

# MAGYAR FRONT

FALL 2008

**GENERAL  
IKUTARO INOUE**



**CHAIRMAN OF THE IMPERIAL JAPANESE VETERAN'S ASSOCIATION**



## MAGYAR FRONT VOLUME X, ISSUE 4 FALL 2008

Published quarterly by  
**Peter Czink VRNT, Editor**

Photography by  
**Lorraine Weideman**  
(unless otherwise noted)

**The New Front:**  
(International Hungarian Military  
History Preservation Society)

**Peter Czink VRNT**  
President

**Lorraine Weideman**  
Vice-President, Webmaster

**Peter v. Laborc**  
Vice-President, Hungary

**John Keir**  
Vice-President, United Kingdom

**Gergely Pál Sallay**  
Historical Consultant,  
Correspondent

PO Box 74527 Kitsilano PO  
Vancouver, British Columbia  
V6K 4P4 Canada 604 733-9948

czink@shaw.ca  
www.newfront.com

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Membership in the  
International Hungarian Military History  
Preservation Society is \$40.00 annually,  
and includes both the *Magyar Front* and  
the *New Hungarian Voice* periodicals.

*The original Magyar Front was the  
weekly newspaper of the Front-Line  
Fighter's Association, and was  
published from the early 1930s until  
the end of the Second World War.*



## A note from the Editor

I am very excited about the “new front” – the International Hungarian Military History Preservation Society. We have already received many inquiries, and I can feel that shedding our highly-charged political affiliation, and embarking in a new direction was a very sound decision.

We are currently working on administrative details, and will soon be updating our website. You will “meet” Péter v. Laborc in this issue, and future issues will introduce other dedicated members to you. It is my sincere hope that our organization will be a central point for hobbyists and historians to share their knowledge and ideas.

For years, I have encountered misinformation about Hungary's Company Officer's Badge, and finally, we have, courtesy of Gergely Sallay, a definitive article on the subject. Work like this will set records straight and be a great benefit to the study of military history.

The main theme this time is remembrance, however, and I think it's a good way to start out on our new journey. For most people, remembrance isn't a full-time job – like it is for many of us. Professional historians and amateur collectors share a significant common bond – an interest in preserving a part of the past that is often overlooked. I sincerely hope that our New Front will facilitate a new kind of memorial, and whether we are history buffs or advanced experts, may it inspire us to explore our interest more deeply and with an open mind, and to generously share it with a broader audience.

Finally, near the end of this issue is a brief article on military re-enacting. It's a relatively new hobby, and whether or not you have the time or inclination to set up a tent or dig a trench, its existence is significant. I constantly hear from my elders that “young people don't care about our military history.” I think that many of them do care – a lot.

I hope you all enjoy our publication, and please keep in mind that I welcome any thoughts, comments or criticisms. Welcome to the New Front!

P.Cz.



## Our Cover:

### A PORTRAIT OF JAPANESE GENERAL IKUTARO INOUE

In a previous issue of the Magyar Front (Volume X Issue 2, pp. 10-13), I gave an account of some aspects of the relations between the Hungarian and Japanese frontline fighters in the late 1930s and early 1940s. In the article, I touched upon Dr. István Mezey's trip to Japan in 1938-1939. In the course of his trip, Dr. Mezey, founder and later chairman of the Magyar-Nippon Társaság (Hungarian-Japanese Society), honorary professor of Senshu University, Tokyo, contacted the leaders of the Imperial Japanese Veterans' Association (Nippon Teikoku Zaigo Gunjinkai) on behalf of the Hungarian Frontline Fighters' Association and presented the association's Badge of Honour to General Ikutaro Inoue, Chairman of the association, on January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1939.

After the article was published, fellow researcher Mr. Péter Wintermantel very kindly drew my attention to a portrait of General Inoue (pictured on our cover) published in *Az igazi Japán (The Real Japan)* by István Mezey (issued by the Magyar-Nippon Társaság in 1939). In the picture, General Inoue is seen wearing the Badge of Honour of the Hungarian Frontline Fighters' Association on the right breast pocket of his uniform beside that of the Japanese Association. In this most interesting portrait, the breast star of the 1st Class of the Order of the Rising Sun and the 3rd Class insignia of the Order of the Golden Kite can also be seen on his left breast and around his neck. Above the right breast pocket of his tunic, another version of the badge of the Japanese Veterans' Association can be seen. The image is much more detailed than the one published in Issue 2 of the Magyar Front earlier this year, and it is a remarkable and rare visual source of the international relationships of the Hungarian Frontline Fighters' Association.

Gergely Pál Sallay





## ***Péter v. Laborc - “New Front” Hungarian Vice-President***

Péter v. Laborc, pictured here with his daughter Zsófia, is the new Vice-President (Hungary) of the International Hungarian Military History Preservation Society. Our association is known as the *Nemzetközi Társulat a Magyar Hadtörténelmi Hagyományokért* in Hungarian, and Péter is ready to address any inquiries written in Hungarian, and to act as an official representative of the “New Front” in Hungary.

Already well-known to many of our members, his is a household name in Hungarian militaria and military history circles. Born in 1955, he was raised and schooled in Tata, and spent the early part of his life working for the Hungarian Postal Service. He has been interested in history and historical artifacts since childhood, and by high-school he was already a serious collector of militaria – specifically uniforms and equipment. He was particularly drawn to the Horthy regency period, and soon became an expert – helped along by his affection for those romantic inter-war years when Hungary seemed to be at its zenith. His grandfather was a lieutenant-colonel during the First World War, and his father served as a captain of the engineers in World War II.

Péter has always gone out of his way to share his collection and knowledge, and has been involved in countless displays and historical exhibitions over the years. His uniforms and equipment, as well as many of his thousands of Hungarian postcards and period photographs have appeared in many books and publications. He believes “that it’s of the utmost importance to understand our forefathers’ history – no matter what part of the world we live in. Through that understanding we will become better acquainted with the history of our homeland.” Anyone who has been touched by his enthusiasm will attest to his sincerity and reliability – he is always ready to help a fellow enthusiast.

In 2003, Péter was awarded membership in the Order of Vitéz. Interestingly, he was initially invested with the peace-time post-nominal letters VRNT for his own merit and service, and later, because of his father’s military record, he was awarded the hereditary title of *vitéz*. His decorations and medals include the Gold Cross of Merit of the Order of Vitéz, the MHBK Cross of Merit, the MHBK Gold and Silver Medals of Merit, the MHBK Vancouver Chapter 1956-2006 Commemorative Medal, and the Austrian Veterans’ Association Silver Medal of Merit.

Currently, a number of very historically significant pieces from his collection are on display at the Komárom 1938-1945 retrospective exhibition at the György Klapka Museum, Kelemen László Street 22, Komárom, Hungary. The exhibit will be open until March 31st, 2009.

Péter can be contacted (in Hungarian) at [laborcemail@freemail.hu](mailto:laborcemail@freemail.hu).

## The Company Officer's Badge

Although it was one of the most common Hungarian military badges of the interwar period and the Second World War, militaria collectors and even historians and museum curators seem to know very little about the *Csapattiszti jelvény*, or Company Officer's Badge.

This most characteristic badge was introduced in 1920 for the Royal Hungarian National Army (called the Royal Hungarian Defence Forces from 1922) to distinguish commissioned officers of the various arms of service (infantry, cavalry, artillery, armoured troops and engineers), from officers that served in motorised and horse-drawn train units and the supply troops. From 1939, officers of the Royal Hungarian River Forces were also authorised to wear the badge. The highest position, the holder of which was still entitled to display the badge on his uniform, was that of a regimental commander. Those officers who were transferred to a higher command or authority, were not permitted to wear the badge anymore.

The Company Officer's Badge was the first officially instituted badge of the new independent Hungarian army after the First World War and it was used until the end of the Second World War. The design of the badge was entirely new and it reflected the independence of the Hungarian national army through the portrayal of the most important national symbols: the Hungarian Holy Crown, the double cross and the triple mounds (the elements of the national coat-of-arms). Other components like the naked sword and the wreath of oak and laurel leaves were meant to reflect the military character of the badge. The sword, held by a hand, represented leadership and was an appropriate reference to the service of company officers. It is noteworthy that the badge was designed by Major Kamil Aggházy, founder of the Royal Hungarian Military History Museum, Commissary Major Ferenc Péter and Second Lieutenant László Gy. Pethely, a renowned industrial designer of the period who also created the insignia of the Order of Vitéz. Major Aggházy's participation in the project suggests that the Military History Museum, which was established in late 1918, took an active part in the creation of the system of the new Hungarian national military symbols.

The Company Officer's Badge had to be worn in the middle of the right breast pocket of the officer's tunic (or on the greatcoat, *pelisse* or *atilla* coat in the same position). From 1933, it was compulsory to wear it with the parade dress, the mess dress and the service dress, but it was not allowed to be worn in marching order. Officers often attached a cloth backing in arm-of-service colour to the badge. In photographs taken at officer's inauguration ceremonies, military academy graduates can already be seen wearing their Company Officer's Badges.

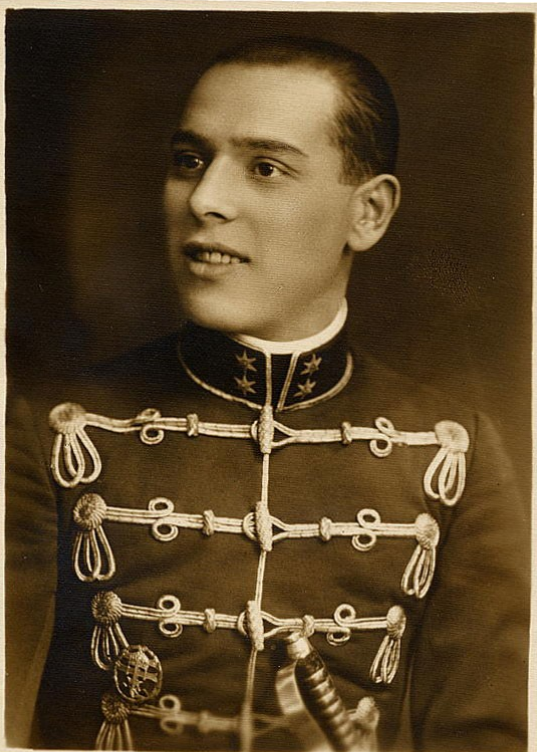
The badge was struck of copper alloy, gilt and enamelled. There were several manufacturers that produced the Company Officer's Badge, so pieces may vary in material, finish and measurements. There are examples with maker's marks being stamped into their reverse or into the fastening clasps on their backs, but the badges typically are not marked. The badge shown in the enlarged picture at right measures 53.5mm by 45mm.

*Gergely Pál Sallay*

**Above: Youthful First Lieutenant (*főhadnagy*) Viktor Orzechovsky, recently awarded the Company Officer's Badge, poses in his Model 1926 *társasági díszatilla* dress uniform, sometime during the late 1920s.**

**Below: An unidentified captain (*százados*) wearing the Model 1939 officer's service tunic sometime in the early 1940s.**

**The Reclamation of Transylvania Commemorative Medal, the officer's Border Rifles branch-of-service insignia, and the Company Officer's Badge decorate his uniform.**



CZINK COLLECTION



CZINK COLLECTION



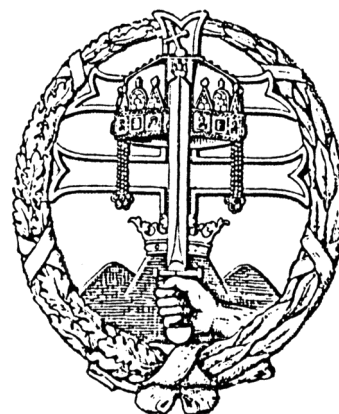
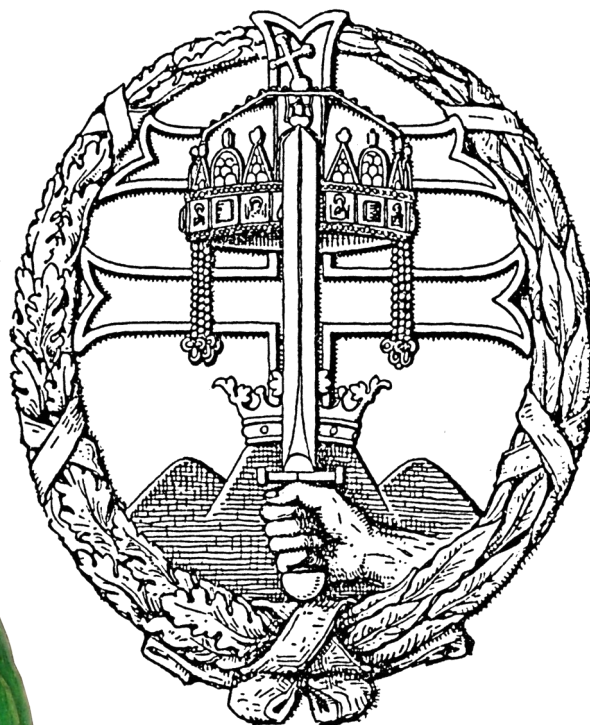
Below: Enlarged photograph of a Company Officer's Badge, from the Hungarian Military History Museum. This example has particularly light coloured, translucent enamelling on the oak and laurel-leaf wreath.

Bottom: four different manufacturer's Variations shown actual size (note the two badges with branch-of-service coloured wool backing - red for artillery and green for infantry).

Right: Drawings of the badge - actual size and enlarged, from official regulations.

88. ábra.

Csapattiszti jelvény.



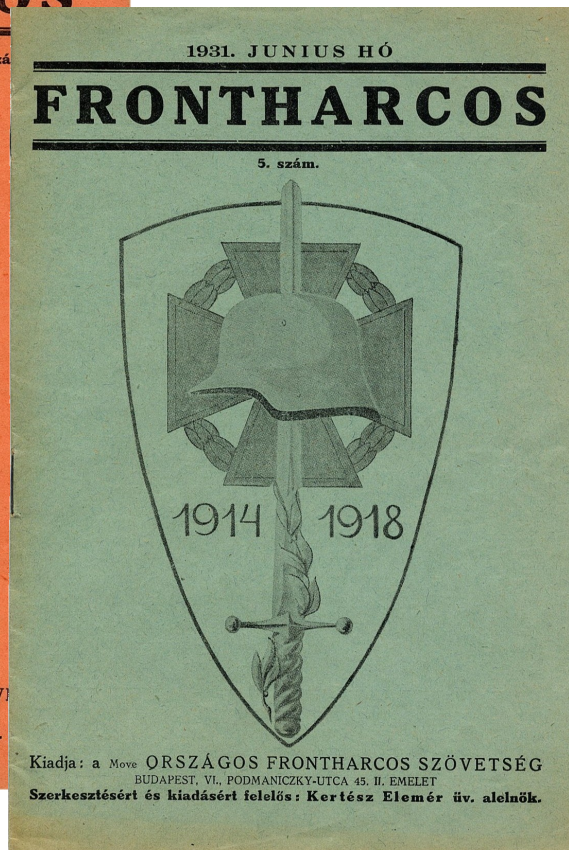
Eredeti nagyságban.



CZINK  
COLLECTION



# FRONTHARCOS!



Pictured at left (shown half-size) are two issues of a publication that was entirely unknown to me: *Frontharcos* – the pre-Magyar Front periodical of the Hungarian Veterans' Association.

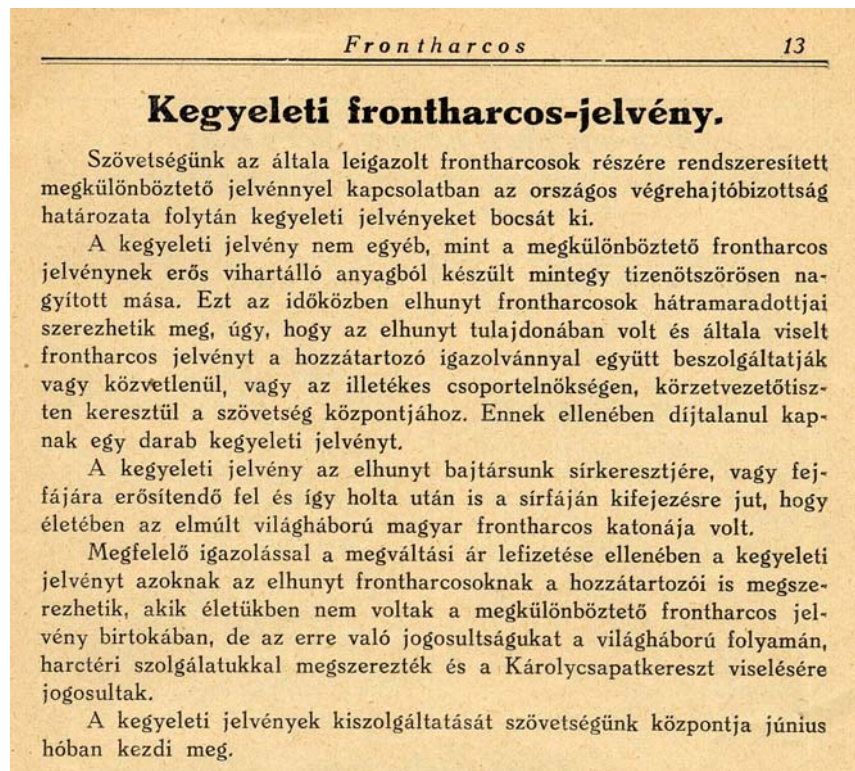
Before becoming an independent national organization, the veterans' association was a part of the conservative and nationalistic M.O.V.E. (*Magyar Országos Véderő Egylet*).

The April 1930 issue (orange cover) was their first one, and the example with the green cover is from June of 1931. The veterans' association continued to exist within M.O.V.E. until February 17<sup>th</sup>, 1932.

## The Veteran's Memorial Insignia

One of the articles in the latter issue is about the "Veteran's Memorial Insignia" (*Kegyeleti frontharcos-jelvény*). It announced that the leadership of the association has instituted a new memorial insignia, or plaque for the tombstones of frontline fighters. Similar in design to the standard membership badge but fifteen times larger, it would be produced in weather-resistant metal.

Family members of deceased combatants could obtain the memorial plaque, free of charge, by providing documentation of their frontline service. For those soldiers who were not awarded the First World War combatants' Karl Troops' Cross, or *Károlycsapatkereszt*, but who qualified for it, the plaque could be purchased by their descendants provided that they had the appropriate frontline service documents.







Cast metal shield measuring 20.9cm x 32.7cm (shown here smaller than actual size).

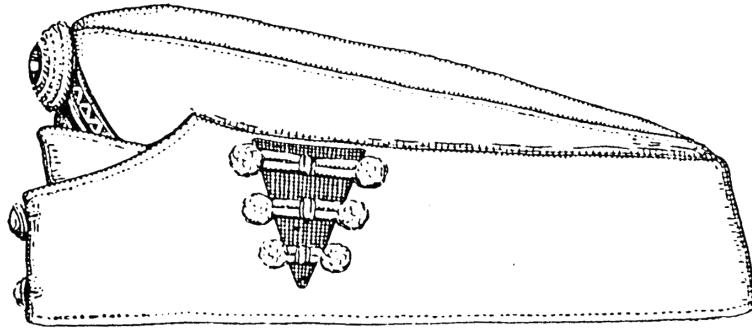
Three holes for mounting and a curved blank “scroll” near the bottom, most likely meant for inscription, can clearly be seen.

Although the only reference to this insignia I have encountered is reproduced on the previous page, this up-until-now unidentified veterans’ association shield is most probably the Veteran’s Memorial Insignia.

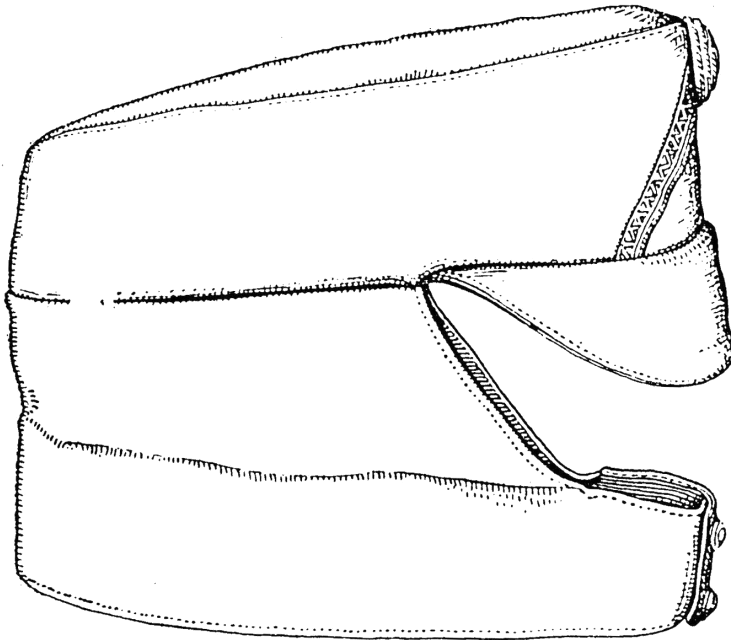
CZANK COLLECTION

# Hungarian

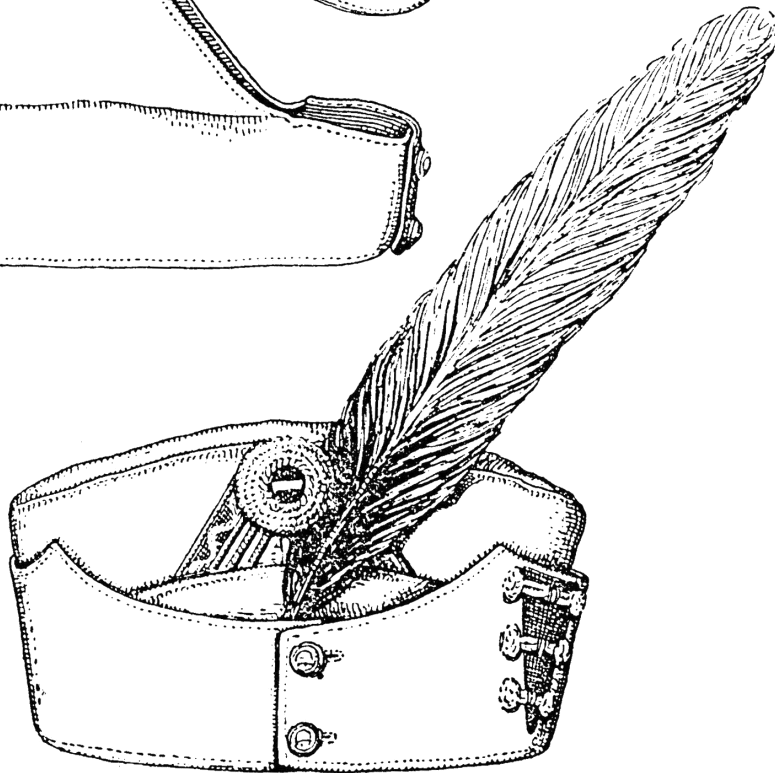
6. ábra.  
Tábori sapka baloldali  
nézete.



7. ábra.  
Tábori sapka jobboldali  
nézete.



8. ábra.  
Tábori sapka elüli  
nézete.



Three views of the M1920 officer's field cap.



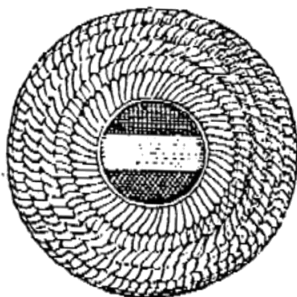
# Regulations

8a. ábra.

Sastoll tábornokok részére.

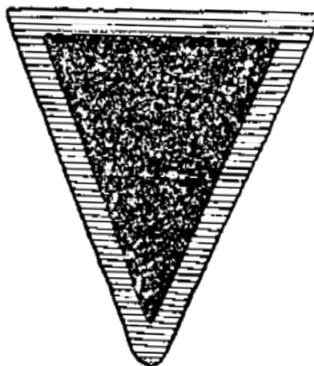
9. ábra.

Sapkarózsa.



10. ábra.

Kettős hajtóka  
tábori sapkán.



Field cap rosette, general's eagle feather decoration, and an example of a two-colour branch-of-service triangle. The practice of wearing the eagle feather was discontinued in the mid-1930s.



*Bajtárs! Ne tagadj meg!*







CZINK COLLECTION

*Comrade! Do not forsake me!*

The fallen soldier, in the National Frontline Fighters' Association's poster from 1930 (pictured in the period almanac *Frontharcos Eszme Szólgálatában* and reproduced at left), commands us not to forsake him. This is certainly one of the most moving and poignant war posters that I have encountered, and graphically illustrates the themes of memorial and remembrance - so important that the frontline fighter has broken out of his grave to remind us. As we study history scientifically and objectively, and if we look more deeply at our collections and related hobbies, we endeavour to do what soldiers like him might have hoped for. For many of us, every day is Remembrance Day - even though many of the monuments are gone.

The postcard pictured at right (shown actual size) is of a Frontline Fighter's monument in Várpalota, a town in Western Hungary in the county of Veszprém.

The familiar badge can clearly be seen, and is even more prominent in the photo above - a private snapshot of a group of people visiting the same memorial.

The little photo, considerably enlarged here, has no caption or date, but it looks like two mothers and their children.

One can't help but wonder if one or both of their husbands were frontline fighters, being remembered that day.



VÁRPALOTA.

Frontharcos emlékmű

CZINK COLLECTION

*Memorials from the past...*



CZINK COLLECTION

## ...and those of today

The three classes of the Hungarian Ministry of Defence's Hungarian War Graves Custodianship Merit Award, or *Magyar Hadisírgondozásért Kitüntető Cím* (Gold, Silver and Bronze), pictured at left (actual size), continue the tradition of dramatic and thought-provoking design.

They are currently awarded for exemplary service in the maintenance of war graves, war monuments and memorials. The awards are issued consecutively for continued exceptional service, and a minimum of three years must pass before a recipient is eligible for the next, higher grade.

Its design is clearly based on that of the old *Tűzkereszt* (Fire Cross), and on the arms of the cross, the motto *Pro Custodia - Tumulorum - Militum* is inscribed.

The old Frontline Fighters' Association insignia (see detail below) can still be seen on this tombstone in Budapest's Farkasréti Cemetery.



SALLAY PHOTO







SALLAY PHOTO

This memorial is in the garden of local government building, in Badacsonytördemic. It's clearly a Frontline Fighters' Association monument (see the detail of the insignia at left) that has survived to this day.

Below: tombstones in Keszthely, for members of the old veterans' association - Vilmos Vértessy (middle), an artillery captain, was killed in action on the Eastern Front, and was presumably the son of Vilmos Vértessy Sr. (left). The inscription at the bottom of Sándor Vértess's memorial states that it had been destroyed by Allied bombing in 1944.

These remarkable photos were taken earlier this year by Gergely Pál Sallay.



SALLAY PHOTO



SALLAY PHOTO



SALLAY PHOTO





## HUNGARIAN HISTORICAL RE-ENACTING

Military re-enacting is almost as old as warfare itself. Early men would have undoubtedly been keen on demonstrating their martial exploits, and modern veterans can often be found re-living their wartime memories. Once stripped of their bravado, military tales become history, to be communicated to future generations through education.

From ancient Grecian amphitheatres to American Civil War battlefield re-enactments, what once served to glorify Hellenic heroes has become not only a dynamic hobby, but also an exciting way for people to immerse themselves in living history.

John Hajnal's "profound respect and admiration for those who have served their country, whatever country that may be," prompted him to become involved in re-enacting, and considering his heritage, his country of choice was Hungary. Being born and raised in the United States and speaking little Hungarian, he quickly realized the obscurity of his interest – the only Hungarian military re-enactment groups were in Hungary, and the hobby still in its infancy at that. He persevered, and over the next few years, he put together a complete WW II Hungarian infantryman's kit, and has started the first Hungarian military re-enactment group in North America – a tribute to the 6<sup>th</sup> Royal Hungarian Infantry Regiment.

"It is our goal to expand our unit to help to educate people about Hungarian participation in World War II – we would like to attend more events, and we're looking for new members," says Hajnal. Re-enacting is growing in popularity, and is an exciting way for people to immerse themselves in whatever period of history that fascinates them most. Hajnal sees it as self-education that encourages historical preservation. "I enjoy re-enacting because it gives me a better understanding of what the soldiers went through. Once, while at a weekend re-enactment in -5° weather, I woke-up and realized that I had no feeling in my legs – I could imagine how much worse the soldiers must have had it, yet they carried on."

John Hajnal is excited about the future of re-enacting: "I have a love for Hungarian military history. This hobby is popular in Hungary, but for me to start a unit over here will be a long process. My plans are to reach out to the re-enacting community to get more people interested, and to spread knowledge about Hungary's part in World War II."

As a society, it has become much easier to choose pastimes that are dictated to us by the media and its advertisers. Especially for young people, military history isn't in the top ten list of popular interests. Re-enacting is a very clever and dynamic way to promote interest in military history, and to educate the people around us.

John Hajnal's new website is a work in progress - have a look: <http://web.mac.com/magyarsoldat/Site/Home.html>

**You can spend a lot of time looking through the various other re-enactment sites on the internet - here are just a few:**

Hungarian Huszárs - [www.magyarhuszar.hu/site/index.html](http://www.magyarhuszar.hu/site/index.html) WW I Austro-Hungarians - <http://kuk.armiam.com/>  
 WW II Soldiers - [www.kiralyihagyomanyorzok.eu/index\\_1.html](http://www.kiralyihagyomanyorzok.eu/index_1.html) Post WW II Re-Enactors - [www.veteranmilitari.hu/](http://www.veteranmilitari.hu/)



# Our Shop



Our brand new International Hungarian Military History Preservation Society "New Front" insignia (shown half size). Exquisitely hand-embroidered badge worked in gold and silver bullion on red, white and green velvet. Measuring 6.5cm x 10cm, each badge has three clutch-back pins on the reverse for wear as a blazer crest.

**\$12.50 (plus postage)**

Full-size replica of the Hungarian Officer's Bronze Medal with the Holy Crown, or "Signum Laudis" on War Ribbon. This is a good quality reproduction of a medal that is getting quite scarce - an excellent and inexpensive replacement for veterans medal groups or for display.

One-piece decoration on proper tri-fold ribbon.

**\$10.00**



Full-colour, full-size (15cm x 17cm) reproductions of the World War II Hungarian Military vehicle insignia.

Printed on square white peel-and-stick paper:

**\$2.50**

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Our 64 page booklet published for the 2006, 50th anniversary of the 1956 Revolution.

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***Memoirs of a Hungary Soldier*** (see Magyar Front July – August 2007 Volume IX Issue 4 for more information)  
**www.lulu.com** - type "Gyokeri" into the search box and you'll find it. \$25.00 (soft cover, 105 pages)

***The Royal Hungarian Armed Forces 1919 – 1945:*** 166 pages, **\$30.00** • ***The Fallen Generals:*** 146 pages, **\$25.00**

***La Regia Marina 1919 - 1945:*** 66 pages, **\$22.50** • ***The Armed Forces of Latvia 1918 - 1940:*** 151 pages, **\$30.00**

***The Luftwaffe 1935 - 1945:*** 144 pages, **\$30.00** • ***Between Kaiser and Führer:*** 131 pages, **\$30.00**

Books by Andris Kursietis can be ordered through his website: **www.arkmusiccorp.com**

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