Dilute with club soda or seltzer.

Named for Szt. István

viola vonfi

As we approach the annual celebration of St. Stephen's Day, we look at an interesting association that was formed in 1997, bringing together settlements within the Carpathian Basin named after St. Stephen.

Settlements named for St. Stephen, the founding king, abound in Hun-



Bust of St. Stephen at Szentistvánbaksa

gary. Yet most of them refer to him only as "szent király", that is, "holy king". Only three incorporate his name – Királyszentistván, Szentistván and Szentistvánbaksa. The rest are Bakonyszentkirály, Kerkaszentkirály, Porrogszentkirály, Rinyaszentkirály, Szabadszentkirály, Szentkirály and Szentkirályszabadja.

In Transylvania, there are four, only one of which bears his name explicitly: Székelyszentistván. The rest are Csíkszentkirály, Kalotaszentkirály, and Marosszentkirály.

There are two in what is now Slovakia: Királyfiakarcsa and Vágkirályfa. (Actually, Királyfiakarcsa seems to refer to King Andrew II who gave privileges to the Karcza family.)

Some of these places are named for the rivers running through them: *Rinyaszentkirály* in the Muraköz, *Kalotaszentkirály*, *Marosszentkirály* and *Vágkirályfa*.

At the initiative of Csíkszentkirály and Székelyszentkirály, the above 16 settlements formed an association, called *Szentkirály Szövetség*, in 1997. Their purpose is to preserve each settlement's identity, while recognizing



Reformed church at Kalotaszentkirály

their cultural and spiritual unity, regardless of country borders, and to bring about reconciliation for the sake of European integration. They intend to learn about each other's cultural values and traditions, and to bring about development of personal relationships, particularly among their youth. They also hope to develop economic connections with each other.

The association accepts as members other settlements within the Carpathian Basin named for St. Stephen or another saintly Hungarian king, which might wish to support the aims of the association. Actually, this is just as well, because according to legend, Porrogszentkirály was named not for St. Stephen, but for King St. László! Twelve settlements bear his name,

located mostly near the borders of the Carpathian Basin, since St. László is best known for fighting against invading Tartar and other forces. (His pursuit of the Tartar abducting a Hungarian girl is iconic and is depicted in numerous ancient Transylvanian church frescoes.)

In 2003, the *Szentkirály Szövetség* donated a bust of St. Stephen to Kalotaszentkirály, which hosted the annual celebration of St. Stephen's Day that year. This was quite unusual because Kalotaszentkirály is a mostly Calvinist village!

Kicsi a világ – It's a Small World!

Olga Vallay Szokolay

The other morning my phone rang, showing my garbage company's caller ID.

A male voice ascertained that he was talking to the Owner responsible for trash. He introduced himself as "Bob". Bob then explained the reason for his call: their changing pickup day from Friday to Tuesday, starting the following week.

I acknowledged the message, ready to hang up, but he continued, asking: "How do you pronounce your last name?"

"Just drop the Z from Szokolay and you get it", said I.

"What nationality is that?" Bob inquired.

"Hungarian."

And he replied: "Köszönöm!" (sic!) (*thank you* in Hungarian)....

All I could say was: "How did you do that..?"

"Not all garbage men are Italian!" came the surprising answer. Bob said he was only half Italian, but also half Hungarian....

Italians have the "boot", but Hungarians dance in it...

Olga Vallay Szokolay is an architect and Professor Emerita of Norwalk Community College, CT after three decades of teaching. She is a member of the Editorial Board of Magyar News Online.

Széchenyi's Social Reforms

Erika Papp Faber

In this our seventh article commemorating the life and impact of Count Széchenyi István during the 225th anniversary of his birth, we look at the essential core of his plans for reform.



In the early 19th century, Hungary was a backward nation, whose economy was strangled by the fossilized remains of antiquated customs dating back almost 500 years.

In 1351, King Louis I (Nagy Lajos) had codified a much older custom, that of *ósiség*, or entailment, according to which a noble's property became inalienable; that is, it could not be mortgaged or sold as long as there were descendants of the original owner. Should the family die out, the property would then revert to the Crown, i.e., the state (known as the rule of *fiskalitás*).

These two antiquated traditions strangled all economic development in the country, because it was impossible to put up land as equity for a loan, so that land had no value. Many landowners, though possessing huge estates, did not really have control over their property, and were quite poor, because they could not be made profitable through investing in machinery, applying better agricultural methods, or using higher yielding crops. Money was scarce, and

credit that would make any of these improvements possible, was not available.

Furthermore, the nobility were exempt from taxation, leaving the tax burden to the serfs (*jobbágyok*) who worked the land. One source estimates that at the time of Széchenyi, in the early 19th century, the Hungarian nobility numbered 700,000, while the number of serfs working their lands was put at 9 million!

The famous Tripartitum, or three volume book of law compiled by Werbőczy István and approved by the king in 1514, legitimized the various ranks of nobility and their privileges, while stating that the peasants were not included in the concept of the Hungarian nation and did not have the right to change masters. Nevertheless, the peasants/serfs supplied the nation with food, and paid taxes to the landowner, the State and the Church. They also provided the foot soldiers for the army.

As the serf population grew, their plots of land were divided into ever smaller particles. By the 1840's, only 43% of the serfs still owned any land, while 57% had become land-less (called *zsellér*).

Returning from his early travels abroad, Széchenyi recognized these conditions as being the main cause of Hungary's economic backwardness. He condemned the conservatism of the nobility and urged them to give up their privileges. He envisioned the gradual abolition of serfdom by allowing serfs to buy their freedom for a predetermined amount (manumission), and thus become citizens. (The principle was laudable, even though only 1% of all serfs at the time had the wherewithal to buy their freedom!) He also urged universal taxation, applicable even to the nobility. Later on, his insistence that everyone, including nobles, pay the toll on the new Chain Bridge – Lánchíd – caused an uproar, as the upper classes considered it a kind of tax from which they felt they should be exempt.

The central ideas of Széchenyi's reform program were embodied in his book entitled *Hitel* (Credit) which, due to cen-

sorship, was published only in 1830. He considered the lack of credit the cause of all moral evils, giving rise to usury and unrepayable debts. In it, he also discussed the burning questions of Hungarian agriculture and commerce, providing guidelines for development and progress. He closed his treatise with these words: "Many people believe that Hungary belongs to the past, but I believe firmly that Hungary is *not of the past, but of the future*" – *Magyarország nem volt, hanem lesz!*"

His ideas were considered revolutionary at the time, and stirred up all of Hungarian society. Many agreed with Széchenyi, but many others opposed him. It was in reply to the opposition that he published a rebuttal and further expansion of his ideas for national reform the following year, entitled *Világ* (World). In it, he broached the necessity of developing public education and a sense of national identity among all strata of society. He considered it essential to the development of the country to unite Buda and Pest into a single capital city.

In 1833, he published his third volume, *Stádium*, setting forth more precisely his plans for reform. But because the censors forbade its publication, he had it printed up in Germany. These were his main points (see above for the first 3 items):

1. Credit
2. Abolition of Entailment (*Ósiség*)
3. Abolition of *Fiskalitás*
4. Ability to own property (*birtokképeség*)
5. Equality of all before the law
6. Protection of those not of the nobility (*nemtelenek pártvédelme*)
7. Sharing of parliamentary expenses by all
8. Parliamentary control of waterways, roads and internal taxes
9. Elimination of monopolies and guilds
10. Establishment of Hungarian as the language of all legislation
11. Rule by the governing council only
12. Making public all judicial decisions and deliberations

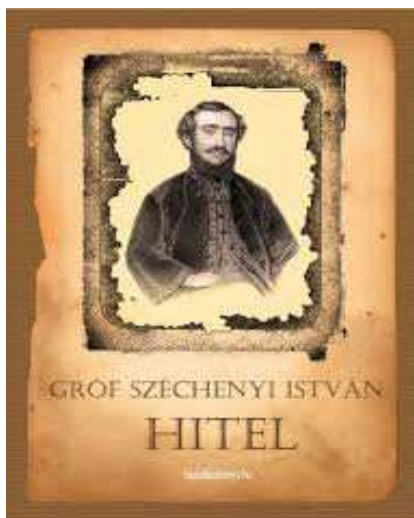
In addition to espousing the cause of the serfs, Széchenyi also considered involvement of the nobility in his reform plans. In 1827, patterned on English clubs, he founded the National Casino as a place where people of rank could discuss political, economic and social affairs and play cards. He envisioned it as a place to exchange and debate ideas, to promote social and national development. Although first established in the capital, it was copied in towns and cities around the country, where the Casinos became intellectual centers for nobility and non-nobility alike. Despite its aristocratic origins, the National Casino did not discriminate according to rank or party. Membership requirements were integrity, erudition, blameless character and independence.

Széchenyi also introduced horse racing, on the English pattern, to improve horse breeding. But he also had a secret motive, as he privately wrote to his wife Crescence: "Some of my friends surely would not like it if they found out that it was really them, and not the horses, that I endeavor to train."

By means of such methods, he hoped to build up Buda-Pest, the capital, as the gathering place of potential Hungarian leaders, enticing back those magnates who had been lured abroad by these amusements.

In future issues we will consider some of Széchenyi's other ideas for uplifting the nation, his statesman's vision for Hungary's future.

Erika Papp Faber is Editor of Magyar News Online.



Dobó István, More Than the Hero of Eger

Éva Wajda

Many of us are familiar with the siege of Eger and the brave people who defended the fortress under the leadership of Dobó István. But it is hardly known what happened to him afterwards: Where did he live? Where did he die? Here is some information about the rest of his life.



The ruins of Szerednye fortress

Dobó István was born in Szerednye (a small fortress in Kárpátalja - Subcarpathia), Hungary, in 1502, one of six children of Dobó Domonkos and his wife, Czekei Zsófia. They were members of the land-owning nobility, with vast holdings in northern Hungary.

Dobó was a Hungarian soldier, and became commander of Eger Fortress in 1549. His fame rests on his successful defense of the fortress during the Siege of Eger by the Ottoman Turks in 1552 - in which 2,000 defenders were able to withstand the onslaught of 80,000 (revised later to 40,000) Ottoman soldiers. The victory is celebrated in Gárdonyi Géza's classic novel "Eclipse of the Crescent Moon" (*Egri Csillagok*).

As a reward, the Habsburg King Ferdinand donated to Dobó the Transylvanian fortresses of Déva and Szamosújvár, now both in Romania. He was also appointed viceroy

(*vajda*) of Transylvania in 1553 and was elevated to the rank of baron. When Transylvania became separated from Hungary in 1556, he was given ownership of the fortress of Léva (now Levice, Slovakia) in compensation.

Falsely accused of treason against the King, Dobó spent 3 1/2 years imprisoned in the fortress of Pozsony (now Bratislava, Slovakia), along with Balassi János, father of Bálint (for a biography of Balassi Bálint see the October 2014 issue of Magyar News Online). His health was seriously impaired by his imprisonment, and he died in his home in Szerednye soon after his release from captivity.

In our days, Szerednye is under Ukrainian jurisdiction, and the fortress is in ruins. No marker or sign of recognition indicates that the hero of Eger had been the owner. Surprisingly, however, there is an underground sign with the Dobó

name. Vast cellar systems, reinforced with ditches and walls, were dug manually at the instructions of Dobó István, supposedly using Turkish prisoners captured at the siege of Eger. The cellars were used to house barrels of wine, since the Dobó brothers were wine dealers, a means to increase their vast fortunes. The operation still continues to this day by the company named *Agráripári Vállalat* (Ahropromiszlova Firma Leanka), where wine tasting events are organized.

On a cellar wall is a sign, in Latin: "Excavated by the efforts of the eminent ruszkai de Dobo brothers Ferenc, István, and Domokos, heirs and owners of the estates and fortress of Szeredne. The cellars were reinforced by a protective wall and a ditch. In the year of Our Lord 1557."

Eva Wajda is a member of Magyar News Online Editorial Board.

The Straw Hat Museum – Szalmakalap múzeum

Erika Papp Faber

Several years ago, my friend Piroska Haywood and I went to Transylvania. Piroska's cousin, Anikó Velsz came from Germany with her car, and drove us around for part of our visit.

At Erdőszentgyörgy, we had gone to see the church where Queen Mary of England had placed a memorial plaque to her ancestor, Claudine Countess Rhédey (see "It's a Small World" in the November 2013 issue of Magyar News Online). There, the minister's wife suggested that we drive a few kilometers further to visit the Straw Hat Museum (Szalmakalap múzeum) of Kőrispatak. It was very much worth our while!



For the Guinness Book of Records?

Founded in 2000 by Szócs Lajos, the Straw Hat Museum of Kőrispatak features a collection of straw hats from villages of the area, used by the farmers when working their fields. Each village has its own style of headgear.

First, straw is spun into ribbons, and then sewn into the required form. Straw spinning and straw hat making camps are offered in the summer months, from May through August, keeping the craft alive. Special machinery, on exhibit at the Museum, is used to sew and form the straw hats into the required shape.

Also exhibited are other items crafted from straw, such as wall ornaments, Christmas tree decorations and items for daily use.

A guest house and bathroom-equipped cabins are available for camp participants, and meals, served in the guest house, introduce Székely cuisine to the guests.

In the courtyard, visitors can admire the collection of unworked, but smooth and rounded rocks found in the area. Some of the rocks have been given names suggested by their shape. A small gazebo is covered by a 5-meter (15-foot) diameter straw hat. And in the Museum is another LARGE straw hat that is a good candidate for the Guinness Book of World Records!



top: Straw Hat Museum, founder Szócs Lajos; middle: village coat of arms; equipment used in making straw hats; bottom: some of the hats in the museum. Piroska is in the center with Anikó on the right.

Did you know ...

... **that** we have the latest in airplane design and other items, including a very sweet exhibit that is too beautiful to eat?



... **that** a hot air balloon shaped like the Holy Crown has been floating over various parts of Hungary since March of this year? Mede Ferenc came up with the idea, intending it not to be a copy, but a symbol of Hungarian unity within the Carpathian Basin. Its cupola has a capacity of 2,200 cubic meters, putting it into the racing balloon category. It can accommodate three people, including the pilot.

Mede explains: "The balloon's mission is to have people get to know our real past and history. Without such knowledge, it is impossible to build Hungary's future." He intends to fly it around historic Hungary, and to visit those places where the Holy Crown had been kept at various times.

The bottom of the balloon is decorated with Makoldi Sándor's paintings based on Hungarian zodiacal figures.

... **that** the first all-electric carbon fiber plane with aerobatic capabilities has been developed in Hungary by Magnus Aircraft, with the help of Siemens? It will be used for pilot training. A training program lasts 15-20 minutes, while the plane's batteries last for 30 minutes in the air. In April, it received the eFlight Award for best electric innovation of the year.

The new plane was produced just in time, since flight training for the 170,000 pilots worldwide will be extended next year, from 10 hours as required now, to an additional 40 hours of emergency training. Demand for the eFusion from around the world is enormous!

... **that** the tallest tower in Hungary is the transmission tower of Lakitelek at Szigetszentmiklós, Csepel Island, at 314 m? The tallest chimney is that of the AES Tisza power station at Tiszaújváros, at 250 m. The tallest building is the Bazilika at Esztergom, at 100 m, as measured from the floor of the crypt to the tip of the cross on top of the cupola.

... **that** there is a baroque room made entirely from marzipan (almond paste) in Eger? The creation of Kopcsik Lajos, it is part of an exhibit of his works in what he calls Marcipánia. In addition to numerous awards and prizes, he had won 10 gold medals at an international confectioners' Olympics in Berlin in 1996.

... **that** one-third of the population of New Brunswick, NJ used to be of Hungarian origin? The annual Hungarian Festival held on the first Saturday of June – on the 4th, this year - drew an estimated crowd of 12,000, many of whom sampled the goodies available along Somerset Avenue! More people took part in the opening parade, accompanied by violins and singing, and more folk dance groups participated in the festivities than in other years.

The *Szent László búcsú* held on June 26th in New Brunswick also drew a nice crowd. Parishioners from St. Stephen's in New York came by special chartered bus. Fr. Juhász Imre, who for years traveled to New York every Sunday to say Mass at St. Stephen's in the afternoon, gave a beautiful homily, and the choir provided outstanding singing. Lunch was accompanied by folk music, and little children danced, as reported by Fr. Iván.