PREPARATIONS ARE UNDERWAY FOR OUR 2006 REVOLUTION ANNIVERSARY PROJECT!

Even though we still are over a year away from the 50th anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution, I am starting to plan for our October 2006 exhibition at the Vancouver Public Library. Our display will be on the 6th floor of the main branch of the library (one of the most impressive buildings in downtown Vancouver), and will consist of large display cases which I will build for the exhibit, as well as smaller ones that the library will provide. These cases will be in the centre of the floor facing the escalators, and will also be incorporated into free-standing vertical display boards for images and information. On each side of the escalators are long walls which will hold large framed displays. The exhibition will be very prominent – it will be concentrated in the centre of the 6th floor – the historical department, and will be very easily accessible to thousands of people each day.

The two large display cases that I will be building will each hold a life size ‘torso figure’ – one with the uniform of a Hungarian officer/freedom fighter; and the other will be a representation of a female civilian insurgent. The officer’s uniform will be displayed with other military equipment and every day Hungarian objects from the 1950’s, and the other figure will include replicas of ‘Molotov cocktails’ and other items commonly associated with the revolutionaries.

The small cases will contain some very rare pieces that will include an original Nemzetőr armband, period and post revolution badges and insignia, secret police items, original photographs and documents.

For the large display walls I already have many examples of revolutionary newspapers that were printed during the revolt, as well as a period flag with the communist coat-of-arms cut out. We will also be looking into having local Vancouver newspaper pages that covered the Uprising reproduced to go along with the Hungarian ones. The Vancouver Archives also has a number of photos of Hungarians taken as they came here shortly after the Revolution – we hope to be able to access those for the exhibition as well.

Many commemorative items will be available next year - the one shown above will be in use throughout our booklet and displays.

The Nemzetőr (National Guard) armband was the only unique insignia manufactured specifically by the Revolutionaries. This original example will be one of the many artifacts on display at our exhibition.

As you all know by now, we will also be publishing a special commemorative booklet (which will be available for free). If you were in Hungary during the Revolution, I would very much like to talk to you about your reminiscences and include them in our publication. Please contact me if you are interested.
The 2001 September-October issue of the Magyar Front was dedicated to an old soldier, ‘Laci bácsi’, or more officially, former Sergeant László v. Polgári of the Royal Hungarian Army.

I met him only twice, but we corresponded and spoke on the telephone quite a lot – we had a brief friendship that meant a lot to me. In several conversations with me, he spoke of how he would like to leave me his most prized possessions – his military medals. He was seen with them often, jingling on his coat, and when he ended up in a hospital bed late in his life he had them carefully mounted in a picture frame with a note on the back that they should be given to me when he would be on the ‘hadak útján’.

He passed away on October 7th, 2001, and his daughter took over his possessions. Shortly after that his dear friend and Vancouver Chapter member Ferenc v. Mandalik was given the medals after he contacted Laci bácsi’s daughter again, and in the meantime I substituted two medals from my own collection, a large silver and a small bronze, for the picture in Volume III, Issue 5 of the Magyar Front.

After some time the original medals were returned to me.

I was disturbed by the whole affair – that such items could be so misunderstood and disrespected by the family members of veterans. I replaced some of the ribbons that were in very poor condition and put them into a special box in my cabinet. I look at them often and with fondness. I have a great love for collecting Hungarian military decorations and militaria in general, but somehow this group of medals were extra special to me – most probably because Laci bácsi expressly gave them to me to care for.

Not too long ago I got to know Gergely Sallay – the head of the Numismatic Collection of the Hungarian Military History Institute and Museum, and he told me of how their collection has very few items from the MHBK. Laci bácsi’s medals (and the documents that go with them) represent awards from many of the Hungarian immigrant veteran’s groups, and I thought of how these important artifacts might have a better home in Hungary’s most prestigious military museum.

I have thought a great deal about this, and I have decided to donate this group to the museum. I think Laci bácsi would be happy about this decision, since now all Hungarians will have access to them, and they will be among our nation’s most revered historical artifacts.
László v. Polgári’s medals are pictured on the previous page (the image was taken from the September - October 2001 Magyar Front, when I had to substitute two medals from my collection - the Large Silver and Bronze Bravery medals. The badge of the Order of Vitéz, Grand Knight’s Cross of the Order of St. László, Knight’s Cross of the Order of St. László, Large Silver Bravery Medal, two Small Silver Bravery Medals, Fire Cross, Commemorative Medals for the Liberation of Upper Hungary and for the Return of Southern Hungary, MHBK 20 Year Anniversary Commemorative Medal, MKCsBK 25 Year Anniversary Commemorative Medal with Swords, Don River Veteran’s Association Commemorative Cross with Swords, MKCsBK Cross of Honour, Royal Hungarian Gendarmerie 100 Year Anniversary Commemorative Medal and the European Combatant’s Cross will be sent to the Hungarian Military History Institute and Museum.

I am also including the award documents that Laci bácsi gave me. The document for the European Combatant’s Cross (1970), an MHBK Certificate of Merit (1972), and the document for the MKCsBK Cross of Honour (1995) are pictured at the top of the page. In the middle is the certificate for the MKCsBK 25 Year Anniversary Commemorative Medal with Swords (1973). The bottom row shows the award documents for the Knight’s Cross of the Order of St. László (1971), the Royal Hungarian Gendarmerie 100 Year Anniversary Commemorative Medal (1981) and the Grand Knight’s Cross of the Order of St. László (1999).

With these items I am also sending 5 typewritten pages of Laci bácsi’s reminiscences; 6 photocopied pages from Hungarian-Canadian publications regarding Laci bácsi; 3 photocopied pages of miscellaneous military documents; 1 page with 2 copied pictures of him; 1 copy of a photo and biography of his father; his MHBK Vancouver Chapter membership document; a letter from the Don River Veterans’ Association; a handwritten Hungarian document from 1947 and letter willing the medals to me.
UNUSUAL ARMBAND WORN BY FRONT-LINE FIGHTER

Shown at right is an image of a well decorated veteran’s from the cover of the June 4th, 1943 issue of Magyar Erő, a Hungarian armed forces newspaper.

He is wearing an armband, which is very unusual for a Hungarian veteran. At left is an enlargement of that corner of the picture, and even though we can see that there is Austro-Hungarian style braid around the top and bottom of the band, and perhaps a shield in the centre; I am still unable to determine what kind of armband he could be wearing.

A prize will be awarded to the first person who correctly identifies this unusual item!

MHBK VANCOUVER CHAPTER EMBROIDERED BADGES

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This insignia is based on the W.W.II war correspondent’s badge - do your best to educate those around you and you’ll be doing your part to preserve our history!

Send a minimum $5.00 donation for your full colour embroidered insignia (shown actual size).
All historical work is the result of many people’s efforts, and I can share the following article with you thanks to several dedicated Hungarians. It is the English translation of an article that appeared in the Hungarian Somogy County newspaper ‘Új Somogy’ on September 10, 1936, that reports on the festive event of consecrating the flag featured in our last issue.

Vancouver Chapter member Péter Laborc VRNT contacted the Somogy County museum and inquired as to the existence of any information on the flag, and ran into an old acquaintance, Dr. Éva Varga, museum curator and historian. Dr. Varga found the article on microfiche (reproduced on page 3) and kindly sent it to me. Zsófia Laborc quickly typed it out and sent it to me electronically, and then Magda Sasvári did an excellent job of translating it. Lastly, I did the editing and then later, Dr. Varga found the photograph that appears on the next page. While reading the text and looking at the wonderful photo, I felt very close to that by-gone era - a time between the two World Wars when Hungary prospered, life was ‘old fashioned’ and when we were convinced in our deepest of hearts that a ‘brighter tomorrow’ was just around the corner.

CONSECRATION OF VETERAN’S FLAG
A MOST BEAUTIFUL CELEBRATION

Archduke József dedicated the flag with a beautiful and moving speech. In all aspects it was an imposing celebration with many thousands of interested spectators in attendance.

It was a long awaited dream of the veteran’s association of Kaposvár that was fulfilled on Tuesday, the 8th of September 1936. The celebration was to consecrate their flag – their symbol of camaraderie, created by the members’ sacrifices and by their organization’s understanding support. Today, it is one of the country’s most beautiful examples.

The lengthy preparations and the great care that was extended to every minor detail made it possible that this day truly enriched the city’s program of events and lured interested public from every rank of society.

His Highness Field Marshal Archduke József, the legendary and much loved commander-in-chief of the soldiers of Somogy County, came in person, and brought along kind greetings from his wife, Archduchess Auguszta. She had been asked to be the ‘flag-mother’, but was not able to attend. She sent her greetings to the veterans of Somogy - many of them had been helped by Her Royal Highness when they were hospitalized as wounded or sick at the end of the Great War.

Archduchess Auguszta asked the wife of the President of the Upper House, Count Bertalan Széchenyi, a big land owner from Felsőseged, to decorate the flag with the Archduchess’ beautifully coloured national ribbon. The description on it read: ‘If God is with us, who is against us, Royal Archduchess Auguszta’.

The other dignitaries included Géza Bornemiszsa, Minister of Industry; Count Bertalan Széchenyi; főnöki vitérc Antal Markóczy, retired Lieutenant General; saárdi Miklós Somssich and Aladár Huszár, Members of the Upper House; Iván Bánó and Miklós Herteledy, Members of Parliament; vitérc László Igmándy Hegyessy, Lord Lieutenant; Pál Stepaiich, sub-prefect; Dr. György Kaposváry, Mayor; Ákos Barcsay, District Chief Constable; baron Aladár Fekete, land owner; baron Károly Kruchina, Ministerial Advisor; vitérc Ferenc Bayor, Order of Vitéz District Captain; Dr. Ferenc Gimesy, President of HONSz. Representatives of churches, authorities, organizations and institutions, the creme de la creme of the city’s society were there, along with great numbers of veterans and their relatives.

Under their flags came the war invalids, the Scouts and the paramilitary youth organizations, as well as representatives of the veterans from Dombóvár and Szigetvár.

The President of the Veterans Association, vitérc József Takách-Tolvay retired Lieutenant General, came accompanied by Vice President Alajos Engelbach; his adjutant József Mayer, retired Major, and Dr. Ottó Vojtsek the organizing officer. Also present were Imre Lajpczig, retired Colonel and local President, and Vilmos Strinovich retired Colonel and Vice President. Close to 800 veterans from the general headquarters main group under the command of Major Andor Rimánczy, vitérc József Adorján, Aladár Hámory, Imre Lőke, Rezső Settler, László Vágó and István Vizy from company headquarters completed their tasks in an orderly, exemplary
and dignified way, and made a very good impression on the audience.

Special mention should be given to the 40 beautiful young girls, who, as children of the veterans did their duties of tying ribbons on to the flag as maids of honour in their beautiful and decorative Hungarian costumes.

The Archduke arrived at the County House at 9:30 where the Lord Lieutenant and the President of the Veterans, along with the dignitaries, received His Highness who came together with his escorts for the camp mass which began at 10:00 am. The minister of the Heroes' Church, Zoltán Boldizsár, held the camp mass which was followed by his beautiful, passionate and patriotic speech for the veterans and (he did not say it, but we all knew), at one time he was also there in ‘the honourable blood flowered fields’. After the speech that created a deep impression, he blessed the flag and nailed the first flag nail into the flagpole with the words ‘In the name of God’, and then said a prayer.

After the military orchestra played the Credo (Hiszekegy), the flag dedication celebration began, opened by President Imre Lajpczig greeting the attendants of the celebration with a smart speech and thanking all for the support toward the flag. He then asked His Highness the Archduke for his dedication speech.

A warm eruption of applause greeted ‘Father József’ who was pleasantly surprised by this immense spontaneous expression of love and respect. The Archduke spoke highly of the unforgettable valour of the soldiers of Somogy, in his very soldierly and manly way, while the frequent expression of appreciation and hurrahs hailed the Archduke, who is not only an excellent commander but also an excellent orator - a master of the Hungarian language, like a hurricane (he is also the president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences).

After his Royal Highness’ nailing of the flag nails, Évike Adorján handed over a bouquet of flowers to the deputy flagmother, Countess Széchényi. Escorted by Mártika Magay and Margitka Véli, the ribbon was tied to the flag, and then the maids of honour also beribboned the flag pole, made especially for this occasion.

Following this, representing the National Presidency, Vice President Alajos Engelbach made a touchingly beautiful speech and then handed over the already consecrated flag to President Lejpczig, who in a short speech pledged to be the guardian of the flag. Next, troops marched past in parade and saluted the flag with Archduke József receiving the salute.

After this, President Lajpczig placed the tremendous oak wreath at the Heroes’ Memorial, which was beribboned by the drivers of the automobiles that participated in the motor car rally. The troops carrying the flag lowered it in salute in front of the Heroes’ Memorial and after the parade and this splendid celebration ended, the flag was placed in the Veteran’s Home.

At the veteran’s luncheon, retired Lieutenant General Markóczy hailed Governor Horthy, and president Lajpczig greeted the guests, the representatives of the national presidency, as well as those who arrived in the 57 motor cars from the automobile rally with kind words.

The tour’s honorarium was distributed by Márton Szily, Member of Parliament and Somogy County Automobile Club President.

The beautiful flag’s selfless, patriotic designer and supervisor of its making, Mrs. Jenő József Kovács (born Klára Farkas), a high school teacher, was introduced by vitéz fonyódi Markóczy to Archduke József and Mrs. Bertalan Széchényi, who admired with awe the flag’s splendid beauty and warmly congratulated the high school teacher.
Hatalmas arányban szűk délnövény korosztánya jellemző a fehérhagymák százaléka növekedése.

József Tóthbercz győződik és határos bemutatások avat választott. — Minden részletezés impozáns telefonsán, mely jobban erős és ízben vissza Powell. A hatalmának sajátítása a házaválasztási törvény mellett 30(142,688),(348,849)

A kivonóhoz társadalmi és társadalmi vágyon ment az ajándék, amelyből az alábbi nézőpontokat és tanulásokat szürték felvételre: a tárgyai közötti szélességi, az alárendelt helyek aktuális tervei, amelyeket a jövőben is megteremthetnek. A háttérben lévő, a hadi, a stratégiai és az azon belül lévő sokanat is jól illesztett a tárgyak esetében. A 18-os két hangsúlyos fél ismételt a tárgyak esetében.

Külön bemutatványa az a 40-50 körüli nők női funktionalitását, amelynek azonban a tárgyak történetét is megteremthetnek. A felnőtt tárgyak vannak, amelyek és az ilyen esetben a tárgyak ismételt a tárgyak esetében.

Tizenötezer ember
Jelentésben lepleztek le
CSÉK FERENCZ szobráról.

Cseszneki, a magyar szoprán
Szántónékné és Kalepitszának
alakítója. A szobor közelpontjában
Kapros, Károly, rejtett a szobor közelpontjában
különösen látott a szabadságharcban, de a szabadságharcban a legnagyobb szerepet játszott a szabadságharcban. A szobor közelpontjában
különösen látott a szabadságharcban, de a szabadságharcban a legnagyobb szerepet játszott a szabadságharcban. A szabadságharcban a legnagyobb szerepet játszott a szabadságharcban. A szabadságharcban a legnagyobb szerepet játszott a szabadságharcban.
THE RE-NAMING OF THE MAGYAR FRONTHARCOS SZÖVETSÉG TO THE MAGYAR TŰZHARCOS SZÖVETSÉG

According to the February 10, 1940 issue of ‘Magyar Katonaújság’ (Hungarian Soldier’s Newspaper) the name of the veteran’s association was officially changed to Magyar Tűzharcos Szövetség. Tűzharcos (literally ‘fire fighter’, is not easy to translate into English since a firefighter battles fires – in this case the ‘fire’ refers to ‘gun fire’). Other sources state that the new name had more of a Hungarian quality. In English, front-line fighter is probably the least confusing translation, so I will continue using it in reference to the organization.

Up until this date, the background colour of the veteran’s membership badges were white; and above mentioned article also states that the new badges will have a light green background. Until now I was unsure about the significance of the two badge colours, both on the large and small ‘button hole’ badges and on the larger honour badges of the organization. Interestingly, the new reforms mentioned in this article also state that officers of the association enjoy the same salary structures as military personnel.

Special thanks go to Gergely Sallay of the Institute and Museum of Military History in Budapest for providing this information.

A selection of buttonhole badges are shown below in actual size (from left to right): early enamelled member’s badge; later type with green enamel; inexpensive plain badge; badge for veterans of the Second World War; badge for ex-military personnel who did not serve in wartime; and the mysterious ‘Új Front’ (New Front) badge (purpose unknown).

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This insignia is based on the W.W.II war correspondent’s badge - do your best to educate those around you and you’ll be doing your part to preserve our history!

Send a minimum $5.00 donation for your full colour embroidered insignia (shown actual size).
Writing this issue of the Magyar Front is a particularly pleasurable for me. Firstly, we have gained a very valuable new honorary member; and secondly, I am happy to announce the Vancouver Chapter recipients of the new MHBK Medal of Merit.

Our new member is Mr. Gergely Sallay, the Head of the Numismatic Collection of the Hungarian Military History Institute and Museum in Budapest. For some time now, I have been getting to know this exceptional gentleman through emails – because of constant requests on my part for obscure military data. In an age when service is practically a thing of the past, Gergely always found the time and patience to answer my many inquiries, and in the process has made it possible for me to access information on Hungarian history that is virtually impossible to obtain here – service that greatly enriches the MHBK and those interested in our cause.

The MHBK began as an exile organisation, but now serves more as tool for historical preservation and for the defending of valuable traditions. New generations of Hungarians born outside of the homeland can only carry on these traditions with the help of people like Gergely, who has spent many years studying English literature and linguistics. It is a great honour for me to welcome him as an honorary member of the Vancouver Chapter!

It has taken some time, but the new MHBK Medal of Merit (MHBK Érdemérem) is ready. This award is for exemplary service, and we wanted to insure that it is a medal that truly represents the dedication it takes to earn it. The manufacturing process not only included the finest quality metal-work - custom woven ribbons also had to be prepared and sewn together by hand.

I have noticed that recognition for outstanding service in volunteer organisations such as ours is often lacking, yet enormous energy and great skill has been invested in these organisations. The Vancouver Chapter of the MHBK is one such group that sets an important example – we have taken a defunct chapter and turned it into the most dynamic and progressive one in the entire organisation. We don’t have the answers for all of the challenges, but we are willing to work hard at preserving this small piece of our Hungarian heritage and hopefully in doing so we will inspire others in the future. Most of the individuals who are receiving these first few medals have not been recognised before – on behalf of the MHBK I offer them my most sincere thanks.

We also know that we are not alone in preserving our history and we will continue to do our best to recognise the kindred spirits who voluntarily (and from unexpected places), heroically defend our honoured past side-by-side with us.

I hope that all of our new recipients (see pages 2 and 3), will wear the MHBK Medal of Merit proudly and in good health!
WARRANT OFFICER GLENN JEWISON

Glenn is the founder and co-author of the well known ‘Austro-Hungarian Land Forces’ website. He started work on it in 2000 to fill the need for a good English language source of information on the Austro-Hungarian Army. He is a career military man who has served in the British Army’s Coldstream Guards since 1975, and currently holds the rank of Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant WO2 (RQMS). More Hungarians should follow this gentleman’s example – through his dedicated passion for the subject he has turned his hobby into an invaluable resource for people the world over who wish to learn about our history – in a language they can comprehend. Glenn wrote to me not long ago: “I managed to put together for my own use a fairly detailed glossary of Hungarian military terms which has been useful and I have since uploaded that to the site.” Have a look at his and Jörg Steiner’s (see next page) work – even the most knowledgeable expert on the Austro-Hungarian era is sure to learn something new.

ZOLTÁN v. KŐRÖSSY, Vancouver Chapter Member

Zoli’s passion for preserving Hungary’s military history is extraordinary. He has one of North America’s largest collections of Hungarian militaria, and his main focus is the Royal Hungarian Gendarmerie (Magyar Királyi Csendőrség). He is always ready to share his vast information and happily makes copies of his rare photographs and documents for his fellow historians. He is now working on an excellent website for the Gendarmerie veteran’s association (www.csendor.com), and in doing so he is bringing our often difficult task of historical preservation into the 21st Century – with modern tools such as the Internet, Zoli is making sure that the younger generations will have access to this precious information also.

PÉTER LABORC VRNT, Vancouver Chapter Member

Péter joined us on September 1, 2001. He has one of the world’s most extensive private collections of Hungarian militaria that has gone far beyond the scope of the average hobbyist - his interest is so advanced that most museums and historians would have a difficult time keeping up with his encyclopaedic knowledge of the subject. He shares his information and passion, and goes out of his way to encourage others to promote and preserve our cultural heritage. Although he is a young man, he is a mentor to me – the Vancouver Chapter has been greatly enriched by his kindness and generosity. He is always cheerfully willing to help in all aspects of the promotion and administration of the MHBK, and is a fine representative of our organisation in Hungary. People like Péter Laborc will ensure that Hungary’s history will always be cared for and preserved.

DAVID MILES, Vancouver Chapter Member

Although David lives in England, he is an extraordinary member and friend to all Hungarians. For the past quarter of a century he has studied and collected Hungarian stamps – in a very remarkable way. His focus has been on the occupations of Hungary following the First World War, the Justice for Hungary campaign and the Treaty of Trianon; and he has educated people all over England about our nation’s 20th Century history. He also has been the president of the Hungarian Philatelic Society of Great Britain. This modern ‘Lord Rothermere’ has done far more than his fair share of defending the Hungarian cause, and now he is concentrating on postal history and memorabilia of the 1956 Uprising. All Hungarians owe a debt of gratitude to this fine gentleman.

ALADÁR PINTÉR, Vancouver Chapter Member

A former officer of the Royal Hungarian Gendarmerie, Aladár happily shares his limitless treasure of reminiscences and recollections of his service during the Second World War and his involvement with Hungarians from three continents. Gentlemen like Aladár had built the foundation of the MHBK, and he continues to inspire the younger generations to carry on with our noble association. His experience and wisdom aren’t the only things he has enriched the MHBK with. He is another member that I often ‘put to work’ with long and complex translating, especially from English to Hungarian. I am personally indebted to him for making it possible to put my words in proper and official Hungarian.
LEYLA PINTÉR, Vancouver Chapter Honorary Member

Leyla is also responsible for the Hungarian language versions of MHBK articles and documents. She is a perfectionist with languages like her husband Aladár, and always goes ‘above and beyond the call of duty’ in helping me with Hungarian projects.

From the moment I met her she inspired me – she is a Hungarian of the highest calibre, and her love and dedication to our culture is nothing less than heroic. Our chapter has been able to maintain a very respectable level of quality in both Hungarian and English because of her.

MAGDA SASVÁRI, Vancouver Chapter Honorary Member

Magda is a pillar in the local Hungarian community, and I have had the pleasure of working with her on many projects. Aside from her talents as an administrator and organiser, her intelligent and progressive attitude is an inspiration to the many Hungarians she comes in contact with.

Even though she always has a very ‘full plate’ with the many Hungarian cultural endeavours she is involved with, she has always been willing to work for our organisation whenever I have asked for her help. One of her main contributions to the Vancouver Chapters is her skill at translating – one of the most important and difficult tasks that face an ethnic bi-lingual group such as ours. I often ask Magda to translate from Hungarian to English, which she does perfectly and cheerfully.

JÖRG C. STEINER

Working together with Glenn Jewison, Jörg makes up the other half of the dynamic ‘Austro-Hungarian Land Forces’ website. This talented and experienced historian took part in the foundation of the Austrian Orders and Medals Research Society and was the first editor of their magazine; was co-founder and current president of the Institute für Auszeichnungswesen und Uniformkunde; and has written 13 books and 160 articles on militaria and military history. Both German and English speaking enthusiasts have been greatly enriched by the dedication of this gentleman, and his work has helped ensure that our forefathers’ history will never be forgotten. Their website can be found at: www.austro-hungarian-army.co.uk

GYULA SZABÓ, Vancouver Chapter Honorary Member

It was 10 years ago when Lorraine and I were walking down a side street in Miskolc, Hungary; and we noticed a door with a very martial looking emblem, complete with a representation of a W.W.II Hungarian steel helmet. We entered the building, walked up some stairs and came to the meeting room of the Miskolc Chapter of the Don River Veterans’ Association. We were greeted by a very friendly gentleman, who, after I explained my interest in Hungarian military history, welcomed me to their organisation. Since then Mr. Szabó has been a far-away mentor to me who was truly the first person to inspire me to serve the Hungarian veteran’s cause. His willingness to accept the young generations, and Hungarians from outside the usual veteran’s circles is exemplary. Mr. Szabó was a front-line soldier on the Don River more than half a century ago, and today he is just as dedicated to the ideals he holds dear, and is willing to take the time to share those precious treasures with others.

LORRAINE WEIDEMAN, Vancouver Chapter Member

Lorraine has been a member since 1998, and is involved in every aspect of the organisation and administration of this chapter. From participation in festivals and exhibitions to the design aspects of the Magyar Front and other visual projects, Lorraine is a hard worker who contributes enormously to the MHBK. Currently she is the webmaster of our Internet site – one of our strongest tools to educate people around the world about our organisation and activities. Lorraine’s grandmother originally came from the Bánát region of Hungary as a child, but she was raised as a Canadian. Although Hungary and its traditions could understandably be very foreign to her, Lorraine has proved herself to be one of the most sincere and dedicated advocates of all things Hungarian here in Vancouver.
THE FRONT-LINE FIGHTERS’ CROSS
FOR PRISONERS OF WAR

In our March - April 2004 issue we pictured a replica of the Frontline-Fighters’ Cross for Prisoners of War. Thanks to Béla v. Hajdu, we now have an image of a genuine example (shown at right, actual size) from his collection.

I recently acquired the original photo at right of a veteran wearing this decoration (see enlargement below - it is the third decoration from the left). This photo is very interesting because due to this medal’s rarity, it may be the only one known to exist.

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THE FIRST VANCOUVER CHAPTER RECIPIENTS OF THE MHBK GOLD MEDAL OF MERIT

The MHBK Gold Medal of Merit (*MHBK Arany Érdemérem*) is only awarded by MHBK central headquarters for the most exemplary service to the organization. It is indeed a rare award, as are the people who earn it. The MHBK is an organization of volunteers, and many of the people involved also work full-time and have families that they are devoted to. Members who are awarded the Gold Medal of Merit spend considerable amounts of time working for our cause and share their unique skills with us. Their contribution makes visible improvements to the organization and they do far more than what is expected of them. I am very proud to announce that two Vancouver Chapter members have been awarded this decoration for their exemplary service.

PÉTER LABORC VRNT

Péter is already well known in Hungary as an experienced collector and authority on Hungarian militaria. Although his collection is one of the finest in the world, it is not his accumulation of artifacts that sets him apart from others. He is also a true gentleman and patriot – but that alone, would not have been enough to earn this distinction. What makes this man unique is his tireless willingness to help and to serve the Hungarian cause.

He has proved it over and over again – whether he is organizing a historical exhibition in Hungary, or helping me with a project here, he will make sure that every aspect is perfect. He is always ready to give patient advice to a beginner, or offer his expertise to an academic display. Although we often do business together, he regularly provides me with information, literature and artefacts for my projects, at his own expense. He spends a great deal of time doing work for the MHBK, and he is the perfect Hungarian representative for our organization.

LORRAINE WEIDEMAN

It seems that male members of the MHBK are often blessed with wives and spouses that support our interests in Hungary’s military history. I have been particularly fortunate, since not only does Lorraine indulge me in my ‘hobby’; she also is a key player in the success of the Vancouver Chapter, and therefore the success of the MHBK. Running this chapter and its various projects can be a considerable expense for me, and when I sometimes feel it to be overwhelming, Lorraine always encourages me to keep working!

She has taken an active part in every project I have been involved with, from the replica crown and the Hungarian festival to historical displays and publication projects. There is no part of this that she isn’t intimately involved with.

Not long ago I convinced the leadership of the MHBK that we need a website to better promote our cause. Lorraine agreed to do it for us, even though she had no experience in such work. She then took it upon herself to learn how to make a website, spending many weeks studying web design after putting in long hours at her place of employment. Her work on our website is fantastic! In my years as a volunteer and member of the MHBK, I have rarely seen such dedication.
Vancouver Chapter member Péter Laborc (standing far right) has been telling me about a remarkable Catholic priest, Rev. Dr. József Kalocsai, from the Hungarian city of Tardos. Aside from his usual duties, Rev. Kalocsai has actively promoted our once banned Heroes’ Day as well as gone to great lengths to care for the long neglected Hungarian Second World War graves.

I have always thought it is a great shame that more exemplary Hungarians are not acknowledged for their work, so I decided to award him the MHBK Silver Medal of Merit. Péter Laborc organized the ceremony on June 26th, and made sure that representatives from the city and the Order of Vitéz were in attendance. I am very pleased to announce that Rev. Dr. József Kalocsai is now a recipient of this prestigious award, and that this ceremony will also begin a closer relationship between Vancouver and the city of Tardos.

Bottom right photo, left to right: László v. Dinga, Mayor Mária Moravcsik, József v. Kaszál, Rev. Dr. József Kalocsai, City Clerk Antal Csomortány and Mrs. Csomortány, Gábor Varga and Lajos Nagy.
I have often thought that all collectors are a little crazy, and I suppose that I’m no exception. Although I do claim to specialize in the items from the old Hungarian Front-Line Fighters’ Movement, I do find it difficult to stay within those parameters.

For some time now, I have been looking for and acquiring many uniforms and pieces of personal equipment that was used by the average soldier of the Horthy era. I have been able to put together a near complete collection, except for a few odds and ends that I hopefully will be able to come across in the future. The opportunity arose recently to purchase a Model 1935 Hungarian Army bicycle (shown below), so I jumped at the chance.

THE M35 HUNGARIAN ARMY BICYCLE

Above and below: Diagrams from the original book of regulations for the military bicycle. The drawing above shows the air-pump, shovel, triangular leather tool kit and the standard canvas and leather carry-all mounted on the rear rack. On top of the carry-all is the soldier’s rolled great-coat and steel helmet.

Right: My vintage M35, pictured in front of Kitsilano Beach in Vancouver, B.C. It was re-painted in the original Hungarian Army colour, (the kick-stand is a modern addition).

It’s a heavy item, and with its beefy tires this bike goes over most terrain. The only drawback, however, is the fact that it has only the one gear (something I only experienced in early elementary school!). The rear coaster and front hand-brake still work very well, and the beautifully made solid leather seat is as comfortable as any modern saddle. Thanks to our good friend Péter Laborc, the bicycle is nearly complete with the hand-pump, rear equipment carrier and the unique rifle holder mounted on the top and front tubes of the frame. The front generator operated light is still there too, but I haven’t had a chance to test it out yet!

Most countries had units of bicycle troops between the two World Wars, and Hungary also equipped units of the infantry with bikes. Although military accoutrements can sometimes be morbid, I find this relic of a bygone era to be representative of a hope that soldier would only ever have to go as far as his trusty bicycle would take him.
THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF THE HUNGARIAN INSTITUTE OF MILITARY HISTORY

At right is a recent letter from the war history museum and library in Budapest. I sent them examples of our MHBK medals of merit (and their award documents) since, as time passes, we tend to overlook this important step in the preservation of our organization’s history.

Many items are missing from the museum’s collection, even though it’s simple enough to send them examples. Items from the old Front-Line Fighter’s Movement have gone unrecorded as well.

If you have an item that you think may not be in the museum’s collection, contact them to see if they need it - our immigrant Hungarian communities have accumulated a great deal of historically significant documents and artifacts that are often unknown in Hungary.

INSTITUTE AND MUSEUM OF MILITARY HISTORY
1014 Budapest, Kapisztrán tér 2 - 4
Hungary

OUR NEW MHBK VANCOUVER CHAPTER EMBROIDERED BADGES ARE READY!

We have a lot to be proud of!
The MHBK is one of the most respected and established Hungarian immigrant organizations, and the Vancouver Chapter leads the way in promoting our honourable traditions!

This insignia is based on the W.W.II war correspondent’s badge - do your best to educate those around you and you’ll be doing your part to preserve our history!

Send a minimum $5.00 donation for your full colour embroidered insignia (shown actual size).

THE MAGYAR FRONT

Is published bi-monthly by Péter Czink VRNT
Chapter Leader, Vancouver Chapter, World Federation of Hungarian Veterans
Csoport Vezető, Vancouveri Csoport, Magyar Harcosok Bajtársi Közössége
P.O. Box 74527 Kitsilano P.O. Vancouver B.C. V6K 4P4 Canada
telephone/fax: 604 733-9948 email: czink@shaw.ca
This has been an eventful year for the Vancouver Chapter of the MHBK and it looks like 2006 will be even more exciting!

Our website (www.mhbk.com) is coming along nicely, and now that most of the past issues of the Magyar Front have been uploaded we seem to be attracting a great deal of interest. Many people from around the world have contacted us about Hungarian military history in the English language - I think we have started to fill a void with our material, and the Vancouver Chapter has become somewhat of an ‘international chapter’ of the MHBK - the flags on the left represent the nations of our members.

I am very hopeful that our website will inspire others to study and promote Hungarian military history in other languages too, as I believe that any attention paid to our cultural heritage is welcome and positive. Unfortunately, much of the established leadership (both in the MHBK and the immigrant Hungarian cultural circles) do not recognize the importance of the English language promotion of Hungary and work such as ours is rarely given very much attention. Hopefully, given enough time, minds might change. In fact, the Central Headquarters President of the MHBK, Mr. László Simonyi dissapproved of my lack of interest in including quasi-historical conquest era material on our website, and has started his own site (www.hqmhbk.com) - have a look and see if you feel it adequately represents our organisation. Our Hungarian language publication Hadak Útján also does not support our English language material and Internet presence as a high priority.

Going by the very nice reception our website has had, I am still convinced that our work is the natural forward step in the evolution of the MHBK. The MHBK is an organization of immigrant veterans and is now also a part of the history of the countries in which those immigrants settled. Promotion and preservation of our culture far away from the homeland is the most noble thing succeeding generations of Hungarians can do - for Hungary and their nation of residence.

Next year will be a very important year for us. Not only will we be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, we will also be showing those around us a great deal about who we are and who we have become. If we want to remain on the cultural fore-front we must project a clear and high quality picture of ourselves - and that we have also entered into the 21st century alongside our neighbours and will continue to be an influential and respected culture. Next year will be the time for us shine, not necessarily as past heroes and revolutionaries, but as brave and enlightened citizens, stronger from our experiences and more empathetic to those who suffer under tyranny and occupation. As Hungarians we have a lot of experience to share, and as the sons and daughters of immigrants we can combine what we have learned with new perspectives.

I hope you, your families and loved ones all have a wonderful holiday season, and I wish you good health, peace and prosperity for the coming year!

Peter Czink VRNT
MHBK Vancouver Chapter Leader

If you have not sent them already, please forward your membership dues to:

Hungarian Veteran’s Association Vancouver Chapter
PO Box 74527 • Kitsilano PO • Vancouver BC • V6K 4P4 • Canada

Yearly fees are $35.00 CAD for Canadian members, and $35.00 USD for US and overseas members, and include the Magyar Front and the Hadak Útján publications (the New Hungarian Voice will also be included if requested)

Please make your cheque payable to ‘MHBK Vancouver Chapter’

Your input, whether it be praise or constructive criticism, is always appreciated. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions!
A NEW 1:6 SCALE HUNGARIAN FIGURE

I recently finished this 1:6 scale figure of a pre-W.W.II Hungarian Major General, or vezérőrnagy, in his dress tunic (kistársasági zubbony). This was a particularly elegant form of dress that was just a little less dramatic as the gala uniform.

Each branch of service had their own specially coloured dress tunic, and generals always wore blue. Rank insignia is worn on the collar and generals also wore the traditional broad red stripes (with narrow central piping) on their dress or salon trousers.

Only the figure itself is ‘store bought’ - the uniform, hat, trousers, medals and insignia are all hand made. His decorations are accurate scale representations of what a general would have received during the inter-war period.

I would like to continue making various figures from Hungary’s military past, and over the next few months I will be concentrating on figures from the 1950’s - Hungarian Freedom Fighters and military personnel that will be part of a 1:6 scale diorama I am constructing for next year’s library exhibition. The diorama will also include a model of a ‘captured’ Soviet T-34 tank.
SOME EARLY ITEMS FROM THE MHBK

Above: Scans of a very early membership card that belonged to the father of new Vancouver Chapter member William Kondor. Originally, the MHBK was called the Collegial Society of Hungarian Veterans (CSHV) in the USA. Actual size: 6.4cm x 20.2cm.

The pin at right (shown double its actual size), was purchased from an American collector. It came with several other Hungarian veteran’s items, and I believe it may be the first emblem used by the MHBK.

The pin at right (shown double its actual size), was purchased from an American collector. It came with several other Hungarian veteran’s items, and I believe it may be the first emblem used by the MHBK.

Two early embroidered MHBK patches (actual sizes: left, 8.4cm diameter; right, 8cm x 10cm). Little is known about these – any information about where and when they were manufactured would be greatly appreciated!

VOLUME VII. ISSUE 6
Next year’s anniversary of the 1956 Revolution is a very significant one, and it will be our best opportunity yet to educate people about our famous revolution and about our culture in general. Our ‘revolutionary publication’ will be produced as a special edition of the New Hungarian Voice, and the first 1,000 copies will be paid for out of the NHV’s savings (at a cost of about $500.00). I feel that they will go very quickly, especially since they will be available at the library exhibition, so I hope to print many more then what we have planned. In my opinion, this would be one of the most worthwhile ways to help promote the remembrance of the Revolution here in Vancouver and beyond.

Please consider donating to help print more of our special edition booklet!

You write a cheque payable to The New Hungarian Voice,
and write in the memo ‘Revolutionary Publication’.

Thank you very much in advance for your consideration and support!
Although we will be starting in earnest in the beginning of next year, I have already begun collecting artifacts for our October 2006 Revolution exhibition at the downtown Vancouver Library. The display itself will contain items never before seen in North America, direct from the battle-torn streets of 1956 Budapest.

I am confident that each and every visitor to the library will be moved by this significant Hungarian sacrifice – and although it was a half a century ago, I intend to ‘bring it to life’ for those who were not there, and to honour and share the memories of the Hungarians who took part.

Original revolutionary newspapers – death warrants for those who possessed them after the Uprising, will be on display. Battle-flags, insignia, personal clothing and everyday items from Revolutionaries, along with Secret Police paraphernalia will be there too. I am in the process of designing the displays in a way that will show our cultural pride while offering all Vancouverites a chance to ‘soak in’ what for Hungarians is so much a part of our collective national identity.

Our special edition ‘Revolutionary’ publication will be ready in mid-2006, but it’s already exciting! One aspect will, of course, be the current and accepted sequence of events of the Revolution – this blow-by-blow account of what went on will be a perfect primer for the casual observer and a refresher for Hungarians with an interest in our history.

Part two will be the most interesting for locals – a combination of the coverage of the Revolution in 1956 by British Columbia newspapers and a unique collection of personal reminiscences compiled by well known Vancouver Island bibliographer, librarian and editor of the Szigeti Magyarság, János Miska. He will be asking BC ‘56ers one question: “What is your single most vivid memory of the Uprising?” I am sure this anthology will be a poignant and fascinating exercise in historical preservation.

Finally there will be political criticism – we already have an excellent academic paper on the historical role ‘Radio Free Europe’ played in urging Hungarians to give their lives for a cause they knew very well would not be supported. Commentary on insurgency and occupation will bring the plight of the Hungarians into a modern context, and will hopefully provide food for thought about the political situation in the world today.

We plan to ‘go all out’ with a colour cover and some spectacular photographs, and as you should expect, this publication will be distributed for free.

Our mission is to share our culture and history with as many people as possible and in a new way – still proudly bearing our red, white and green colours, and sharing the benefits of our cultural experience with all peoples while tempering it with a modern perspective enlightened by our immigrant experiences.

I have never asked Vancouver Chapter members for donations of any kind. Next year’s anniversary is a very significant one, however, and it will be our best opportunity yet to educate people about our famous revolution and about our culture in general. Our ‘revolutionary publication’ will be produced as a special edition of the New Hungarian Voice, and the first 1,000 copies will be paid for out of the NHV’s savings (at a cost of about $500.00). I feel that they will go very quickly, especially since they will be available at the library exhibition, so I hope to print many more then what we have planned. In my opinion, this would be one of the most worthwhile ways to help promote the remembrance of the Revolution here in Vancouver and beyond.

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Thank you very much in advance for your consideration and support!
Ever since I was a boy I would seek out those elders of mine who saw combat or lived through war and revolution for first hand accounts of what went on. I realised sometime during elementary school that ‘Rat Patrol’ and the mainstream war movies were pretty weak as far as historical accuracy goes.

Over the years I have interviewed hundreds of fighters, ranging from a Boar War veteran I spent an afternoon with in Australia, to one of the most famous Second World War German generals. In between I have chewed the fat with merchant seamen, commandos, fighter pilots, war correspondents, privates and officers, heroes and war criminals.

By far my favourite subject is Hungary’s military history and I do my best to absorb as much as possible from the old soldiers and the freedom fighters. I may even be a little persistent with my inquiries, perhaps because my dad, a former revolutionary, is a man of few words, and it has never been easy for me to pry stories from his memory.

With the coming of the 50th anniversary of the Hungarian 1956 Revolution, I have been going through my memories of talks with freedom fighters and sifting through the information, separating the truth from the fiction, and doing my best to keep 50 years worth of Hungarian jingoism out mix.

On October 23rd, the anniversary of the Revolution, we remember the freedom fighters and the other Hungarians who lost their lives in the brutal street battles of the Uprising. Anyone who bravely fights for their cause is a hero, and these men and women fought particularly hard – we need to remember their sacrifice, not only as a matter of national pride, but in order to learn from it and hopefully contribute to making the world a better place.

There are many accounts of young boys fighting and dying during the Revolution, and many Hungarians glorify them. I find those tales the most tragic, as military battles are difficult enough for trained soldiers – I can’t imagine adults allowing the slaughter (or more accurately suicide), of children who apparently attacked the Red Army’s armoured units with at best, small arms and improvised fire bombs.

Revolutions, in my opinion, should be left to those who know how to handle weapons and who have been trained in the techniques of warfare – and it is the story of one of those fighters that I think, above all others I have heard, is the one that truly portrays what a Hungarian Freedom Fighter was (and still is). I sat down with István v. Joó (Joó Pista) in his Kitsilano apartment to go over a story he told me a long time ago. I wanted to make sure of the facts, and he told me every detail again, just as he did before, accompanied by many tears. He’s a
good looking fellow, with lots of trademark Hungarian hair and some nice gold rings – I always thought he was a bit of a dandy, but so are most of the interesting Magyars that I have had the pleasure to meet. His surroundings are simple and comfortable, with just enough embroidery to reassure you that you are in a Hungarian home. Even in his golden years he is just what you’d expect – proud, a no-nonsense straight shooter; still a soldier.

He was a First Lieutenant in the Hungarian Air Force when the Revolution broke out and he was in the thick of it. This story is about a time, on November 1st, 1956 when he was walking down Tompa Street in Budapest, and he came across 6 or 7 armed Hungarian civilians marching 3 captured Soviet tank crewmen, with their hands up, towards him.

Pista stopped them and asked them what they were doing, and they informed him that they had captured these tankers and would hold court and execute them. The Soviet leader, probably a little relieved that a military man had arrived, took out his ID papers and gave them to Pista, and as he inspected them the Russian broke down and begged for mercy as he showed photos of his wife and two boys ‘who were waiting for him’ back in Russia. As the tears rolled down my old friend’s gentle cheeks he kept saying the man’s name, Kuznezov, over and over again. I could feel how he was re-living that day, as I am sure he has many times over. Pista explained that for some reason he had even memorized the man’s ID number.

He turned to the leader of the insurgents and asked if they had disarmed the Russians, and when he was answered in the affirmative, he ordered them to release the prisoners, and send them back in the direction of Népliget, where the Soviet base was located.

What a relief! Amid the violence of the Revolution and the brutality of the subsequent Soviet crushing of the insurgency, a brief glimpse of what humanity should behave like.

I am proud of my old friend Pista, a true Hungarian Freedom Fighter; and I think that old Kuznezov is also glad that he met this fine Hungarian gentleman, 50 years ago.
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