

Spring 2023



Hungarian-American Club of New Mexico

P.O. Box 3454

Albuquerque, NM 87190

www.hacnm.net

2023 Events:

June 11

Picnic

August 21

St Stephen's Day
celebration

Oct 23

Remembering
revolutions
1956-1989

Dec 11

Holiday/Christmas
Party



Steve Borbas receiving the
Hungarian Cross of Knighthood
delivered by Tamas Szeles, Consul
General of Hungary.



(More on page 2)

Greetings from Steve

by Steve Borbas

The March 15, 2023, event was very low key with Eva doing a lovely slide show from various places in Hungary and instructed the crowd in Hungarian dance. I spoke about the Spring traditions and customs in small villages. Six of us were given a wonderful recipe by Simone Debbas for Gulyas Soup. Each of us cooked a pot of similar tastes - needless to say, all was gone in a short time because most all had seconds (even thirds by some). This was helped out with good bread and sweets brought by Joe Galko. About 40 of us attended.

Our next event is the picnic on June 11, noon, at Simone's house back yard (as usual) under her massive mulberry tree. Please bring a dish and a chair if you can. We will probably also have some hot dogs.



Picnic 2008

Presidential Award for Steve

by Anna Powless



On March 27, 2023, Szeles Tamas, Consul General of Hungary, traveled to Albuquerque to present a Hungarian presidential award to Steve Borbas. There were a handful of us who gathered at Steve's house to welcome the Consul and to witness this event.

The Consul thanked and congratulated Steve for the many years he spent supporting and growing the Hungarian community in Albuquerque. (He was also instrumental in the success of a UNM internship program in mediation with his personal support of the Hungarian students)

In this edition of our Newsletter we are doing something different by publishing a LONGER story in its entirety written by one of our members. It may bring back memories to some of you but hope that it will resonate with all.

Az Apam—My Father

By C. L. Nemeth

As you get older one of the benefits is that you can look back and, hopefully, make a more realistic evaluation of things that happened in your life.

Az Apam (my father) was a case in point. Most of the opinions that I developed about my father, as a child and a young man, no longer seem valid. In fact, I can explain, if only to myself, much of what he did and how he acted.

My father was born in what was then Austria-Hungary, in 1885, to a peasant family. He was one of seven sons. He had only a fourth-grade education, was trained as a cabinet maker, which he used to good advantage in his life.

He immigrated here in 1904, just nineteen years old, and settled in South Bend Indiana, heavily populated with Hungarians and Polish. His first job was at the Studebaker auto plant unloading pig iron from railcars, a six day a week, 10 hour a day job. I can only imagine how back breaking this was. He also worked at Oliver Plow Works and Singer Sewing Machine, there in the cabinet shop. Also, during this time (up to about 1927) he also was involved with home construction. All in all he always worked at labor intensive jobs.

He married about 1912 and had two daughters, Rose and Ann. His wife died sometime about 1915. He married my mother in 1920.

Four children were the result, Frank, Helen, myself, and Vince Jr. What information I have from 1920 until the time when I could observe for myself comes from my mother. He was involved in an accident between his horse drawn wagon and an automobile suffering a fractured skull.

People today have little concept of what living was like at that time. It was early in the transportation revolution. I can remember horse and buggy, heavy hauling done by mules, oxen, and horses, as well as most farming. It was in the middle 30's before the farm tractors began to take over farms. Most home chores were manually performed as were gardening. Dad was constantly involved in providing for his family.

I remember moving to Brookfield Street, early in 1931. I was almost three years old. A vacant lot on the south side and three lots on the north were almost immediately taken over by Dad along with the back yard. He turned it all into extensive vegetable gardens. A farmer friend plowed and graded both lots. Dad planted potatoes in the north, larger, plot, putting sweet corn, beans, peas, watermelons in the south lot. The back yard was fenced; the team could not plow it. One memory I have is Dad, after work, steadily turning over the soil with a shovel and then raking it into a smooth planting surface.

Dad planted such things as Jerusalem artichoke, Rutabaga, Turnips, Pumpkin, quash, and the very hot Hungarian Banana Pepper. I'll talk more about them later.

The depression was in full swing as I grew from an infant into a little boy. At this time Dad worked on the WPA but soon, somehow, accumulated enough money to buy a used Chevy dump truck which improved his earnings. Dad soon utilized this truck into a business that would bring shudders to any neighborhood today. He purchased cow manure from farmers and sold it to families for garden fertilizer (no bagged stuff for those people.) He would load the truck by hand but he could dump it in the customer's yard or in the street.

I admit that I was ashamed of my Dad at that time because even though I was very young I could pick up comments from people. Now I realize that it was simply one man providing a service, and I think it paid quite well.

Now, when I think back, I am amazed how he could see an opportunity and make use of it. Case in point was the manure, but there were others. He once came home and told us that he found someone with a Cherry tree and we were to pick the Cherries. We were there all day, Dad and my older brother, and Mom, picked the higher branches while we little guys, picked, or at least we thought we picked, the lower. But this was only the beginning. After coming home with as much as ten baskets of Cherries. Some of this Mom canned, with the rest Dad made wine.

Dad had a number of wooden wine casks. He would open one end of the cask, scrape the barrel carefully on the inside, and then proceed to build a fire and char the inside of each cask. He maintained that this gave the wine its distinctive flavor and that the charring was a necessary part of the fermenting and aging process. I assume that he learned this from his parents and the fact that Hungary produces wines, mostly made from the Tokay grape. One of the best known, and a favorite of mine, is a very dark red wine called "Bikavie" ("Bull's Blood.")

He went one step further. Selecting two of the most robust casks he filled them with the fresh Cherry juice, and then dug a hole about 8 feet deep. Tightly driving the bungs into the cask openings, he buried them. These casks would stay there from early July until sometime around Thanksgiving, when he dug them up. The wine was very clear, with a rosy red color, and when sipped it was smooth and rich. However, after a glass or two your knees would turn into rubber. Dad explained that most wines were left to ferment uncorked, allowing the wine to push out as it fermented. He said that by sealing the bung tightly the pressure would either push out the bung or split the cask, thus the pressures in these buried casks must have been very high. The pressure would recede after a time and the casks could then be safely dug up and opened. I have talked to several wine makers here in New Mexico and none had ever heard of this method.

Dad would not spend a nickel on anything that he could produce himself. For instance, he grew his own tobacco. This caused quite a stir in the neighborhood as no one had ever seen tobacco growing in that part of Indiana. The plants grew very large, up to almost five feet, with very large dark green leaves.

Dad would cut the leaves from the stalks, bind them together with cord and hang them from the shed rafters. I don't know how long tobacco leaves should cure, and I am not sure that Dad did

either, but he would take them down in the late fall and cut them into pieces for a pipe. As to its quality friends of Dad that tried it thought it was very coarse and strong. This did not bother Dad; no way was he going to buy tobacco when he could grow it himself. He made his own shovel, rake, hammer, and pick handles as well as some other interesting things.

I have several articles that he made utilizing his cabinet making skills. One is the size of a jewelry box, made from the fancier wood home trimming from the turn of the century. The box has a checkerboard wood of light and dark and is very nicely made. The other item is Dad's shaving stand. It is in my possession awaiting restoration. It is a small box on curved Chippendale type legs, about 8" by 10", with a drawer to hold the razor, brush, etc. and an oval mirror that can be pivoted.

I also have a wooden snake which he made. It is very realistic consisting of small rounded wooden pieces glued to a fabric that runs down the center vertically. Painted black with a leather tongue sticking out. When you held it in your hand the fabric center would allow the snake to swing realistically from side to side. Dad used to put it into the pockets of female guests, much to my mother's mortification. The ladies would reach into the coat pocket and withdraw the snake with screams. Dad thought it was hilarious.

Another example of Dad's (and, I guess, Mother's) penny pinching was the Thursday newspaper grocery ads. One store would have a special on an item, the next a different item. On Saturday they would go to each store and buy the sale item. If there was a limit on purchase, Mom would go in, then Dad, and then together. They spent the entire morning going from store to store.

South Bend is 8 miles south of the Indiana/ Michigan state line. The tax on liquor was less in Michigan than in Indiana. Dad would drive the five miles to downtown South Bend, and then the 10 miles to Niles, the first town in Michigan, to buy a bottle of liquor, a round trip of 30 miles. I would point out to him that the cost of fuel was more than what he saved, but he did it anyway.

We had a cow. There was plenty of grazing on vacant lots but what about hay in the winter? You could, of course, buy hay but not Dad. The city water pumping station was about a mile from the house. It had a large expanse of ground planted in Timothy which grows to a height of 24 inches and must be mowed from time to time. Dad offered to cut it for the hay. They readily agreed. Dad used a scythe to cut the hay. This is a long handed affair with a very sharp blade about 30 inches long. You swept the scythe in a half circle in front from right to left, swiveling your hips and back. It is tiring work and no help to your back. Yet, Dad would be out there all day on a Saturday cutting that hay. It takes practice to not cut too deeply and to keep the scythe on a level cutting angle. American scythes have a curved, almost bowed wooden handle. Dad made his own with a straight shaft. Apparently, this is the way they did it in Europe. He carried a whetstone in a small pouch on his belt which contained water. He would stop every 5 minutes or so and sharpen the blade. I don't remember how long it took Dad to cut the four acres, but he would move steadily down the field, cutting swath after swath. As I remember the hay was cut at least twice in a summer.

In October 1941, just before Pearl Harbor, we moved to a place two miles from the city limits.

This was a two-story house with garage and sheds, and four acres of ground, just up Dad's alley. Of course, we moved ourselves using the truck. Brother Frank walked the cow the three miles to the new place but now we had the hay to move. Dad had the ability to put more items on a load than anyone else. But this time we had a problem. Dad had loaded all the hay onto the truck. To hold the load down he put two extra-long railroad ties on the top of the load. I was 13, Vince was 10 and we begged to ride on top, and Dad agreed. He and Frank rode in the cab. All was well for about halfway when the load began to shift. In spite of our cries Dad did not notice (he was hard of hearing, (a family trait, it seems) Vince, the ties, half the hay, and me slid off the truck and onto the side of the road. Dad was not driving very fast and the hay cushioned our fall. Luckily none of the hay or the ties fell on the roadbed, but Dad, Frank, and the truck were gone. So, we sat there. Presently Dad came back to find us. He was very surprised to find us missing when they arrived at our new house. It seemed like a lark then but it could have been a serious matter falling those heavy ties with two boys. Now, as I look back, I am surprised because Dad would not usually allow such a stunt.

The new home showed, once again, the versatility of Dad. One of the first problems was the septic tank leach field. It was almost right up to the house. We soon found that the leach field could not keep up with our usage and the yard became very wet and spongy with sewage. It was a mess. Enter Dad. He came home one day with the truck loaded with cement block pieces. The blocks were all split along the length leaving a piece with one smooth side.

Dad pointed to a spot about 30 feet from the house and told us to start digging. He measured a circle on the ground about 10 ft. in diameter. It was hard going for the first 2 or 3 feet, we had to use a pick. But after that we dug into a very soft and sandy soil and were able to dig the hole about 10 ft. deep in a short order. Now what? Dad went down into the hole, and we started to hand him the broken cement block pieces. He proceeded to stack in an interlocking pattern, making a cistern like cavern with the bottom open and the sides able to allow water and such to seep away.

At the top he used cement to build the blocks slowly into a hole about the size of a street manhole. He made a cover for the hole, dug up the pipe from the house and directed in into the cistern. End of sewage problems.

This was our home for over 30 years and never was there a problem again. I looked into the cistern several times over the years but never saw the sewage but a few feet deep. How he knew that this would work is still a mystery to me.

The house had an enclosed back porch. Directly under this porch floor was the water well and pump. The well was 64 feet deep. The pumping rod extended to the bottom of the well, with leather seals. The seals would require replacement about once a year. It was quite a job to pull the 64 feet of rod up through a hole in the porch roof, reseal and then replace the rods. Dad soon improved on this. The well had only a small area under the porch floor where the pump stood. Next project; he cut a door in the basement wall and excavated under the porch, making a roomy place to work as well as store vegetables. We still had to pull the rod and reseal the pump but now you had room for more than one person.

Speaking of storing vegetables we always had a root cellar which Dad dug new every year. In

this way we stored potatoes, carrots, turnips, etc. It had a hole about 2 ft. square for access. The top was built up into a slight mound. Old carpets and such were strewn on top of the mound. To get to the hole the carpet had to be pulled away, you lay on your stomach and reached into the hole to get what you wanted, and then recover the hole.

Just before we moved Dad left the WPA, bought a new Dodge dump truck and began, on a contract basis, on road construction. There are two more stories about Dad and his truck before I leave this subject. One day, in autumn, Dad came home with a truck load of windfall apples. On top of this he threw several wooden casks and drove away. Shortly he returned. All the apples were gone. In the truck bed stood two casks of cider. One year he had a load of pears. Pear cider is very good and gets a lot harder than does apple cider.

The other truck story involves heating the house. There were strip coal mines south of Joliet, Illinois. You could buy coal directly from the mine. Now a ton and a half truck is not a very big truck by today's standards. It had a gross vehicle weight of about 12,000 lbs. (six ton)

The 12,000 lbs. include the weight of the truck which means that it will haul only about a maximum of 6,000 lbs. (3 ton). Not for Dad. He built up the sides of the metal dump bed with heavy timbers up about 10 feet. Off he went. The mine was about 80 miles from our home. He left early in the morning and was back late afternoon with the truck loaded with over six tons of coal, far exceeding the truck's rated hauling capacity. I went with him one year; I was over sixteen and could now drive. He let me drive part of the way. I remember that the truck would lean in one direction to the point I was sure it would tip, and then come back and lean the other way. Dad was not the least perturbed and we made it home safely.

I mentioned that we had a cow when we lived in town. Our new home had no pasture. Dad had us stake out the cow along the sides of State Hwy 23. If you drove the stake along the fence line the cow could graze in a half circle without going out on the road. When she had grazed the spot clean she would bawl and one of us would walk down and move her over. We never ran out of pasture and the roadsides near our home were always in nice shape.

With the four acres' we now had a good-sized garden and Dad put the rest of the fields in corn.

Now that we were out in the country, Dad built a pig sty and we always got two young pigs in the summer, fattened them, and then butchered one sometime between Thanksgiving and Christmas, the other in January.

Now, again, Dad did it differently. Hogs have a hairy coat which must be removed before you can start the butchering process. Here in America the standard practice is to dip the whole hog into a large cauldron of boiling water and literally boil off the outer layer of skin with the hair. Not so with us. After putting the hog down Dad had a supply of straw and he packed this around the carcass; setting it afire. He would move the straw as needed to thoroughly scorch the entire hog. Then, with a dull knife the hog is scraped, taking off the outer hide surface with the hair, most of which had already burnt off. Surprisingly the hog comes out looking fresh and pink.

Again, the American practice is to cut the hog's jugular vein and allow the blood to flow out on the ground. We let the blood flow into a pot, adding fresh snow to prevent clotting. This blood

is used to make a very tasty sausage called "Blood Sausage." It is made by filling the casing with a mixture of ground meat, rice, blood and spices; it is usually baked, with chitlins. It is one of my fondest memories of hog butchering. After Dad killed the hog the work started in earnest. The hog was cut up into the normal cuts of pork. The fat was cut into cubes, heated and then put into a sausage press which squeezes all of the lard out leaving what is known as chitlins. These were used in many ways, one described above. Another way was to grind them and make very tasty muffins.

The intestines were scraped with a dull knife inside and outside. This left an opaque tube used as sausage casing. The bladder was also scraped and stuffed with a variety of hog parts, boiled, and then I remember sometimes smoked, it was called Head Cheese. The feet were cleaned thoroughly and were used to make a Hungarian staple known as "Kocsonya". The pigs feet, carrots, celery, parsley root, and spices were boiled down to a thick broth then the liquid poured into soup tureens, a pigs foot in the center, and put out to cool. It would turn into a thick jelly like consistency. Served cold, with sliced garlic and pepper, it made a very hardy meal indeed. I used to love it but now I am not so sure.

Dad took the hams, shoulders, bacon, and some of the sausage and hung them into a small shed resembling the good old outhouse. Inside, he built a smoky fire which is nursed for several days. This smoked hams and such were very good and kept forever.

In the winter, after supper, Dad would bring into the kitchen a bushel of eared corn. We all sat around and shelled the corn; the cobs went into the stove. This was feed for the cow, hogs, and chickens, and ducks. Now a chicken can be stripped of feathers quickly by dipping into a pot of boiling water, but a duck is another matter. It has feathers which must be pulled out one by one leaving the down, making it a tedious process to clean. Of course, the down and small feathers were cleaned and kept for pillows and feather comforters, but that's another story.

Earlier I mentioned the Hungarian Banana Peppers. These are about the strongest type known, and, unlike our New Mexico Chilies, burn your skin, your mouth etc. making them a challenge to eat. Dad loved them, eating at least two with his supper. Mom would can them and since there wasn't such a thing as rubber gloves in their vocabulary, not to mention that they cost money, mom's hands would be bright red and burned for several days. I still cannot eat Banana Peppers although I love our state grown chilies.

My youthful memories of my father revolve around a man who seemed to be very loud, stubborn, and brusque. He never played with us, was very loud and threatening but seldom resorted to severe punishment. **He had a** Model T Ford fan belt which he kept on a nail on the back porch. Unlike the v-belts we are used to seeing on later model autos, the model T had a flat, looped belt somewhat like a trouser belt. When we were too unruly he would produce the belt and snap it very loud. This was enough to quiet even the loudest argument or play. He was very strict, demanding we obey at once, seldom forgiving. He often argued loudly with my mother, although he never laid a hand on her. One example comes to mind when I was in my late teens. He and I had a disagreement over what I no longer can remember. It was his practice to give you the cold shoulder and not talk to you. He did this with others such as my sister who responded by trying to get him to relent and talk. Not being of a docile nature myself

I decided that if he wanted to give me the quiet treatment I would oblige him and do the same. My mother was very concerned but I assured her that I would not give in as others did. This went on for over a year. In those days I worked half a day on Saturday. Coming home I sat for lunch. Dad suddenly said, "I have trouble with my car, it overheats." I was as surprised as my mother but kept my cool. I replied that it could be the thermostat and I would look at it after lunch. It turned out to be just that and I went into town for a new one. He was very surprised, getting into my car. That was the end of that. Afterwards when we would have an argument you could see that he was upset but he never tried the cold treatment with me again.

Dad wasn't always mean and cross. He had a very good sense of humor, and he could make you laugh with a variety of witty remarks. In Hungary they do not celebrate your birthday, rather your name day, almost always taken from a saint. Dad had a saying for every one of these saints' days. I cannot remember but two of the sayings and I can't recall the names of the saints.

One was in the autumn. Dad would say that today was this saints day, "when, no matter which way the wind blows, it's cold." The other was in the spring, "the old man comes out from behind the cook stove." He had many of these along with a supply of sayings apt to an occasion or situation.

It wasn't until after Dad died that I began to reflect upon just why I thought badly of him. He passed away at age 83 in 1968.

I have come to the conclusion that I may have been mistaken about him. Rather, I think, he suffered mightily from the lack of a good education. He surely had a better than average IQ. Being in a new country, he spoke broken English, mixing up phrases and reading very slowly. I do not think he understood all that he read . . .

This lack of education, speaking, and reading was a burden for him. If he had been better educated' he could have achieved much more than he appeared to do. It must have been frustrating to not be able to communicate. In our home he spoke a patois of English and Hungarian, whatever word that better expressed the thought was used. No one who has experienced this type of schooling and language can realize how much of a handicap it can be. If you were a dullard, it would not matter much, but I think my Dad had far more intelligence than I ever gave him credit for. I saw the bad. It has taken me a long time to find the good. He worked hard for us. We always had enough to eat; we were always clothed, clean, and warm. I used to think it was only my mother's doing but that just cannot be.

Some of the things I wrote about above were embarrassing to me at the time because we were different then my friends and neighbors. Now I am proud to have experienced these things and treasure the memories of them. "Az Apam" was from another time, another generation, but he saw to it that we matured and could take care of ourselves. For that I can only hope that he understands me now.

THE END

March is the end of our fiscal year. Please bring your membership fee to our next meeting or mail a check to

The Hungarian-American Club of NM
P.O. Box 3454
Albuquerque NM 87190-3454

Seniors (65 and over)	\$12
Individuals	\$15
Family	\$30

And something just to make you smile!

I told my wife I saw a deer on the way to work.
She said how do you know he was headed to work?

DON'T MAKE OLD PEOPLE MAD
WE DON'T LIKE BEING OLD IN THE FIRST PLACE SO IT DOESN'T TAKE MUCH TO PISS US OFF



On average, a Panda feeds for approximately 12 hours per day. This is the same as an adult at home under quarantine, which is why we call it a "Pandemic"

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President Eva Nagy-Boross	Vice president Samir Sekhubara	Secretary Anna Powless	Treasurer Joe Galko
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The Newsletter staff members are Steve Borbas, Anna Powless, Eva Nagy Boross with guest writers and articles. Special thanks to everyone who contributed this month!!

HUNGARIAN AMERICAN CLUB of NEW MEXICO

Purpose: To foster Hungarian culture among those residents of new Mexico who are of Hungarian descent, related to people of Hungarian descent, or who may not have Hungarian affiliation, but who are interested in the preservation of ethnic cultures, such as Hungarian, which may become lost without organizational effort.

IF YOU WISH TO ADVERTISE YOUR BUSINESS OR SERVICES IN OUR NEWS LETTER, PLEASE CONTACT Steve Borbas 265-7088

If you have news, or you need information, please call Steve Borbas 265-7088 or Anna Powless 280-6886



*You are cordially invited
to join the Hungarian Community at
our Annual Summer Picnic*

Sunday, June 11, 2023 beginning at 12:00pm

at the home of Simone and Richard Debbas
8801 Natalie Ave, Albuquerque

Please bring a dish to share (READY to serve) bring a drink if you'd like, and a
chair if you can.

We will provide water, shade, tables, and some chairs .

From:

The Hungarian-American Club of NM
P.O. Box 3454
Albuquerque NM 87190-3454

To:

