

Papi Through My Eyes: Recollections by a Son of Wass Albert

Brigadier General Huba Wass de Czege, US Army Retired

Papi, my father Wass Albert, the author, would have been 100 on January 8th, 2008. This commemorates our loss these ten years since he has been gone, but it also celebrates the long and productive 90 years he served as an example and mentor to us and every one he touched in person or through his work.

What follows was originally offered as an epilogue to the Szabad Ter Kiado version's of Wass Albert's Voltam, a special collection published in Budapest in 2006 of autobiographical writings Wass Albert began even before the Second World War, and while still in Erdely. But, rightly, the editors thought it best to have Wass Albert be the sole voice in that book. Here is an amended version of that earlier project in English. A shorter Hungarian version will appear in the more complete edition of Voltam being prepared by Mentor Kiado from Erdely. This English version is prompted by my participation in the XLVII Hungarian American Congress in Cleveland, Ohio on 23 and 24 November 2007, which was to a great extent dedicated to commemorating my father's work in America in behalf of the Hungarians left behind the Iron Curtain. This work is to satisfy an immediate, and sincere interest in Papi's life, and how we viewed his life and work within the Hungarian American community.

Papi Through My Eyes: Recollections by a Son of Wass Albert	1
An Introductory Foreword.....	2
The Beginning: Up to June 1943	5
All Is Lost: Up to Summer 1948.....	8
The War	8
Bavaria	9
Finding His Voice and His New Place: Up to Summer 1956.....	11
Hamburg	11
Emigration.....	12
Ohio	13
Astor	16
On to Gainesville.....	20
Organizing the Crusade in America: Up to Summer 1970.....	22
Getting Established in Gainesville	22
A Natural Rhythm of Life.....	24
“Out Reach”	25
Into the Big World.....	26
Becoming A Family of Adults	28
The Golden Decades: Up to March 1987	32
Focus on the Mission	32
The Justice Department Investigation	33
Papi's Early Concerns About His Legacy	35
The Troubled Sunset: Losing Bebe, a New Marriage, Old Age, and a Silver Lining ..	39
Losing Bebe	40

Period of Transition and Possibilities (1988-91).....	42
Family Frictions, Upsets, Disappointments, and Low Points (92-95).....	47
The Turning Point (95-97).....	48
The Last Days.....	50
The Legacy Continues.....	54
Biographical Sketch: BG(R) Huba WASS de CZEGE.....	57

An Introductory Foreword

This short biography provides a greater appreciation of the obstacles he had to overcome to achieve his life's work. Papi's life is organized into six distinct periods, some very long, and others very short. During each period his circumstances changed dramatically and these influence his priorities, the issues he chose to address, his moods, and the energy he could devote to his work. Consequently I have written six biographical sketches: "The Beginning: Up to June 1943," "All Is Lost: Up to Summer 1948," "Finding His Voice and His New Place: Up to Summer 1956," "Organizing the Crusade in America: Up to Summer 1970," "The Golden Decades: Up to March 1987," and "The Troubled Sunset: Losing Bebe, a New Marriage, Old Age, and a Silver Lining." Finally I close with a short sketch of Papi's "Last Days" followed by "The Legacy Continues: An Epilogue."

The first period is about his early life up until he goes to the Russian Front in 1943. The events and scenes of the interwar years shape the issues he writes about, and he has the means and the opportunity to make his writing the number one priority of his life. He produces insightful works of great and lasting value during this time.

The second period begins when he becomes a soldier in Russia, at age 35. From the time of his arrival at the front, the fighting becomes a retrograde: out of the Ukraine; backward through Transylvania; and backward through Hungary ending in Bavaria. His world has become unhinged. In Bavaria he lives a simple, but physically demanding, country life. But he has time to reflect on what happened and to think about the meaning of the mission he has accepted by having left Hungary. By about 1947 he is working on Give Me Back My Mountains and it is published in 1948.

Then begins the third period, one of getting established in exile, raising his family, and writing what he can and publishing it as he can. This period extends from 1947 until his employment with the University of Florida in 1956. This 17-year period is full of frustrations. He decides by 1947 that he must go to America and tell his story there. He turns down opportunities to go to Chile, Argentina, and Brazil while still in Bavaria. He moves his large family, for whom he must provide a living, to Hamburg, the home of his wife's family. Two things convince him to leave for America. Even though Give Me Back My Mountains is a big success, widely read and translated into several languages, Europe is wounded and deeply preoccupied with healing itself. He perceives that while he can build sympathy, he can't motivate useful action. Remembering the lesson of Trianon, he realizes that the arbiter of the future is America. The short period in Hamburg prior to emigrating in September 1951 only confirms his belief. Establishing himself in America is not easy, and he must work hard at various occupations and move

frequently to provide for his family. He passes through divorce and remarriage and the difficult and time-consuming challenges and rewards of parenthood and being the head of a mixed family. Word of his “war criminal” status arrives by 1952 within the Jewish community in America, he is unjustifiably labeled an anti-Semite and he sees normal opportunities to publish closed to him. Then by the fall of 1956 he finds a secure position as a professor at the University of Florida.

This begins a fourth period, lasting until 1970, during which his main aim is to reach out to the Hungarians in exile in America to help “tell the story” in the event America has to make a decision in regard to Hungary’s future. His life becomes less stressful. It becomes established in a regular rhythm that accommodates long periods for reflection and writing. His children leave home one by one, and from the end of the 60’s through 1970 he clarifies his objectives, decides how to proceed, and becomes more satisfied with his progress. He begins and builds the American Hungarian Literary Guild and the Danubian Press. The last eleven-years of this period is marked with a vigorous “out reach” program to the Hungarian exile communities in the United States and Canada. This involved long annual summer travels by auto throughout North America.

Wass Albert’s retirement from the University of Florida and his return to the Ocala National Forest in 1970 at the age of 62 begins the fifth phase of his life. At an age when most humans contemplate their retirement, and begin their withdrawal from active professional life, he begins a very productive seventeen years. He could devote more time to the missions of the organizations he had started, and to his “out reach” program among the Hungarians, and with influential Americans. Besides this, several excellent pieces of literature were created. Most noteworthy among these was a two volume fictionalized 1000-year saga of our family in Transylvania from the Middle Ages to the present, entitled the Sword and the Scythe, or Kard es Kasza in Hungarian. He also became an influential member of many Hungarian and Transylvanian exile groups, earned many honors and spoke often to influential Americans about minority rights in Romania, and other important issues. But this period is also marked by stressful episodes, such as the 1978 to 1980 investigation of his “war criminal” status by the Office of Special Investigations of the US Justice Department, occasioned by the Romanian Government’s release of the transcript of the post WWII “People’s Court” that convicted him and many other “class enemies” in absentia.

It would be fair to say that the sixth and last phase begins in March of 1987 when Papi, at age 79, loses “Bebe” (Elizabeth McClain Wass de Czege), his wife, love and true partner of 35 years and ends in February 1998 with his tragic death at the age of 90. This is the most difficult period, because it is when we first confront the reality of Papi’s aging and the vulnerabilities his aging reveals. This was a period of very high and very low emotions for him and for all of us. For instance, it was the time of the end of the cold war, a rediscovery of Papi’s works and renewed interest in their publication. After four lonely years Papi finds a new wife and two generations of the family unite to establish the Czegei Wass Foundation to continue his mission. But, also during this time, not only was Papi beginning to age visibly, but the entire family gathered on four sad occasions, early efforts to publish in Hungary ended in failure. Also he becomes increasingly concerned about who will care for and publish the body of works he would leave behind. And finally, his new marriage causes stressful moves away from and back to Astor Park, and

creates other difficulties for him and for the family. Accumulating sadness, the stresses of his daily private life, and a failing body, cause him to take his own life at the age of 90.

But the story of this remarkable author, his vision, and his work did not end on 17 February 1998. It continues to unfold. He arranged to continue his work through a non-profit organization formed with his sons. He assigns his copyright to it, so earnings from his writings could be used for the benefit of the Hungarians he left behind in Transylvania. And progress is being made toward his “rehabilitation” with the Romanian authorities.

The Beginning: Up to June 1943

Wass Huba

In June of 1943 Papi went to war. I see this as the first significant turning point in his life. While his world before this was turbulent, complex and difficult, Papi had found a unique niche in it. He had worked out his priorities and his message for that time, and giving this message voice was his first priority. Mami, our mother, used to say that Papi wrote most beautifully during this time.

Born into a very old aristocratic family, Papi grew up with all of the advantages of that class. But, it was not the usual upbringing, since he was an only child, and his mother abandoned him at the age of three to live a more interesting life in the capitol of the Hapsburg Empire, Vienna. She was the daughter of the more wealthy aristocracy, and while her husband's family had older roots, it had meager resources in comparison, and, for her, country life was dull. Papi never reconciled with his mother. Papi's step-mother, who arrived when he was about five, never had children of her own, and Papi has never expressed warm feelings toward her. Papi had a series of German and French nurses, governesses, and tutors until he was 10, then he went off to the boarding school all of the male family members had attended in Koloszvar. By the age of five he could swim and ride, having been introduced to swimming by his father and older cousins, who tossed him into the deep water of Lake Czege to learn. He learned to ride by not falling off a trotting pony as it circled his father who held a long line in one hand and a whip in the other. The purpose of the whip was to keep the pony in motion and Papi's hands and body in the correct posture. He spent much time with the servants: the gardeners, the coachman, the game-keepers, whom he loved and respected for what they knew and did. And when he had an opportunity, he loved to spend time with his grandfather Bela and his grandmother, Rachel, who lived a more simple life twenty or so miles distant at MezoZah. Papi told of regularly running away from home on horse-back, beginning at the age of five, to be with his grandparents. Whenever he spoke of his grandfather, it was always with great warmth and deep respect. Thus, Papi became self-sufficient and developed an independent mind at an early age.

He grew to adulthood and maturity when, to keep your bearings, you had to hold fast to what is important and dependable and you had to let loose what was not. From his grandfather Bela, he learned the durable values, which had been passed down in the family for many generations. This is a family that traces back to crusaders and beyond that to the very origins of the Hungarian nation.¹

The changes after World War I were the first major transformations in the social and world order Papi experienced. Important people in his world grew cynical.

¹ A recent work by Kovacs W. Andras, *The History of the Wass de Czege Family*, uses painstaking research from surviving property documents to trace the family's Transylvanian roots back at least 800 years. Many Transylvanian aristocratic families were more prosperous and more famous, but the records of this family were more complete. And that record reveals a rare durability over time, and a consistency of virtue and integrity, much like the heroes of Wass Albert's writings.

Opportunists came to power. New “isms” were being preached – radical nationalism, socialism, and communism – as solutions to the disorder in peoples’ lives. The frictions of daily social interactions built mistrust and hatred. The tensions in the world of his youth were caused by strangers taking a land, which had been thought of as Hungarian for over 1000 years, and making it Romanian by a stroke of a pen in a suburb of Paris far away. He was a teenager in a boarding school. During this time he began spending more and more of his free time in the forests and mountains with the down to earth people he knew there and valued. Some were Hungarian, some were Romanian.

Later he was educated in the best Universities of Europe and was aware of the social and political upheaval, which would soon again bring war – World War II. But he kept returning to the woods and mountains and its people when he could.

His writings began to appear at an early age– a first major work in 1932 at the age of 24. His poems, stories and novels were well received. They reminded people of what was good about the world – the beauty of God’s domain, the love and warmth between genuine people, and the folly of pride and pretense. His key heroic characters live principled lives guided by Judeo-Christian ethics, but he does not promote one religion over any other. In his eyes, as in the eyes of many of his readers today, men and women are accountable as individuals and not by religious, ethnic, or nationality groups. His scoundrels are not only Romanian or German chauvinists, or Jewish opportunists, but also Hungarian opportunists and chauvinists who take advantage of the ordinary Romanians, Germans, Jews and Hungarians who lived principled lives. He does not spare those of his own social class, whom he blames for setting the conditions for the social catastrophes of the 20th century by not adapting during the 19th. In his view, human institutions fail when individuals within them fail. His view on minority rights stems from the teachings of Judeo-Christian doctrines, for instance the concern of Jesus for the rights of the accused and down trodden. It is easy to understand why the writings of that time are so fondly read today.

Early in his life he saw in the history and culture of multi-cultural, multi-lingual, and multi-national Erdely a broader solution for Central Europe. First, Erdely was the first place in Europe to legalize religious tolerance. Second, its early independence and political stability depended on laws that were blind to ethnic origins and the acceptance into the ruling aristocracy of families of Romanian, German, and Jewish ethnic origins. Third, he recognized that when outsiders of any one nationality, whether German, Hungarian, or Romanian ruled Erdely, the common principled people suffered and the opportunists rose to prominence, wealth and power. Finally, this led him to seek and advocate trans-national solutions. He admired Kossuth Lajos' vision of a trans-national Danubian Federation within which nationalities had the right to live side by side, sometimes in the same home village, without the right to evict each other. His concept of homeland was not exclusive; it was inclusive. From his view, it was right and natural that Hungarians, Romanians and Germans should call Erdely their home.

At the age of 27 he married our mother, Eva Siemers. She was 21, and had been educated in England to be the wife of an estate owner. Her mother was my father’s favorite aunt, Ilona, who had married Hans Siemers, a wealthy heir of a Hamburg shipping and real estate fortune. The ships had all been given away as prizes of war to

punish the German Kaiser. Eva had spent most of her childhood summers in Transylvania, and fell very much in love with Papi.

Vid was born in 1936, and Csaba soon after in 1937. Papi had been the last male member to bear the old family name, therefore this was happy news. The young couple lived at Vassasszentgothard, and worked together to rebuild the run-down, and greatly reduced estate. Our mother, Eva, played an important part in the management of these efforts. For instance, she financed an experiment with a buffalo herd, and often rode horseback to inspect the crops. She also shared Papi's leisure time, hunting in the mountains and visiting with Papi's famous artist and writer friends. She bought a modest house in Kolozsvar to make stays there with Papi convenient.

The Second World War came and Papi dealt with the issues of the day, as a writer, and, as a father and head of a large household. He wrote several books, participated in rebuilding the family farm, and served as an official in the management of the large state forests of the Carpathians for both the Hungarian and Romanian governments at various times. Csaba died of influenza in September 1940, just as the new border of Hungary was redrawn to include Vassasszentgothard. Huba was born in 1941, Miklos in January 1943, and Geza in April 1944.

Papi enjoyed an active social life and had many friends of all walks of life. He was active in the Transylvanian Helikon, and socialized with artists and writers of all walks of life and religions. My godfather, Tamasi Aron, had a humble origin. Dr. Zoltan Ovary, a school friend, and later world famous immunologist, derives from a Jewish family of doctors and scholars at the University of Kolosvar. He told us of gatherings in his mother's house of the most "avant garde" writers and artists of the day, which often included Papi and other members of our family.

But even after the war began, and the Hungarian Army joined the Germans in the war, Papi's priorities were those of a writer. While he participated in running the estate, he was not consumed daily by this effort. Others were available to tend to the everyday business. He spent time in the Carpathians with his typewriter, often alone. He was very productive between the outbreak of the war and the time he, too, went to the front.

All Is Lost: Up to Summer 1948

Wass Huba

It has often been said that you can tell much about a man or woman's character by how they handle adversity. What would you expect of an aristocrat when his world turns upside down? Most, during that time and even later, simply huddled in refugee camps, fed and housed by relief agencies. Papi did not do that, and felt little pity for those of his social class who did not cope well because they were too proud to perform manual labor. He fed, clothed, and sheltered his family through the fruits of his capable hands and his nimble wits.

The War

By June 1943, Papi could not avoid the fighting, and went to the Russian front. We are not entirely sure why he went to the front in June 1943, but Papi's explanation was that the Nazi influence became strong in the government and he had displeased the authorities and was advised by a family friend of high military rank to seek refuge in the Army.

Like most veterans who saw real action in war, Papi seldom spoke of this period. He was proud of being a cavalry officer, and once, when I was a boy, I told him I, too, wanted to be a horse cavalryman. To illustrate why that was not a very good idea, he told the story of a mounted attack into the fog at dawn somewhere in Russia. Having been given the order to charge, into an enemy position, sabers drawn, they heard the rumble of Russian tanks through the fog. The tanks decimated his horse mounted cavalry troop. He survived by being pinned between two horses as the tanks passed by. At another time he told of retreating into the Ukrainian Pripjet marshes with his cavalry troop. Just as his senior commander was ready to surrender the entire organization, he and his men found a way out by following a deer through what was thought to be an impassable marsh.

While these stories don't reveal much, I know from the historical record that nothing much good happened to the Hungarian Army after he went to the front. The forward advances into Russia had culminated, and only the difficult retrograde operations remained. I know that there were great difficulties and that his soldiers loved and respected Papi, who was, at 35, somewhat old to be a Lieutenant. (I know this because in 1952 one of his soldiers, a "Feri Bacsí," came to live with us at the Knolls Farm in Ohio. He could make Transylvanian style furniture, and Papi helped him make a start in America.) In retrospect, it is important to point out, that a man with his social connections could have found safer staff work, but Papi served as a troop officer, often exposed to bitter combat and much danger, and was decorated for heroism twice.

After the worst kind of fighting back to the Carpathians, Papi experienced the withdrawal across Transylvania, and the devastation of his homeland and its people. After his unit was ruined, he served on the personal staffs of several senior Hungarian commanders until the war ended. There is hard historical evidence that he was connected to anti-Nazi resistance. Historical research into this time in his life is in progress.

This much is known. By the end of September 1944 Soviet forces surrounded Kolozsvár.

Papi was among thirty-eight Transylvanian officers who requested their discharge to return home as civilians and defend their families and the local residents from the anticipated reign of terror. Their commander Lieutenant-General Lajos Dalnoki Veress, who commanded the IXth army corps (Kolozsvár), accepted the resignation of only thirty-seven.

Papi often reminded us that he was ordered to leave Transylvania and later Hungary by his senior commander because he was a writer and had four sons. He had wanted to remain and use his great knowledge of the mountains and survival skills to help organize a resistance to the Soviets. Papi thus left his beloved Kolozsvár just before the bridge over the river Szamos was blown up.

He managed to get us out of Transylvania just ahead of the Soviet advance, and then from Hungary to Bavaria in Germany as the war ended. Papi said it was the last train to cross the border before the Russians closed it.

My first memories stem from the time of our leaving Vassasszentgothard, our stay in Sopron during Christmas time, the train trip and arrival in Bavaria. I remember Papi's visit to us at Sopron, when I proudly showed him I could tie my shoes. Later, during our escape from Hungary, Papi was the train commander. My brother Vid and I were looking out the window of our cabin. No one else was there with us. An airplane appeared and began shooting at the train with its machinegun. We were watching it with great fascination. Suddenly Papi appeared and pulled us under the wooden seat of the cabin. I was three.

Bavaria

Bavaria was a place of forests and mountains and down to earth people. It was as good a place as it could have been. For five years we lived with the Raab family in two upstairs rooms of their typical Bavarian farmhouse. Papi worked for the farmer, cultivated a large vegetable and tobacco garden, and hunted for game when he could. We all helped pick blueberries and mushrooms for our table and for market. He made cigarettes with a small machine and paper in the evenings after the tobacco harvest. He would then depart in the mornings with an empty rucksack on his back, and a small cigar box filled with cigarettes under one arm. In the evenings he would return with a rucksack full of good things to eat.

I remember the first Christmas after we arrived. We waited patiently for the Angels to finish their work in the other room. Finally someone opened the door. A blazing Christmas tree, with what seemed a thousand candles, greeted us. Under it was this enormous pile of spools, such as thread is wound on. There must have been several hundred. These all were for us, and no one else. There was so much little boys could do with such a treasure! It was overwhelming. (Much later in life when I told this story to Papi, he smiled with tears in his eyes, saying, "I was very sad, that was all I had for you boys. I went by a factory for making these spools and these were the rejects they could give me. I gave the man a few cigarettes.")

We children thought we were rich. In truth we were. Papi spent much time with the family. There were always stories when berry picking got too tedious. And all the people we knew loved us and we loved and respected them.

It was here that Agnes Neni joined our family. Her former family immigrated to America without her, and we were happy to have her join ours. She was stern and made us speak Hungarian to her, and not German. At home with our parents we would speak German as often as Hungarian

He also found time to write. Among the many things he wrote, was a book of children's stories and his 1948 best seller "Give Me Back My Mountains." This book was eventually published in five languages. It tells of a young man from a mountain village who lived through the confusion of the events my father had experienced. It was never translated successfully into English. (The translation, such as it was, was published in the 1970's by the Hungarian American Literary Guild and is now out of print.)

But the pace of life was slow in Bavaria, and while Papi was working for the farmer, weeding the garden, or walking down country roads to trade cigarettes for useful items, he was free to turn over, again and again, the contents of his mind. Why was he spared and sent out? What was the message? How would it be expressed? And who needs to hear it? Where should he go from here? By the time we moved to Hamburg, I believe he had generally worked most of it out. He had to get some security for his family, and he had to be heard in America. His decision to go to America was a deliberate one because he had turned down opportunities to emigrate to South America, and had entered his name on the list to go to America while still in Bavaria.

Finding His Voice and His New Place: Up to Summer 1956

Wass Huba

It took eight years, from the time he left Bavaria until he became established at the University of Florida, to find the opportunity to place his “mission” ahead of the more immediate business of providing for and rearing a family in a foreign land, not to mention coping with the several other challenges life served up to test his character.

Hamburg

In 1948 we moved into an apartment on the corner of Bogen Strasse, and Schlankreye in the big city of Hamburg. It was sufficient, not large. We four boys slept in the “dining room.” The entire block of buildings called the “Klinker,” belonged to our mother’s family, and had been destroyed by the bombing during WWII. Our apartment was in the first part of the Klinker that was rebuilt. The Siemers family did not have much income at the time, because of the wartime destruction, and rents from the surviving apartments were very low. They all lived simply in apartments like we did. Onkel Hans, who was in his late 20’s, and the only one seeming to work among them, was riding to and from the building sites of the Siemers Stiftung on his small motorcycle. Sometimes he let me ride behind.

Construction was proceeding on the block where we lived, and across the street, as the ruins were being rebuilt. Although forbidden by our parents, we often played in the basements of the ruins. Papi was working as a night watchman in the Klinker construction site. It was his duty to prevent people from stealing the building materials, which were very scarce at the time. The location was very convenient, and Papi seemed happy, but very busy. When he was home in the apartment, we would hear the typewriter behind the closed door of his workroom. We saw him at meals, and sometimes we visited him at the work site. He also had his typewriter with him there, and between inspections of the construction site he wrote through the night. I don’t know when he slept.

Life on the city streets and in the large overcrowded schools was very different from the idyllic life on the Raab Farm near the small Bavarian village of Blaibach. One day I was playing “Cowboys and Indians” in the ruins. I was usually an Indian, and was wearing a new Indian headdress with multicolored feathers. The gang of bigger boys, aged 10 to 12, interrupted our playing and took it away from me. I was about 8. When I went home, Mami asked where I had left the headdress sent to us from America, I started to cry and told her the big boys took it from me. She started for the door and said “Show him to me,” when Papi came out of his workroom and asked, “What is the matter.” Mami explained. He bent down and looked me in the eye and said, “Big boys don’t ask their mothers to solve their quarrels. And I don’t want you to solve them by fighting. What did you think would happen by showing off your fancy headdress amongst boys who will never afford such a thing? If you do get into a fight, I don’t want to hear about it from you. Not that you lost and not that you won. It only means you failed to use your head to solve a problem. But, if you are backed into a corner, and there is no other way, I want you to know this. Your first move is the most important one, and once you start don’t let the other one think about anything except getting away from you.” With this advice, life

became easier in Hamburg. It was not a good time to be an “auslander” in Germany. I was careful not to attract attention by having something desirable. But then, street justice was often determined by fighting, even among children. I eventually learned the value of my father’s advice about what to do when backed into a corner. Most of these incidents I was able to conceal, as much by my silence, as by the shame of the bigger boy.

By 1950, soon after Endre was born, we began our processing for emigration to America at Camp Wentorf near Hamburg. I remember it as an adventure. We lived in two rooms again, but Papi would often spend time outside with us. He must have found it difficult to write during that time. He taught us a complicated game of hide and seek in the big park just outside the camp gates. This game also involved following the tracks of those hiding, and a lot of running around that made us tired.

He also began attending an English class for adults. Miklos, Geza and I asked to go with him. Since they allowed only those who could read well, Geza was not allowed. He had not yet started school. Miklos and I were proud to be with Papi and the other adults. Papi was the best pupil in the class, and we were better than many adults. Papi was very proud.

Within a short time after we arrived at Camp Wentorf, medical tests revealed that our mother had tuberculosis and could not travel to America. The decision had to be made whether we would all stay in Hamburg. I remember that Mami had to go to a Sanitarium for a cure, and that the cure would take very long. It was soon decided that we would continue with the emigration. The baby, Endre, would stay with Mami in Germany, and then when Mami was well, she would join us again in America.

Emigration

In September 1951 we sailed to America on board the American military transport ship, the USS General Muir. Agnes Neni had to stay with the women in the front of the ship, and we boys and men were in a very large open dormitory in the back. The beds were stacked five high in huge rooms below decks. Papi found beds for us altogether, and at the very top, where the air was better. Strange, noisy men slept below us.

Papi made special rules for the four of us for the trip. The first of these was that we were not allowed to become sea sick. The second was that we had to stay in the fresh air as much as possible. We were not allowed to just stay in bed. Every morning we got up early and went exercising up on the deck in the open air. Papi marched us up and down stairs and around and around the ship. He was also the editor of the ship’s newspaper, so sometimes we were alone under the supervision of Vid, who was 15 and much older than the rest of us. At those times we would go to the activity rooms and play board games or play ball.

Coming out of the English Channel into the open Atlantic Ocean we hit a storm that tossed the ship for several days. We continued to follow Papi’s rules. Nobody became sea sick among us for about two days. On the third morning of the storm we were the only people in the dining hall for breakfast. Everything went well until I was nearly through the serving line with my food when the cook in the white hat got sick on my tray. This was too much. I quickly asked Papi if he would excuse me to go outside. My stomach had begun to get upset and I was afraid to get sick while Papi could see. I came

back a short while later and finished a very light breakfast. Papi said nothing, he only smiled.

Ohio

When we arrived in New York, we were one of the first off the ship. On the huge dock there were places marked by letters of the alphabet. Under the “W” we met Beebe and her son Joe, who was 16. They had come from Ohio with a car and a small truck to carry all of our things. Bebe was a big, warm woman, and Joe was tall, broad shouldered, quiet, and very friendly. I liked them both right away. As soon as we found our things we packed and began the long drive to Ohio. During the drive, Bebe would talk and ask Papi whether he understood. He would repeatedly say, “Half, half.” I understood less than that, so I was impressed. He had learned more English than I had.

We arrived at the Farm after driving through the night. We were tired but had to look around. Bebe had decided that because our mother had not come with us, and because Papi was obviously not trained to manage a household, even with Agnes Neni’s help, that we would have to move into the big two-storey farmhouse with the six bedrooms where she lived with only son Joe and her father William G. Mc Clain. Papi had his own bedroom, Vid shared one with Joe, Agnes Neni had a room, and Miklos, Geza and I shared another.

The farm with the big house had been bought and modernized by Bebe’s father when she was a small child, and he was then a successful banker. She was the youngest of five children. Her mother’s family had come from England, and her father’s from Northern Ireland, but was Scottish. The father had lost all of his money in 1929 when the big financial crash began the “Great Depression” in the USA. The farm had been, wisely, put in the mother’s name, so it remained in the family.

Bebe had been divorced many years before, and had already raised two grown daughters, who were both married and living some distance away. She had been a schoolteacher for many years. We knew right away that she loved children, and was very good with them. She could be both very stern, and very warm, as suited the occasion. We came to love her very quickly.

Soon after we arrived and moved into the big house, Bebe decided we needed American school clothes, and that we needed to go to school right away. The trip to the store was very exciting, but the news about having to go to school was not. Miklos and I were better at English than the other boys at this point, and we were just beginning to understand the “half” Papi had already understood on the day we arrived.

But Bebe had prepared the way for us with the teachers at the school. Because she had been a teacher, she knew many of them. The experience was very different than being a foreigner in Germany. My teacher introduced me to the 4th grade class and said that the class project for the year was to make me into an American. I learned English rapidly, and classroom work went well. So did life on the school playground after Miklos introduced me to the schoolyard bully in the next higher grade, “This is my big brother, Huba, and he can beat you up.” With such an introduction the inevitable happened, the bully pushed me, and I had to demonstrate what I had learned in the streets of Hamburg. The bully ran away with a bleeding nose, and there was peace for us from then on.

Life on the farm was interesting and busy. We each had jobs. Papi soon discovered that the farm had been poorly managed, even stolen from. The 50 or so milk cows were not the same as those in the official records of the farm. Some one had exchanged the pedigreed Guernsey milk cows for some very common ones that didn't produce well. Papi discovered other problems also. The machinery was not well maintained. He introduced scientific methods of feeding each cow a carefully measured amount of grain based on her individual need and productivity. But milk production alone could not make the farm profitable. Papi also started a large vegetable garden the next spring. The idea was to sell vegetables house to house with the milk.

When we met Bebe's grown daughters Anne and Pat, we liked them as well. We liked Anne best because she knew how to play with boys. Pat had a beautiful voice and played the piano well. We enjoyed that also. I will now let Anne speak about her first impressions of us:

"When I first met Papi I was less than thrilled. It was in 1951, when Papi arrived in Ohio. At that time, I lived in Columbus where my husband was an engineer for North American Aviation. That was 120 miles from the farm in Eastern Ohio. The Presbyterian Church asked people in this country to sponsor Displaced Persons. Papi had a strong agricultural background and my grandfather's farm needed a manager. No one knew he was an author or had an aristocratic background. My grandfather who was a strict Scott (no alcohol, no smoking and a high moral standard; and taught the Young Men's Sunday school class at our local Methodist Church) was tremendously impressed with Papi from the very first day; he recognized him as a man after his own standards. Papi said it had been his desire to take his boys out from Europe and train them so they could one day return to Hungary and help the Hungarian people. I remember that point reiterated throughout the years. In Ohio Papi worked as farm manager of The Knolls Farm, my family's farm and did everything from managing to working the fields. My mother's family, other than my grandfather, was not impressed with him, especially when they heard of his writing and made up their minds he was just a "foreigner. " They found no fault in him except they were slow to get to know him. Papi had good ideas about the farming and the brothers did not realize how well prepared he was to take over."

"My grandfather had lived in Ohio since he came to the USA when he was three years old. He had started to learn bricklaying, like his older brothers and father, who were very proud of their craft, but was a good student and received a job as a messenger boy with a bank as a teenager. He learned the banking business, and became a leader in banking prior to the depression, when his bank failed. In his wisdom he had transferred the ownership of the farm to his wife, and thus it remained in the family when all else was lost. He respected Papi, and soon loved the boys."

"Since the farm belonged to my mother and her two sisters and two brothers after my grand mother died, my grandfather and mother operated a small dairy supply business for their income. This continued and consumed much of their time during this period."

"Within a short time Papi tried many things to make the farm a success. This included finding a Hungarian craftsman, a former member of his cavalry unit, who helped Papi

and my brother-in-law build Transylvanian furniture made from hardwoods cut from the Knolls Farm forests. They exhibited the furniture at the Ohio state fair and received some orders, but this business was insufficient to save the farm. Some pieces are still in the family.”

“The more and longer my mother knew Papi, the more she respected and eventually loved him. They were married in May of 1952. I was excited to have the “little brothers” and loved them from the beginning. I learned to love Papi over the years as he made a good husband for my mother, a good father to me, as well as my brothers and an excellent grandfather to my children. Both he and Mom were disciplinarians and, I must say, they were usually in agreement. He taught my sons and my brothers to hunt and fish and find their way around the forests.”

Even with the great disparity in our ages, we became one family with Bebe’s son and daughters in a true sense. Of the three, Anne would become a true daughter to Papi and an older sister to the rest of us, sentiments that have in fact grown even stronger after Bebe passed away, and continue to this day.

Joe had been the only child at home since his much older sisters left home for the University. He was a mature young man with mature responsibilities on the farm. With our arrival, not only was he no longer alone, but also there were many of us. We never felt his discontent; he was particularly good to me. I think I was his favorite. But the summer of 1952, Joe asked permission to explore the United States alone. At that time it was still possible to travel “on your thumb.” meaning that a person could stand by the side of the road and, with arm extended and thumb up, drivers with space to spare would stop and give total strangers a ride. Vid, though one year younger, also asked to do the same. They both left home after school ended in early June, with little pocket money, and returned in late August before school began again with money to spare. Joe never told his entire story, but the two soon parted because it was easier to get rides alone. Vid traveled to Colorado Springs in the Rocky Mountains. To eat he washed dishes at restaurants. He found a well paying job at a large resort hotel clearing tables and washing dishes. It was a maturing experience for both boys. Joe started school, but he soon became restless again and on his 17th birthday entered the US Army. Soon thereafter he was fighting in Korea.

Upon Papi’s recommendation, the McClain family decided to sell the farm because it had been mismanaged so long that it would require large investments and major changes to make it profitable. So Bebe and Papi looked at two possible places to move our family. They thought of Montana, a place with mountains and large forests like Transylvania. Papi’s good friend, Padonyi Gyulas lived there and had been praising the large open spaces. Montana is called the land of the “Big Sky.” This was my wish. I had images of buffalo herds and Indians on fast ponies.

They also considered Florida. Pat’s husband Bob Roush had been asked to compete for an opening to work and study toward an advanced degree at the University of Florida’s Department of Agriculture. Bebe and Papi had accompanied them on the auto trip they had taken in the spring of 1952 to interview for the position. Bebe’s father’s health was failing and the doctors advised him to move to a warmer climate. So of course they chose Florida, and to suit Papi’s love of the out doors and nature, they aimed for the big empty space between Daytona Beach on the Atlantic coast, and Tampa

on the Gulf of Mexico. This was the Ocala National Forest, the largest of the National Forests east of the Mississippi river.

Astor

For Papi the longer-range plan was always to have an income that would allow him to pursue his real life's work -- writing for Hungarian causes. Papi had received an offer to write for Radio Free Europe while still on the Farm in Ohio. This work could be done anywhere, and it provided a small income, sufficient to live on wherever the cost of living was low, especially when the family table could be supplemented through hunting, fishing, or gardening. (He continued to write for Radio Free Europe until after the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, when the funding was cut back because it was believed they were responsible for giving the Hungarians false hope.) Bebe and her father also were going to try to transplant their dairy supply business to Florida.

With only a general plan for the future, Bebe and her father, "Pa," left behind everything familiar to them. In retrospect now, all three adults were remarkably unified in the faith that God would provide not only a place for us, but a means of livelihood. I remember we traveled south along the curving roads through the Allegheny mountains in two small, but tightly packed, automobiles filled with four adults (Papi, Bebe, Pa, Agnes Neni) and four children (Vid, Huba, Miklos, Geza). We were all singing a hymn at the top of our lungs that included these words, "Green pastures are before me which yet I have not seen. Blue skies will soon be over me where darkest clouds have been."

We drove down US Route 17 from somewhere in the Carolinas to Florida and arrived near the eastern edge of the Ocala national Forest in the small town of Ponce DeLeon Springs, named for the Spaniard who discovered Florida in pursuit of a magical "fountain of youth." Papi chose the stopping place as he remarked, "If that Spaniard considered this a good place to stop and taste the water, so can we." This was on a Saturday.

The next day, being Sunday, we went to church in the nearby larger town, Deland. After church, people were friendly and introduced themselves to us. When asked where we wanted to live in the area, Papi expressed his desire to live in the Ocala National Forest. Promptly we were introduced to Mr. and Mrs. Wright, who lived in Astor and whose neighbor had a home to rent.

So, by that evening, we had a new home, one which Bebe and Papi eventually bought. Because the house had only two bedrooms, one for Bebe and Papi, and one for "Pa," we boys and Agnes Neni slept in the garage, a tin building with a large open attic for us, and a storage room with a small window for Agnes Neni. It also had a toilet, a shower room and a Finnish sauna. Papi set up his typewriter by their bedroom window.

In a sense, Astor was a frontier town. The nearest police, the county sheriff, was more than thirty miles away. There was no fire department, and there was no telephone service. In case of emergencies, the sheriff had installed a long range radio in the local liquor store owned by a German immigrant named Walter Affenberg, whose other distinction was the high quality of the smoked turkey sandwiches he served with the whiskey produced nearby in the forest. He and the sheriff were said to have an "understanding."

When you grow up with a father who is a towering giant in the eyes of all of the adults whose opinion you respect, you become over-awed just being in his presence. I think we felt about Papi much like he felt about his own grandfather, Bela. We tell stories about him, just as he did about his grandfather.

I will never forget what he did one day in 1953. It was not long after we arrived in Astor and were greeted differently by the two very different groups of citizens. Most of the older, usually more educated, people moved there for retirement from the North from well paying careers. They greeted us with friendly curiosity. Many of them soon became intrigued with Papi and often asked his opinions on world affairs. He was often invited to speak at local clubs.

The “Florida Crackers,” those born there and several generations from their settler ancestors, however, warmed to us very slowly. The only legal businesses in the Ocala National Forest catered to the needs of tourists and retirees, such as fishing or hunting guides, shopkeepers, and so on. (Later in life, this is why none of us made our careers there.) There was also much illegal hunting and fishing to supply restaurants. In addition there was also illegal whiskey-making in hidden away “moonshine stills.” To these people we were not only foreigners, but also “Damn Yankee” foreigners, which was much worse. But we didn’t fit the mold of most “Damn Yankees.” We spent much time in “”their” forests and swamps, even just exploring them when there was no hunting season. In their eyes we had no good reason for being there! Not only that, but we allowed our big Great Dane dogs, Beauty and Trinka, to run free when we roamed the forests. They often followed deer in a great circle and returned long afterwards with their tongues hanging out.

We, therefore, weren’t very concerned when Trinka did not return with Beauty one day after such a run. She was the younger and stronger of the two, a five-year-old reddish brown (fawn) colored female with a classic head and a very black face. After she didn’t return by nightfall we began to be concerned. Next morning we found Trinka’s body in the grass by the road in front of the house.

This was soon after we had started a restaurant. It was a Saturday because there was no school, and we weren’t going to Church. I was 12, and found her as I started my grass mowing before guests came. There was much sorrow in the house, and Papi organized a burial in the back yard and said some comforting words about the highly valued place of dogs in God’s world, and in the ancient Hungarian culture, and how Trinka only knew how to give love. We missed Trinka terribly.

By sundown, guests came and guests left. We boys all did our jobs, waiting on tables and cleaning up, while Bebe cooked. Agnes Neni cleaned dishes and helped with the meals. And Papi greeted and entertained the guests with his humor and stories, and took their money at the end.

Soon after the last guest’s car left the parking lot and was some distance away, a quick succession of shots whistled over the house. Papi and I, with my brothers, were cleaning up the tables outside on the screened-in porch, and could hear the repeated cracking of the high-powered rifle and immediate “zing” of the bullets over the roof above our heads. The shots were coming from the house across the road, toward the east slightly, and down the road toward the rest of Astor. We lived in the last house on the

west end of the village. You could see the chimney of the house above the trees, but not much else.

Papi said nothing. He retreated into the house and soon returned with his Mauser hunting rifle. He calmly walked out the front door, and sat down on the top step. With his elbows supported by his knees, to steady his aim, he began shooting slowly, one shot after another. As I looked at where he was aiming, one brick after another was shattered and fell in pieces from the chimney of our Florida Cracker neighbor's house. Papi was icy calm. As he finished he said in a quiet voice, "Now we shall see what happens."

When I stepped up on the school bus the next Monday morning for the long twenty-five mile ride to school, all eyes were on us with a quiet respect, and no one said anything to us. Later that day, Papi stopped by at "Pop" Smith's gas station to fill the car. Papi told us at supper that "Pop" smiled and said, "Good shooting." As Papi had finished his business and departed to leave, Pop Smith said, "There are certain places to avoid in the forest. People have got to make a living somehow." Trinkka had been shot in the head exactly between the eyes with a small caliber pistol. She had apparently found someone's business address --"moonshine still." After this incident, we avoided certain places, and began being accepted by the native Floridians. It was a small lesson in standing up straight.

We soon began meeting people and Bebe and Papi began contributing to the life of the community and over time the family's presence and activities had a civilizing effect on the community. Bebe organized the first Astor Community Club using an abandoned school for youth activities and dances. This club functions to this day. Many of its members were at Bebe's and then Papi's funerals thirty-five and forty-five years later.

Papi organized the first Boy Scout Troop, and Geza, Miklos and I became the core of it. Soon all the boys of the right age who lived there were members. This was Papi's most useful and influential contribution to the community. He had been involved in the early beginnings of the Boy Scout movement in Hungary, as an adult leader, and he believed very much in the moral teachings of the movement, and the self-reliance it develops in boys. There were absolutely no organized programs for children in Astor and Astor Park. There were many opportunities for boyish mischief, however. The troop was never large, because the population was small, but his troop always won competitions among other troops, because his boys knew more and worked harder. They all loved Papi, and many of them stayed in contact with him to the end of his life. We, his sons, had to work harder for the same recognition, and awards. But we all finally earned the highest Boy Scouting rank, Eagle. He also inspired his grandsons the same way.

Bebe also had the idea that a newspaper would be good for the community. Their belief was that a community with a newspaper would have less crime. After all, Papi had newspaper experience so he would be the editor, and write the editorials. Bebe would be the assistant editor, publisher and business manager, and we three boys would report the news, sell advertisement space and subscriptions, operate the mimeograph machine to print it, and distribute the printed product. (I also suspect that keeping four active boys very busy, with no time for crime, was also a motivation! The paper did pay its costs, when salaries were excluded, but profit was never a motive.) We boys each had bicycles

and our own areas of the community were we stopped at homes and businesses to ask if they had any news, and to delivered the weekly paper (often, efficiently, at the same time). The criteria for “news” was very flexible: visitors from outside the community; birthdays; weddings; celebrations of any kind; and unusually remarkable events. These included catching large fish or shooting bigger than normal deer, turkey, or boar. Sometimes we reported mysterious happenings, such as unidentified floating bodies in the St Johns River, or sightings of the “Astor Monster.” The monster was of far greater interest to our readers. For several years people reported mysterious sightings of a large unknown aquatic animal, larger than an alligator, with a short snout and a solitary horn on its forehead. Papi had fun with such Astor Monster stories, often embellishing our reports with dry humor, but I soon came to suspect that there was a close connection with the report of a sighting and the fiery liquid product of the many moonshine stills in the forest. But I never revealed my theory. Papi’s insightful and serious editorials were often picked up by the larger newspapers in the region, our occasional Astor Monster reports also were republished. These then tended to bring visitors to Astor and later some have credited the Astor News with the eventual growth and development of the area.

When the old house that originally belonged to the famous John Jacob Astor family came up for sale, Bebe’s father bought the property inexpensively. It was in a neighboring town, Astor Park, just three miles from Astor, and even deeper in the forest. The large wood frame house, built of lumber cut and milled nearby nearly 75 years earlier, had been neglected and needed much work, but with Pa and Bebe supervising, we boys did much of the repair work while Papi was writing. When it was livable, we moved to the larger Astor Park house.

The dairy supply business was moved to Florida, and Bebe and Pa started visiting farms all over the central portion of Florida, even as far as the Florida-Georgia border. They, finally, gave up the effort because dairies were too few and far apart in Florida, and many of the smaller ones, which had in Ohio been the core of the business, were being consolidated into large automated farms. This meant finding another source of income.

About this time Pa became sick again and died shortly thereafter. We all missed “Pa.” He, Papi and we boys had become great friends. Pa had taught me basic building crafts, specifically how to lay a straight course of cement blocks for the foundation of the new porch we added to the Astor Park house, how to repair and replace the old electrical lines, and basic plumbing to repair the bath room and kitchen water lines. With his passing Bebe inherited the Astor Park house.

The \$200 monthly from Radio Free Europe was a very small income for such a large family. Bebe suggested we open a restaurant in the Astor house rather than rent it to tourists. Food for the family would be less expensive, because the restaurant could buy in larger lots and at a business discount. It would be a family effort. We all had talents to contribute. Bebe was an excellent cook and Agnes Neni an excellent housekeeper, and could be the kitchen manager. Papi had Hungarian recipes that he could translate, and he could be the maitre de and cashier. We boys could learn to be the waiters. We were on the major highway between Silver Springs and Daytona Beach, two major tourist attractions. It soon became a popular small restaurant, with mainly a weekend business specializing in Hungarian cuisine. Our csirke paprikas and galuska became a regular feature. The collaboration of Bebe, Agnes Neni, and Papi also produced many other

Hungarian dishes and deserts for the menu. We, and our guests, ate well, but it was long days and hard work. When few people came, Papi wrote in his office in the former bedroom, and we boys and Bebe handled the business. But we were often busy, and the periodic interruptions when guests came must have been a frustration for a writer trying to concentrate on a story.

Bebe and Papi met many people who stopped at the restaurant. Among them were newspaper reporters who provided publicity for them. Bebe learned from the newspaper contacts made at the restaurant that publicity would be of value to Papi's future. She had become a full partner in his life's work very quickly. She realized that most Americans, even the educated, knew little about Europe, and needed to be taught about Hungary. And, to show off Hungarians in a positive light, she managed to get publicity for the many changes Papi brought about in Astor and Astor Park.

However, despite our best efforts, the restaurant struggled to survive, partly because it was a long distance to the nearest large towns, and also partly because of our inexperience in this business. To supplement our income, Papi took a teaching position at the Florida Military Academy near Deland, teaching mathematics.

Like Joe, Vid also left home before completing his schooling. In retrospect, Vid's early departure was inevitable because he was not happy at home. He did not fare well through the various abrupt transitions in his life, beginning with the loss of his home and a special place in the world, which he was old enough at 9 to appreciate. And he, like Joe, had difficulty with the new marriage and the divorce from his sick mother. School was very difficult, always. It was not until some of us had children that we realized an unwelcome inheritance some of us bear. It is the learning disorder called dyslexia that hinders the learning of intelligent people by distorting what is written on a page as the information travels between the eyes and the brain.

One day in his 17th year Vid was given a small amount of cash and driven to the small road junction town of Barberville on US Route 17 to board the Greyhound bus. From there, he ended up in Sarasota at the winter home of the famous Ringling Brothers Circus. Vid had failed some key classes and was in danger of not being promoted to the next grade. Papi interpreted this as insufficient attention to his studies. They argued and Vid was given an alternative, either to perform in school or to leave school and get a job as a "ditch digger." Vid chose to leave home and make his own way in the world. We didn't hear from him for many years.

On to Gainesville

Given the demands on his time, Papi must have been exhausted much of the time. By mid-1954 Papi was working full time as a teacher, driving to and from work almost an hour each way, helping at the restaurant on the weekends, attended to the demands of fatherhood and still managed time to write his weekly Radio Free Europe scripts. He also kept up an extensive correspondence. On some days he would sleep over at the academy rather than drive home. Life in the Ocala National Forest was very difficult for Papi the writer, there was not much time for him to vent his creative genius, given the array of responsibilities he had.

One day in the spring of 1956 the two university professor friends, and their wives, who drove more than 70 miles at least once a month to eat Bebe's food, and visit

with Papi, brought news of a position at the University of Florida that they thought would suit Papi perfectly. Since Papi had received advanced degrees from both a German and a French University, he would be perfect for the position of preparing doctoral candidates for their German and French examinations. The job would start September 1956. So Papi gave up the teaching position at the Florida Military Academy at the end of the school year.

Papi and Bebe had already faced the issue of the failing restaurant, and the difficulty of Papi's not having much time to write, and very little time to hunt. Bebe had found a job teaching school in Ft. McCoy about 30 miles in the direction of Gainesville. Both jobs would start at about the same time.

They were also concerned for another reason. There were no educational prospects for us near Astor Park, and certainly very few respectable job opportunities for young men. Moving to Gainesville meant good schools and a University we boys would be able to afford to attend.

The plan was to sell the Astor house and buy a modest home in Gainesville, but to keep the Astor Park house for the weekends and summers. Papi would be able write better in the forest at Astor Park than he could in Gainesville. And they would be able to return there after his retirement from the University.

Organizing the Crusade in America: Up to Summer 1970

Wass Huba

The fall of 1956, when Papi joined the faculty of the University of Florida, he begins the fourth period of his life, lasting until his retirement from the University in 1970. For the first time since leaving for the Army in 1943, he has both financial security, and the opportunity to focus on his life's work, especially in the summers. At the beginning, he was still writing for Radio Free Europe. After a few years of adjustment, during which we three remaining sons leave home, his life becomes established in a regular rhythm that accommodates long periods for reflection and writing. From the end of the 60's through 1970 he clarifies his objectives, decides how to proceed, and becomes more satisfied with his progress. He begins and builds the American Hungarian Literary Guild and the Danubian Press. And he starts a vigorous "out reach" program to the Hungarian exile community.

Getting Established in Gainesville

The first three or four years of this period provided less opportunity for Papi to focus on his life's work than later. This was partially due to the logistics of moving his large family from Astor Park to Gainesville with very little capital and uncommitted time. We moved in stages. It was also because he took his responsibilities of fatherhood seriously, as I will soon explain.

When Papi began his job at the University of Florida, we still lived about 70 miles south of Gainesville. He came home to Astor Park on the weekends. At the same time Bebe was driving daily to her teaching job at the village of Ft McCoy, halfway between Astor Park and Gainesville. For the month of September, we boys still attended our old schools about 25 miles west of Astor Park.

Miklos, Geza, and I then transferred to her school in October. When the Hungarian Revolution happened in late October of 1956, we first heard the news on the car radio during one of those long trips through the forest. Bebe, soon after this, found a small forest cabin that we could afford to rent near her School. The forest cabin was someone's rough hunting camp. As winter came, it was difficult to heat, and it was very crowded for three adults (counting Agnes Neni) and three growing boys, so we returned to Astor Park almost every Friday evening, and drove back each Sunday night.

The Ft. McCoy School was a typical small rural school. Each teacher had two grades at once. Bebe had the first and second grade students in one classroom. Each grade had few children. For instance, my 10th grade had 5 other students. The choice of courses to prepare us for University was very limited. There was no Latin and no higher mathematics beyond introductory Algebra. Papi spoke to the school principal offering to teach a Latin Class for Miklos and me, and any other students interested, if the principal would teach me advanced Algebra. So in addition to his University Courses in Gainesville, Papi also came to Ft. McCoy High School twice a week in the afternoon to teach Latin.

Life in small remote rural communities in America is enlivened on Friday evenings with sporting events, and Ft McCoy was no different. Since we boys were a significant fraction of the male students, and Bebe was a teacher, it would have been

unthinkable not to enroll on the sporting teams of the season. For us to refuse to participate, because we needed to return to Astor Park so Papi could write on Saturday, would not have been understood. Thus we made our contributions to the football, basketball, and track teams that year, and the family had to delay departure to Astor Park either after the sporting event on Friday night, or on the following Saturday morning, whenever the sporting event was at some other school very far away.

For us three boys, it was a pleasant year we would remember fondly, but for Papi and Bebe, it was hectic. I'm sure Papi did not get much writing done that year beyond the weekly Radio Free Europe script, and his correspondence. They were happy to return to Astor Park in early June 1957, when school ended.

Even before the Astor house was sold, Papi had been looking for an affordable house in Gainesville. He first looked at a small bungalow, similar to the first Astor house, because it was within our price range. However, it was unappealing because of its small size. Then Bebe and Papi heard about a large old mansion that we could afford, near the University, and within bicycling distance of our schools. This mansion had character, and a history, but it had been turned into several apartments, so there would also be rental income. There were, however, several small problems. The renters were University students, several crowded into each apartment, and not all rental "partners" were reliable in paying. And it needed many repairs, from a leaking roof, and leaking plumbing to ancient, unsafe electric wiring. The character of the house appealed to Papi, and the challenge of it appealed to Bebe. Being the oldest boy at home, now 16, and experienced in the use of tools from the renovation we had accomplished on the old Astor Park house, I knew what I would be doing in my spare time for the next year or more.

We left for Gainesville with Bebe a month before summer ended in 1957, and Papi stayed at Astor Park to write, with Agnes Neni to look after his feeding. We worked every day until we were exhausted, with Bebe reading some Do-It-Yourself book on how to do electrical work, or how to fix a plumbing problem, and Miklos, Geza and I with the tools, and strong arms followed her directions. By the time school started, the house was livable.

It certainly was spacious. And Bebe had sorted out the good renters from the bad. She and Agnes Neni also provided two daily meals at our table for several of the students for an extra fee. We used the two down stairs apartments for ourselves. Bebe and Papi occupied the one that used to be the master bedroom with a nice well-lighted studio next to it for Papi's writing. There was much work left to do, and we would do it as we could afford the materials. Having the rental income allowed Bebe to give up teaching.

Papi soon became a very popular teacher, and for additional income, since Radio Free Europe had cut his program, he took over the management of the "language laboratory" as well. Therefore, every student who studied any foreign language at the University soon came into contact with the charming new Hungarian professor with the fabulous sense of humor, and a good way of handling students. That was the positive side. On the negative side this involved very long hours daily. He usually left home by just after 7 in the morning and returned after 6 in the evening.

Miklos and I soon joined the student body of the largest school we had ever seen. He was in the 10th grade and I was in the 11th. Geza was in the 8th Grade at another school. The mathematics and Latin Papi had arranged for us to learn the year before made it possible for us to enter classes on an equal basis with the children of University

professors with excellent schooling all their lives. I also joined the school sports teams, and had some success.

I remember a discussion at the dinner table one night soon after the school year began in 1957. It was about being on a much larger stage in Gainesville, compared to our lives in the remote villages of Astor and Ft McCoy. Many more people would be judging us as Hungarians. It would be very important for us to represent Hungary well in everything we did.

When the first anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution came around, Papi, Miklos, Geza and I dressed in our best clothes and wore black armbands. We boys knew the most relevant facts of what had happened the year before, and were prepared to speak about it with anyone. All of our classmates were curious, and on the second day the newspapers interviewed us at our schools and Papi at the University. As the days of commemoration continued, more of Dad's students, and more of our classmates appeared with black armbands. Other Hungarians at the University, and in Gainesville, also began wearing armbands. We became well known as Hungarians, and Papi received invitations to speak at several of the civic clubs: Rotary, Kiwanis, and so on. The idea of the armbands was Bebe's.

Later that year, Miklos talked me into running for election to the high school student body government. He wanted me to campaign for President, and we compromised at Vice-President. I thought I would have no chance, being new, and foreign. But by now Miklos, Geza, and I were speaking English without any trace of foreign accent. Papi and Bebe encouraged us. Papi said to me, if you are going to do this, don't do it for the experience, do it to win! With the help of the energy of Miklos and his friends, some success in sports, and the votes of nearly all of the 10th and 9th grade girls, we won easily.

We all had jobs beside school and sports. We earned our own spending money, and contributed to the household. At different times, I worked in a grocery store, delivered telegrams, and managed the night shift of a small restaurant in the back of a large store. Miklos and Geza had similar experiences during our time at Gainesville.

At some point Papi was asked to be the faculty advisor to the "Young Republican" club at the University, by a student who would later in life be elected to the United States Congress, Bill McCollum. Bebe's father had been Republican, Bebe had been active in the Republican Women's movement in Ohio, and Senator Robert Taft, a famous Republican, had speeded our family's emigration when we were still in Germany. Later in life, many of the young men and women he influenced became successful in American politics. It is impossible to tell to what extent he influenced Americans to see Hungary in a positive light, but I would judge it to be considerable.

A Natural Rhythm of Life

Soon after getting established in Gainesville, there was a natural rhythm to the annual cycle of events surrounding Papi. This rhythm was determined by the University Calendar, and punctuated by the major holidays of the year: Christmas, Papi's birthday, Easter, Father's Day, Bebe's birthday, Thanksgiving Day, and back to Christmas. The University Calendar allowed Papi to have June, July and August free, and a long break from the week before Christmas to the week after New Year's Day. These periods were always family gatherings, some small when only a few of us could bring our families, but

many where large, when most of us arrived with all of our wives and children. Most weekends and holidays were spent away from Gainesville, and usually at Astor Park.

Papi often wrote at Astor Park, but he loved to hunt during the fall and winter, when hunting was allowed in the Ocala National Forest. And to share this time with him was precious. Bebe always encouraged him to take one of us along, and since I was older than Miklos and Geza, I had the earlier opportunity. (Vid never had this opportunity because he left home so very young. And Endre grew up in Europe.) When Papi hunted, he hunted with a passion. There was no talking, and absolutely no coughing. And, I must say, that when we hunted during the early years in Florida, before his University job, it was serious business because it was also food for the table. But Geza came along later, and truly became Papi's hunting partner for many years.

Hunting did two very important things for Papi. The game and the gun were really incidental. It was the quiet sitting, waiting and thinking surrounded by nature that re-energized his creative core and reconnected him to the past.

“Out Reach”

Visiting the various exile communities involved long annual summer travels by auto throughout the United States and Canada. Usually one or two younger members of the family accompanied Papi and Bebe and their one or two big dogs in the crowded automobile. The geography of this continent is huge, and it may be difficult for Europeans to understand the distances Papi covered to visit all of the communities of Canadian and American Hungarian exiles during this time.

About the mid 1960's they acquired a small parcel of land near Franklin, Tennessee in the Smoky Mountains, where it was cooler than Astor Park in the summer. There they had a small clearing with a permanent roofed platform about 10 meters long and three or four wide. This was furnished with rough porch furniture next to which they always parked their travel trailer. No neighbors could be seen, the vistas were long and clear, and the air smelled of pine forests. They launched their annual treks to the Hungarian communities from either Astor Park or Franklin.

One can imagine that the pace of this existence required great stamina, and the logistics of it was prodigious and complex. Bebe and Papi both had remarkable energy during this period, considering that in 1960 Papi was already 52 and Bebe 54. But Papi only had to focus on his work and the mission; it was Bebe alone who managed all of the logistics and the finances, which were always balanced to close margins. Not only did she plan and manage the weekly trips to Astor Park, but also the frequent great gatherings of the clan, and their annual treks to Franklin and the long road trips.

During this time, in addition to speaking tours throughout the United States and Canada, Papi also wrote and published several books in Hungarian and English, established the American Hungarian Literary Guild, the Danubian Research and Information Center, and the Danubian Press. The purpose of the first was to maintain Hungarian literary classics in publication, provide a source of good Hungarian literature to the Hungarian exile community world wide, and to publish selected cultural classics in English to help second and third generation Hungarians maintain an awareness of their heritage. The purpose of the second organization was to make important facts known to future policy makers by collecting and publishing scholarly works for research libraries

on the histories, politics, and social, and economic challenges of the Danubian countries in Central and Eastern Europe. The Purpose of the Danubian Press was to publish and market his books and those of other authors. The pace and intensity with which this couple lived life between their early 50's and early 60's is amazing in retrospect, as we pass through these same ages. At the time, it was what we considered normal.

Into the Big World

In time, Miklos, Geza and I all left home. Gainesville was our launching pad into the world, much better than Astor would have been. We boys moved to Gainesville in the summer of 1957, and by the summer of 1960 I left home for a career in the Army.

During my last year at the High School I happened to deliver a telegram to a particular business office. The manager just happened to ask me what I wanted to do after High School. To this I answered that I wanted to attend the US Military Academy at West Point, and have a career as an Army officer. He happened to be a retired Army officer with a son at West Point. He asked me if I had had an interview with Congressman "Billy" Matthews, the Democratic Party representative to the US Congress for the region we lived in. The Congressman had sponsored his son's entry to West Point. (I had not tried this approach to getting into West Point because my parents had voted Republican. I was, instead, going to join the Army and compete for entry that way. Papi was still lukewarm about my being a soldier. I think Papi wanted me to be a writer.) The interview with the Congressman went very well, and he placed me on his list of candidates. There were only about 100. Every Congressman is responsible for providing candidates to fill four positions at West Point. That year he had no vacancy, but had two the next. That meant I could attend the University of Florida for one year to prepare further for the competitive examinations and the difficult West Point curriculum. The next autumn I took the congressman's selection examination, and was lucky to have the top score. Then I only had to pass the difficult entrance examinations in verbal and quantitative skills, plus a stringent medical examination and some physical strength and agility tests. This also went well. So all I had to do was wait and enter on July 5th, 1960.

In the meanwhile I had entered the University of Florida as an Engineering student. Not that I wanted to be an Engineer, but the West Point course is heavy in engineering subjects, and if I didn't get into West Point, the fall back plan was to get an Army commission through the college reserve officer training program, a less desirable, but alternate, way to enter an Army career.

It also was an opportunity to observe Papi at close hand at his job. I studied German. (There was no Hungarian offering.) This meant I would see Papi as a student in the "language laboratory" where students listen to their language through headphones, and practice pronunciation, and learn vocabulary. A boring and dreary business it was, but Papi greeted all of the students with jokes, and good humor. He helped all students who needed help. Papi also had his graduate students classes, these he liked much more. But he spent long hours, days, and years in this dark basement laboratory, not because this was his chosen field of work, but because it made possible for us, his boys, to be educated, and to build up a retirement so he could return to Astor Park to write. It was eye opening, and made me grateful. I think it was the first time I saw my father from a nearly adult viewpoint.

Papi gave me one more, typically Wass Albert, gift before I left home. In January of 1960, when I had passed all of the West Point examinations before the second semester began, he asked me why I needed to continue at the University. Well, I didn't have to, but what else useful would I do? He said, "Get a job as a ditch digger." He had always used the term "ditch digger" to describe the only thing we would be qualified for if we weren't diligent with our schoolwork. He saw my questioning look and followed with, "The worst officers I knew in the war were graduates of the Hungarian "West Point" who considered themselves "gentlemen." They could give orders, but they couldn't lead. They had no idea what was in the heads and hearts of the common soldiers under them. You will lead the sons of poor white farmers, black industrial laborers, and Mexican migrant fruit pickers. And you will ask them to lay down their lives somewhere in some strange place for a noble sounding idea that may not mean much to them. It would be very useful if you had the experience of being one of them for the next six months."

That was a Thursday evening. By noon on the next Monday I was standing knee deep in mud with five older black men, digging out the foundations of a building for the University. The six of us worked equally hard for the minimum wage allowed, but because I was white, I received 25% more than they. I did not realize this immediately. I learned many useful things not taught at the University, the most important of which was to respect all good people, and especially a good "ditch digger," whatever the color of his skin, or nationality, or religion. Papi taught me the secret of leadership in the face of danger: there has to be mutual respect between leaders and followers.

Miklos graduated from High School the year I entered West Point. He first studied at the University of Florida, and at the Marshall Space Flight Center in Alabama. During this time he lived at home half of the year and in Alabama during the other half. His studies were in Advanced Mathematics, but he was interested in everything – science, philosophy, history, computer science – he learned voraciously. He was considered by us to be the "brains" in the family. He was always reading. He knew how to read before he started school, because he learned along with me during my first year of school, from the books and homework I brought home. Miklos was a strange combination of introversion and extroversion. He could be lost in books for hours, and then revel in the company of his friends for hours. He made friends very easily. He and Papi developed a close rapport at this time, but not one that bridged into later life. They would have long philosophical discussions, even debates, at least mental jousting that Miklos enjoyed. And Miklos accompanied Papi and Bebe on several of his long summer tours. But they never found an intellectual common ground, upon which to build an adult relationship. Papi would be very critical of him, at times even cruelly so. I could never explain it. Miklos later worked in various businesses, think tanks, and entrepreneurial ventures in various parts of the United States, and around the world.

Geza first entered the US Navy as a seaman in 1961, returning home when his equivalent of my "ditch digging" was complete, to study at the University of Florida. He studied forestry and wildlife management, in response to his time with Papi learning to love nature. During his time in the Navy, while I was at West Point, he served in Maryland and in Canada. He lived at home during his years at the University. He and Papi became very close. As his schedule and Papi's permitted, they enjoyed hunting in

the Ocala National Forest. Geza and Anne's son Mike, only a few years younger, became very close friends. They, with Jack and Kirk, the younger of Anne's sons, would spend many hours hunting with Papi, beginning in the 1960's and continuing until the 1990's. When Geza graduated and married he moved some distance away to southern Florida to join the State of Florida Department of Forestry. Later he became a biology teacher, and finally the owner and operator of an environmental consultancy service for real estate developers and builders, all in Southern Florida. But the bond he had developed with Papi during this long time of sharing time in the forest continued, and although he was more than four hours away by automobile, he would continue to meet Papi in Astor Park throughout those many years.

Becoming A Family of Adults

I believe many agree that one of the most difficult transitions in life is developing an adult relationship with your parent. We each managed this in our own way. This transition was easiest for Anne and Pat, and more difficult for the rest of us. The holiday gatherings at Astor Park became major affairs as our numbers grew, but Bebe and Papi extended themselves during these times, and we all looked forward to attending. These were a major factor in keeping the family united.

Anne moved to Florida with her boys after her divorce, and lived near by from the early 1960's on. From that time, she and her boys became increasingly a part of our life. Late in Papi's life, after Bebe died, she was his close confidante. She received a teaching degree at the University of Florida and became a teacher like her mother. She eventually earned a masters degree, and then also a doctorate. First she taught in Ocala, between Astor Park and Gainesville. During this time she was married again while her youngest child, and only daughter, Suzie, was born. Anne married one more time to Bela Atzel, the oldest son of Papi's first cousin, Ede Atzel. She received a better position in Southern Florida, in Naples. Eventually this marriage also ended. She managed to raise and educate her four children, all of whom spent much time with Papi and Bebe both in Gainesville and in Astor Park. Her children one by one followed the second oldest, Jack, to the less developed North Florida Gulf of Mexico coast, near Pensacola. Jack had trained there as a pilot in the Marine Corps, and had started a business based on outdoor adventures and water sports. The brothers and the sister all eventually married and settled there, close together, some participating in the business. Anne remained in Southern Florida until her retirement, and then she joined her sons and daughter in North Florida. Anne and Papi became increasingly close in spirit throughout this period. She often understood Papi better than we boys did.

Anne's sister Pat and her husband had also moved to Florida from Ohio. Pat's husband studied for an advanced degree at the University of Florida, and then was employed by the Department of Agriculture at two experiment stations, first at Lake City north of Gainesville, and then at Brooksville near Tampa, where they still live, even though her husband is retired. They eventually had six children, two sons and four daughters. Pat and her husband Bob were very fond of Papi, and visited often. Bob and Papi shared an interest in gardening and agricultural developments.

Joe returned home after the Korean War, where he had been wounded. He visited for a short while and then returned to the Army. He served in various postings in

Germany, Korea and in the northern USA prior to the Vietnam War. He was wounded again during this war, and with this he retired from the Army and became an employee of the US Postal Service in Ohio. He later retired to live near Astor Park, in St Augustine with his wife. Joe also developed a fondness for Papi and they also visited often.

Geza and Papi shared the love of hunting and nature. Geza spent many days together with Papi every year from the time his tour of duty in the Navy was complete until their last day of hunting together in 1991. I will let him speak of his experience, as he did in a letter after Papi died:

“I have been privileged in experiencing with him one of his greatest pleasures: hunting. The gratification of hunting was not the kill, but the peacefulness of the forest during the pre-dawn hours while waiting for the sun to rise, the birds starting their morning ritual, bouncing from limb to limb on a near by tree, and observing the morning fog as it began to rise, while the sun cast rays of light through the trees, creating tiny sparkles on the morning dew. Learning to appreciate those special moments while spending time with Papi, I will never forget, and will hold dear to my soul.”

“Some of the most memorable hunting trips were days spent walking the shores of Lake George, trying to flush snipe from the tall marsh grasses. I can still see Papi sitting on his stool next to a cabbage palm, which he sat under to break his silhouette, while Mike, Jack, Kirk and I would wade through the mud and tall grass to find the little, long-billed marsh bird. Although we typically would get the first shot at the snipe as they flushed, we would more times than not, miss the birds, causing them to fly along the shoreline, past Papi. We would watch in amazement, as nearly ever time, he would lift his Drilling to his shoulder, which followed with a puff of smoke from the end of the barrel, a bird tumbling from the sky, and then the report of the gun. Buffy, his favorite retriever would run from his side to retrieve the bird.”

Geza and his Hungarian wife, Zsuzsa, and family visited Astor Park very frequently. Not only did they share the love of hunting, but also the concern for the preservation of nature.

Throughout this period Miklos worked in various businesses, think tanks, and entrepreneurial ventures in various parts of the United States, and around the world. He lived a very interesting and unconventional life. This bothered Papi and Bebe, and they were never clear just what Miklos was doing. We would enjoy hearing of his adventures when he would visit home during holidays. Although they had a loving relationship, the distance between Papi and Miklos continued to grow. As the distance grew, his visits became less frequent.

Endre grew up in Hamburg with our mother, and grandfather. Nagypapi was able to leave Hungary about the time of the revolution, and was more comfortable living in Germany. Mami had recovered from tuberculosis after a few years, and came to the United States to seek a reunion with our father, whom she continued to love to the end of her days. We boys visited her and Endre at the time. This was a difficult period for all. During this time of fighting Mami in court, Papi slanted the story of our leaving Hamburg to sound like our mother had not really become sick, but had deserted him in order to benefit from the wealth of her family. He even maintained that Endre was not his son, but

we boys did not believe this. Endre, even at this young age, looked more like Papi than any of us ever have. Mami and Endre returned to Hamburg after about two years, and our grandfather joined them in 1957. This was a bitter time, and added to the developing gulf between our family in America and that in Germany. Endre and Papi never spent any time together during his growing up. They saw each other only in the courtroom when Endre was four.

But Mami continued in her love for Papi and Endre grew up with the image of Papi she kept alive with stories of their life in Erdely and Bavaria. He and our mother visited Transylvania often during his youth, and developed close contacts there. Endre was an excellent student. In 1965 and 1966, when I was serving in the US Army in Germany, I visited Mami, Nagy Papi and Endre in Hamburg when duty allowed. These times were too brief, but there was a deep love and reverence for Papi in that household. Mami's defense mechanism was to blame Bebe for her loss, and Nagy Papi had become the real father figure in Endre's life. In the summer of 1969, Endre had achieved his Abitur with honors and traveled to the USA to visit us. He stayed with me in Georgia, where I was undergoing military schooling, and then visited Papi for two weeks in Astor Park. From all accounts, this was a pleasant visit, but an arms-length meeting of father and son.

Vid left the circus for the Army where he completed his high school education, then spent some time at a small College, and finally found his life as a businessman in Roanoke, Virginia, where he lives to this day with a wonderfully supportive wife, a large loving family, and many grand children.

Bebe and Vid's wife, Ruby, worked to reconcile father and son in the 1970's. Thereafter began annual visits and later they visited on a more frequent basis.

During this period, I lived farther away, traveled more, and moved more often than any of us. I graduated from the United States Military Academy in June 1964, and was married immediately after. Bebe and Papi and some of the family came to the graduation and wedding. For reasons that can't be understood from a rational light in retrospect, I had a falling out with my parents over the marriage arrangements. This meant a four-year separation from Papi and Bebe until June of 1968.

I was soon posted to Germany, in Mainz, until fall 1966. During this time I did not visit home. While in Germany, I became reacquainted with the German part of the family, and got to know Endre. To me then, Endre appeared to be the most like Papi of all of us. I was in Vietnam by January 1967, and back in the US by Christmas.

My young wife met me at the airport with the news of our divorce. I did not go home for Christmas, again for reasons too irrational to admit in hindsight. I was then stationed at Ft. Lewis, Washington. This is in the opposite corner of the United States from Florida, a greater distance than Budapest to southern Spain. But that wasn't the reason I didn't go home.

In the spring of that year I met Sharon, and in June I took her home to meet Papi and Bebe. Papi declared that she reminded him of the girls of Transylvania, and Bebe insisted we be married before my return to Vietnam. We had planned to wait until my return. We were married on 30th of June 1968, in the Hungarian Reformed Church of

Lakeland, Florida. Two weeks later I was on the way to Vietnam again. Sharon returned to live with her mother in Washington State. This time when I returned to the USA, we were stationed in Georgia, next to Florida. Sharon and I visited Bebe and Papi the first free weekend after my school started, and we enjoyed visits several more times that year. From then until 1988 we visited Papi and Bebe at least annually at Christmas, and often during the summer also. During the next 20 years the Army moved us from Georgia to the following states: Massachusetts, New York, Kansas, Washington, Kansas, and California. Sometimes Papi and Bebe's travels among the Hungarian communities brought them to us for short visits.

My way of developing an adult relationship with Papi was to talk politics, history, and philosophy. Ours became a relationship of ideas and emotions. It was these things we talked about during the many visits to Astor Park after I became an officer in the Army, was married and had children. I would hear of his projects and adventures, and I would share mine. I brought my children to get to know him and hear his stories. I always came away refreshed. After he started his publishing, I would send him a monthly contribution for his work. He never spoke of financial needs for himself, and we never discussed such things until some time after Bebe passed away.

The Golden Decades: Up to March 1987

Wass Huba

Papi's retirement from the University of Florida and his return to the Ocala National Forest in 1970 at the age of 62 begins the fifth phase of his life. At an age when most humans contemplate their retirement, and begin their withdrawal from active professional life, he begins a very productive seventeen years. He could devote more time to the missions of the organizations he had started, and to his "out reach" program among the Hungarians, and with influential Americans. Besides this, several excellent pieces of literature were created. He also became an influential member of many Hungarian and Transylvanian exile groups, earned many honors and spoke often to influential Americans about minority rights in Romania, and other important issues. But this period is also marked by stressful episodes, such as the 1979 to 1980 investigation of his "war criminal" status by the Office of Special Investigations of the US Justice Department, occasioned by the Romanian Government's release of the transcript of the post WWII "People's Court" that convicted him in absentia.

The first decade of this period was as busy as the previous one. Papi and Bebe reintegrated into the community of Astor Park where they spent the rest of their lives. He joined Kiwanis Club and educated the community about many things. Eventually he became president of the Kiwanis Club. And Papi restarted the Boy Scout troop he had left here when we moved to Gainesville. It had failed for lack of adult leadership. In his mid 70's the Florida Boy Scouts organization honored him, and told him it was time for a younger person to take over.

Focus on the Mission

During this entire period Papi was single purposely focused on his one driving motivation: when the opportunity came he wanted political decision makers in the West to be both well informed about Hungary and Central Europe, and he wanted them to be positively disposed toward Hungarians. He believed that pre- World War I Hungarian leaders failed their people by allowing outsiders to educate the elites of Western Europe and America about Central European issues. He also felt that the Hungarian exile of the time, a considerable population in the United States and elsewhere since the 1848 liberty wars, played no role in shaping public opinion about Hungary.

Through the Danubian Research and Information Center, he aimed to fill American and European libraries with well-researched and scholarly works about Central Europe, because those that existed were written by biased outsiders. For instance, in 1969 he published the scholarly History of the Hungarian Nation by Dr. Bela Vardy, and in 1977 Documented Facts and Figures on Transylvania. These, and other volumes like them, informed countless research papers and shaped the education of many American, Canadians, Australians, and British students. The second turned out to be a serious embarrassment to the Ceausescu regime, which at the time of publication was applying for "favored nation status" in trade with the United States.

The aim of the American Hungarian Literary Guild was to preserve Hungarian culture and awareness among the Hungarian exile. It published in Hungarian and English. It reached its peak during this time with the annual publication of classics of Hungarian literature by various authors, books of Hungarian Folk Tales and Legends, and some of his own novels. He wrote a two volume fictionalized 1000-year saga of our family in Transylvania from the Middle Ages to the present, entitled the Sword and the Scythe, or Kard es Kasza in Hungarian, and several other important works. These works were published first by The Danubian Press, and distributed to the American Hungarian Literary Guild subscribers.

During this time he also became the first president of the Transylvanian World Federation composed of 134 Transylvanian exile groups from all over the world. He also served as vice-president of the American-Hungarian Federation, director of the Polish-Hungarian World Federation, and Member of the Arpad Academy.

But this was not a period of cloudless skies.

The Justice Department Investigation

In the late summer of 1979, a letter appeared in the Gainesville Daily Sun accusing Papi of being a war criminal and hiding in the Ocala National Forest. This article was followed by articles in several Central Florida newspapers featuring interviews with neighbors, undisclosed sources at the US Department of Justice, and the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Vienna. Several reporters interviewed Papi himself. It seems that a professor of entomology from the University of Florida had been to a conference of entomologists in Bucharest, Romania. In the previous year Papi, and his political allies, had been urging the US government to deny Romania “most favored nation” trading status until it improved its civil rights record. The Romanian government revealed to the Florida professor, and months previously to the Simon Wiesenthal Center and the US Justice Department, selections from trial records of 1945, in which Papi and his father had been sentenced to death for inciting atrocities in connection with border incidents during the September 1940 border change between Hungary and Romania. These occurred near his Erdely home. Hungarian border guards cruelly and unjustifiably shot and killed four prisoners they were taking back to their headquarters for interrogation. Two of the victims were young Jewish women, both were sisters in law of the respected shopkeeper, Mr. Rozenberg, in the village of Vassasszentgothard, called Sucutard in Romanian. Papi was far away up in the Carpathian mountains when the incident occurred. These border guards were tried and convicted by Hungarian military courts.

More than five years later, Papi and his father were accused and convicted of “instigating” this horrible crime by a politically motivated and illegally constituted “Peoples Court” that used illegal procedures, and obviously falsified evidence to try and convict Papi and our grandfather.

Many newspaper accounts played up the sensationalism of the “War Criminal” hiding in the Ocala National Forest. Friends and neighbors in Astor and Astor Park defended him, but many didn’t know what to think.

At this time I was a US Army Lieutenant Colonel, and again stationed at Ft. Lewis, Washington. I called the Office of Special Investigations at the Department of

Justice to find out that, yes, they did have a file on Albert Wass de Czege, but because of higher priorities, would not get to his case for several months. They did not consider his case very important, and yes, they regretted the information had leaked to the newspapers.

Papi was confident for two reasons. First, how could an author and public person hide his true being? And second, he trusted in the integrity of the legal process in the United States. But this made him wary of ever returning home to Erdely. I convinced Papi to gather witness statements about his whereabouts during the alleged crimes, and personally visit the investigators in Washington to stop the war criminal rumors and get the issue resolved.

Papi remembered the 1940 incidents, which occurred just before my brother Csaba died. He was away from home in the Carpathian Mountains at the time. He contacted several people who also remembered the incidents and the circumstances. These statements corroborated Papi's claim that he was absent during those incidents; had to be contacted in a remote area to inform him of Csaba's death; and only arrived home in time for the funeral, well after the incidents had occurred. Armed with these witness statements, Papi, Bebe, Geza, Anne and I met with the Justice Department investigators in Washington. We appealed to them to expedite their investigation to clear Papi's name.

I gave them another reason to speed the investigation. I was being considered for a position of high responsibility requiring a Top Secret security clearance and I had included all of the newspaper clippings about Papi with my papers applying for the upgrade. They would soon be forced to respond to the charges by those investigating me for fitness to have access to the highest level national secrets. Sons of war criminals cannot be cleared.

This "fire storm" soon subsided. We never communicated with the Office of Special Investigations again until after Papi's death. All we knew was that my Top Secret clearance came through on time, and I continued to advance in rank, rising in levels of responsibility, and reaching the highest security clearance possible before I retired in 1993. (When Papi's war criminal status resurfaced after his death, we learned that Justice Department investigators had found only "hearsay," unsubstantiated accusations, and no proof in the record of the 1945 trial. They concluded that there was no case against Papi even after conducting their own investigations in Romania, Israel, and Hungary after 1989.)

After this, Papi and Bebe continued the natural rhythm of their busy lives. Holidays came and went, always eventful and fulfilling. What tied the family in America together during this time were Bebe's efforts at regular telephonic communications amongst us, and the effort they both made to bring the family together for holidays several times a year. And during some of these we all went hunting. Over the years the family developed a system of alternating who was to call the other every week. There were periods when this lapsed from time to time, but Bebe would always reconnect us when one of us would forget to call.

In the 1980's traveling on long trips became more tiring. Eventually Papi and Bebe reduced the strenuousness of their travels, and visited fewer communities. With this

came a reduction in annual subscriptions for the literary guild. It was the lack of support and not the loss of income that seemed to concern him. Papi also became increasingly concerned about his legacy, even before Bebe passed away.

Papi's Early Concerns About His Legacy

Papi's judgments of us, his sons, have never been neutral or luke-warm. He was either very proud or very disappointed. As he began traveling among the Hungarians, and we sometimes accompanied him, our Hungarian language deficiency became an issue, and he became concerned that we could not truly appreciate his life's work. On more than one occasion he expresses these concerns in public, as in the example below:

„And my children? I am just an old foolish Don Quixote in their eyes – an outdated hero with a sword, lance, shield, - whom they respect and admire in a loving and worrying concern. But following me? What would the world say? (what would people say about it?) Maybe, once they will take over the business I am engaged with, a nation-saving mission. Unless this business goes down due to the lack of interest and support of people.” (*Answers to Questions*” - Katolikus Magyarok Vasárnapja, 1979).

We considered this criticism unfair for two reasons. Changing the rules after we were fully grown was the first of these. Second, the criticism of our language deficiency did not take into account the circumstances of our upbringing, and thus it unjustly imposed guilt on both father and sons. In addition it did not take into account the fruits of his earlier priorities, that were just beginning to become evident by 1979, and would be much more evident ten years later.

Earlier he emphasized a different set of priorities. Growing up with Papi was never easy because his expectations were always very high. Winning his approval had always depended on basically three things.

One was living by the moral code he reinforced by the way he lived and by what he taught. There was a clear consistency in the daily moral instruction we received while growing up. Mami, and later Bebe, had the same values and backed him up.

The second thing that was always important for winning his approval was how we represented the Hungarian people in our daily lives. One of the causes of Trianon, he often remarked, was that Hungarians were very poorly represented abroad, while Romanians and Czechs were far wiser. He therefore stressed to the Hungarian exile community the importance of representing Hungary very well in their daily lives. In our growing up, our daily duty was to be the best ambassadors of Hungary that we could be. And this we took to heart and did, each in our own way.

Before our first day of school in America, Papi gathered us on the veranda of the big house for a serious talk: Vid 15, Huba 10, Miklos 8, and Geza 7. I will never forget the seriousness of his tone, and the gravity of the occasion. We had come across a big ocean together on a mission. America was the most important country in the world. And we would have to show the Americans what good people we Hungarians were. That was our job. I remember thinking about that as I went to bed, and being excited about going to school.

Initially we only used the short version of our last name, Wass. But we insisted that people should pronounce it the Hungarian way. Later when we became citizens, the January after the Hungarian Revolution, Papi added the “de Czege” from the family title. This small thing made a big difference in how we represented ourselves. “Wass de Czege” was clearly not an Anglicized American name. It always provoked a discussion, “Who are you” and “how do you pronounce it.” You could no longer blend in, and you would be remembered. Thus we carried our names and our Hungarian legacy like a flag.

The third thing that was important to him was a practical matter. We should learn to be useful. I believe this came from his experience of the years immediately after the Second World War. He saw too many “gentlemen” fail their families because false pride, or lack of skill or will caused them to avoid manual labor, when that was the only alternative to dependence on relief organizations. In Ohio, we were assigned our own plots of ground to garden. In Florida we always had jobs. If we dropped jobs, when jobs and sports conflicted, Papi would call us “playboys.” Although Papi was proud of his own sports performance during his younger days, he rarely attended our sporting events and never glorified our performances.

In the late 1960’s Papi seemed comfortable with the results of his fatherly duties, comfortable enough, even, to give advice to other exiled Hungarians about how to raise their own children:

The author of this essay succeeded in guiding the keel of the family boat on their voyaging through and breaking down. Not only the boat avoided shipwrecks, but the crew has also been holding together in rowing the boat – shoulder to shoulder – in unity throughout the entire voyage. Thus, I earned the right to give advice to other emigrant Hungarian parents with the same difficulties and challenges. My advice sounds as it follows: you should love your child and consider his long term advantage rather than short term and temporary goals pleasing you or seeming to be immediately profitable. You should sacrifice time and energy to invest for their future. For a while, you may miss contentment about them, but it is better not to avoid conflicts and challenges that might cause temporary disagreements. Don’t try to solve the problems with easy and comfortable solutions that lead just to temporary successes. At the same time, facing the challenges with honest courage and generosity will pay with good results later and for the long term. So, my advice is to consider not today’s child’s immediate interest of today but what will benefit tomorrow’s man.

(Translated by Eva Lukacs from *Magyar szemmel*, 1969)

There is a hard, but practical side to this advice. We were never coddled as children. In fact, transgressions of the rules were punished with a flexible bamboo stick on our backsides, or with a swift and decisive decision, like the one that sent Vid off to the Circus with little more than \$20 in his pocket, and Geza to the Navy recruiter when his 11th school year produced one failed grade. (We later discovered that Geza also has the dyslexia disorder that makes reading a very difficult act to perform. Papi was never aware of this.)

Of course Papi took the criticism of the Hungarians about our language deficiency very personally. Other Hungarians now made him feel guilty for placing less stress on keeping up our Hungarian. This we discussed frequently, but the criticisms came often

and continue to this day. The point we continually made with him at the time was this: while we were growing up he had to make a difficult choice between writing or devoting that time to Hungarian lessons. Because we were a family that included Bebe, and often Anne, Pat or Joe and their families, it would have been impolite to use normal family time, such as at the dinner table, for “Hungarian lessons.” Papi would have had to schedule separate time. This would have encroached on his time to write and think. While we were growing up he needed to work long hours to provide for us. I think he chose remarkably well, or much of what he created would never have appeared.

He was hard on himself, and then passed that criticism off on us during this time when we were all away from home and deeply involved in our own careers. We also inherited from our father a strong minded individualism, all of us. And inevitably, strong-minded people clash. It seemed that during this entire time, at least one of us was asserting his or her independence. But there also were times when we all rallied to a common cause, as during the 1979 storm of publicity about Papi’s “war criminal” status. Even so, he began to worry more and more that we would not appreciate his work and take up his mission. The tendency to judge us in a bi-polar way, either positively or negatively was a tendency that continued to the end of his life.

Meanwhile, Endre, and our mother, continued to visit Transylvania, and continued to develop close contacts there. He met and married, Agnes Dely, from Szasz Regen. She studied medicine in Hamburg. Endre brought her to America to visit Papi at Astor Park. Again, it was a friendly visit, but while the intelligent, warm and beautiful Agnes charmed Papi, sadly, this also was an arms-length encounter and their last. Papi remained indifferent to Endre until very late in his life. After 1970, Endre studied economics at the University of Hamburg and later also earned his doctorate there, and became a member of the Economics Faculty. His research and writings on how to transform a communist “command economy” into a functioning market economy, well before 1989, made his knowledge very useful in Hungary and elsewhere after 1989. Today, as I will explain later, Endre is the keystone to the family’s efforts to follow-up on Papi’s legacy.

But while Papi began to complain about his sons, he also, however, began to appreciate Bebe’s support more and more, as well as that of Anne, who became increasingly supportive and helpful to him in very many ways. He began to refer to Anne as his Transylvanian daughter, because she reminded him of the attractive, bright and capable young women with whom he grew up. Anne, though living in southern Florida, would often visit for long periods, especially in the summers, and help Papi with translating Hungarian pieces into English for the Danubian Press and for the Hungarian American Literary guild.

But what was not yet visible to him was the indirect influence he had on world affairs when the opportunities for change came in 1989 and later. Some of this influence will be difficult to attribute to him. For instance, how many hundreds of University of Florida students gained a positive attitude toward Hungarians, and which few of them were in a position to make decisions favorable to Hungarians later? How many of our classmates were similarly influenced? How many other Hungarian exile families became more proud of their heritage and had similar influences in their communities? He had also

instilled in us a set of values and a sense of responsibility that to him were not yet in evidence for several reasons.

During this time we continued to see Papi as the strong and rugged individualist, more than capable of fighting his own battles. We saw no sign that he needed our help. And we continued to see Papi as the father figure, rather than as the adult friend. Late in this period, Anne and Geza, by being closer to home, had the opportunity to build those bridges toward true friendship with Papi. That proved vital when Bebe died and he was alone.

The Troubled Sunset: Losing Bebe, a New Marriage, Old Age, and a Silver Lining

Wass Huba

The sixth and last phase of Papi's life begins in March of 1987 when, at age 79, he loses "Bebe" his love and true partner of 35 years. It ends in February 1998 with his tragic death at the age of 90.

This was also a period of very high emotions for him and for all of us. For instance, it was the time of the end of the cold war, and the rediscovery of Papi's works in Hungary and the Hungarian speaking parts of Central Europe. With it came recognition, renewed interest in the publication of Papi's works, and hope of financial security after the failure of the Hungarian Literary Guild and the Danubian Press. Also after four lonely years Papi finds a new wife, Mary. And finally father and sons unite in 1996 to begin publishing Papi's books after other efforts failed, and the two generations of the family unite to establish the non-profit Czegei Wass Foundation to publish his works and use the income to benefit those Hungarians Papi left behind in 1945.

But, also during this time, not only was Papi beginning to age visibly, but there were more sad family occasions with the death of our mother in Hamburg in 1991, and the death of my wife Sharon in 1994. In addition the hope of early promises by Hungarian businessmen to publish in Hungary, and to provide lucrative financial rewards, ended in failure. These failures prior to 1996 contributed to Papi's increasing concerns about his legacy. And finally, his new marriage caused worries about his financial situation, stressful moves away from and back to Astor Park, and other difficulties. The impress of the lows, and a failing body, cause him to take his own life at the age of 90.

There were times when Papi complained about us in private letters, especially in some desperate depressions of mood late in life. He is as often proud of our progress and contributions. But his disappointments stem as often from seeing the end of his life and seeing a long fight still ahead and no one to carry it forward.

It also was a period of coming together to deal with crisis and face new challenges. This strengthened the bonds among our generation and with Papi. We now continue to meet at least annually.

All of us were at stages of high responsibilities in our own careers. At the beginning of this period I was commanding a brigade of Infantry soldiers in Ft. Ord California, then in 1988, I was transferred to NATO in Belgium, coming back to the USA for duty in Kansas in 1991. These important assignments kept me very busy. Between 1992 and 1994 I was absorbed with fighting the cancer that eventually took Sharon, the mother of my children and my wife of 25 yrs. In 1993 I retired from active service to give Sharon more attention, and established a new home and new career, but had more time to visit Papi.

Vid lived in Virginia, and began to visit Papi more frequently during this period. They would speak of old times in Hungary, and the wounds of their earlier, rocky

relationship seemed to heal. Miklos lived first in New York, then California during this time, and although he came to visit with Papi on several occasions, he never regained the earlier rapport he had with Papi. Endre never saw him during this time. Mami's funeral, Siemers family matters, the establishment of our foundation, and furthering Papi's legacy in Erdely brought him in frequent contact with his brothers again. Thus in spirit he came closer to Papi than any of us.

Losing Bebe

The entire family gathered for Bebe's funeral. Anne and her sons, daughter and grandchildren. Sister Pat and her large family came from Brooksville, Florida and all their grown children from various locations in the Eastern United States. Joe and his wife were living in St Augustine, Florida by the time. Vid, his wife Ruby and some of their children came from Virginia. I brought my family from California. Miklos came from New York. And Geza and family came from South Florida. There was a large representation of their church and the communities of Astor and Astor Park.

When we left, he was left alone in a large house in the country with Impy his cat and Buffy and Pluto his dogs. Some of us failed to appreciate, at first, how vulnerable Papi had become because when we spoke with him or were with him during the time after Bebe was gone he would be totally composed and the image of confidence and health. It was difficult to accept his becoming old and all that goes with age. He had always looked younger than his years, and was slow to gray and show the normal infirmities of aging.

Anne was the first to see that Bebe's death created a void in his life that nothing could fill. The loss of Bebe meant that the world around him lost its motive power and direction. Things had to happen on their own, rather than from the dynamo of her creative energy, as if the carousel stopped turning and the music faded away because the electric power was shut off. It would be difficult for outsiders to appreciate what she did to keep him productive, serene, and centered.

After Bebe passed away Anne and Geza spent more time at Astor. They lived in Naples and Ft. Meyers, several hundred miles to the south of Astor Park. Anne taught school during the week and on Fridays she drove to Astor Park and returned to Naples Sunday. She attended church with Papi each Sunday. She would cook dinners for Papi for the coming week and put them into the freezer. He could then take them from the freezer and heat them in the microwave oven at dinnertime. Often Geza and Zsuzsa would also join them on weekends. Sometimes they alternated so someone was usually with him. Geza and Zsuzsa bought a parcel of land near Astor Park during this time, in order to be near Papi. Geza loved going hunting with Papi, a time they shared nearly four years after Bebe passed away.

Arrangements were also made to care for Papi during the week. A housekeeper came weekly to keep the house clean and occasionally she would prepare a special meal. Neighbors invited him to their homes at least once a week for a dinner and an evening.

For the next three years, Anne became Papi's special confidante. She had begun to help Papi with his writings after Bebe became unable, putting his newspaper articles and then his manuscripts on floppy disks. After Bebe passed on she continued helping

him. Anne spent the next three summers, when school was dismissed, with Papi, occasionally one of the grandchildren would join them. There had been talk of Anne's retiring to Astor Park from her school teaching. To illustrate their close relationship at this time, and his very deep loneliness, this is a letter Papi wrote to her on August 24, 1989 following her return to Naples for the oncoming school year.

“Dear Anne: Please don't misunderstand me: I would love to have you here permanently for the rest of my life. Every time you are here is a special holiday for me. But I don't want to impose on you, and I don't want you to sacrifice your life for me. You are a beautiful young woman and you deserve your own life, not to be tied to a grouchy old man. Nevertheless, if you should plan to desert me, I come after you and catch you on the run. This letter (enclosed) came yesterday. I love you darling, and counting the days when I can see you again! Papi”

Whenever my duty sent me to Washington, I extended the trip to visit Papi for a while. When I visited Papi in May of 1988 on the way to my new NATO assignment, I knew a transition in his life was underway. Bebe had been gone more than a year. I visited her grave several times during that week. Papi was lonely and depressed. He was 80, and began to show his age.

I noticed that he lived a quiet life with his writings during the week, but always had visitors on the weekend. He had many local friends, belonged to the Astor Kiwanis Club, Anne or Geza visited nearly every weekend. Vid visited often from Virginia. He remained in touch with world events, especially what was happening that summer in Central Europe, and telephoned and corresponded with many Hungarians worldwide. He spoke of having lunch with this or that lady, as well. These things punctuated his life, and he seemed satisfied, but I felt the lack of the protective framework Bebe had kept in place around him all those years.

Papi had a routine in the evenings. He would invite his dog Pajtas to come with him for exercise in the field and the forest paths behind the house. Papi would throw a ball into the bushes as we walked and the old dog would find it and bring it back to him for a few words of praise, sometimes in Hungarian, and sometimes in English. This game of throwing, retrieving and praising continued as we walked slowly and talked.

We talked about many things including my next assignment and the momentous historic events that were unfolding in Central Europe and in the Soviet Union already in 1988. I told him I was excited about my new job. I would be the special assistant to the NATO commander, General Galvin, at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, or SHAPE, in Belgium. I had met General Galvin while he was on a visit to our post, and we had discussed my duties. He had told me my focus would be both war plans and arms control because only a good war planner would be able to give sound advice on arms control measures that would result in peace. Gorbachev was talking about Glasnost and Perestroika. I remember Papi saying as we walked that the leaders of the communist regimes were riding a tiger, and eventually they would fall, and the tiger would eat them. He mentioned that he had heard reports that some of his books were appearing in Budapest, and being sold in the streets. We spoke of hope for a good turn of events for Hungary and Transylvania. But, then, it was just hope.

When I saw Papi standing alone on the steps of the old Astor Park house as my car started toward the airport, a great feeling of sadness came over me. I stopped the car at the gate, walked back, and embraced him with tears in my eyes. He asked me what was the matter, and I said, "I don't know. I'll be gone three years." He said, "I'll be here." I smiled and murmured, "OK." I squeezed him again, turned, and left without looking back.

After Bebe was gone, family gatherings continued at Christmas, and in January several of us usually joined Papi to celebrate his birthday. Anne's sons and daughter hosted that next family Christmas at their Tomahawk Landing in Milton. We had spent recent holidays there because the logistics of large family holidays had become too difficult for Papi and Bebe at Astor Park. Papi was at first reluctant, because he wanted to be at Astor with Bebe's memories. He realized the reality of things and we spent Christmas in Milton from that time on. When Papi gave the blessing before that Christmas dinner he prayed that our families would always stay close together.

Period of Transition and Possibilities (1988-91)

Many important events transpired between May 1988, and June 1991 when I brought the family to visit, after our return to the USA. This would be true of events close to me personally, and also in Papi's world in Astor.

The pace of life for a special assistant to the SACEUR, the official acronym for General Galvin's position, was hectic, and mentally taxing. Soon after arriving, I became involved in what would be the strategy if Gorbachev would agree to new conventional arms control talks. My contributions seemed helpful so by summer of 1989, I was promoted to Brigadier General and headed a new multinational staff of officers from every NATO nation to provide practical solutions for an arms control treaty. My idea was to develop verifiable treaty measures, that, if put into effect, would transform the situation in Europe radically, making surprise attack by either side impossible. Many of the treaty measures our group developed became part of the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE). But this concentration on my work limited the opportunities to keep up with Papi's world.

Events in Europe were evolving very rapidly. By the summer of 1989, Hungarians created the first gap in the "iron curtain," by opening the Austrian border for East German refugees. By November the Berlin Wall fell, and liberalization was well on the way in Hungary. By 1987 and 1988, some pirated publications of Papi's books were beginning to appear and circulate in Budapest. Interest in him began to awaken. This led to two new relationships for Papi.

In December 1989, a charming silver-tongued Hungarian newspaper publisher, with a history of legal problems in California, Belize, and Switzerland approached Papi with an offer to be his agent for publishing in Hungary. (Papi knew nothing of his background.) He offered Papi five-thousand dollars, on the spot, for an agreement that promises further 12% royalties. It had been many decades since someone had offered him real money „up-front” for the most important products of his long life. This lifted Papi's spirits, and he shared the good news with the family. We were all happy for him.

During this time, I called Papi from Belgium about twice per month, and had short conversations with him on those occasions, every family member taking turns. I

kept him abreast of my exciting news of the time. By the spring of 1990, most of our contributions to the treaty were in place, and I was one of several members of the NATO staff sent to Budapest to represent the NATO military at a conference sponsored by the new Hungarian government on security in Central Europe. One of the topics was what would happen to the Warsaw Pact and NATO, and another was whether NATO would accept new members from the Warsaw Pact. This may have been the first conference in which the return of Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland to the West was discussed.

This was my first time on Hungarian soil since I was three years old. On one of my walks in the city, I came across an outdoor bookseller with two of Papi's books for sale. You can imagine how I felt. I was in Hungary at long last, the government had changed, and Papi's books were being rediscovered in his homeland! I called Papi as soon as I could. He told me he had made arrangements to publish, but had not heard about the outcome. I congratulated him.

In May of 1990 a TV crew from Hungary came to interview and film Papi. This was a very big event in his life. His countrymen had recognized him, at last. The Orlando Sentinel reporter, Bill Bond, wrote an in depth story about it. Papi became a sort of celebrity again not only in Hungary, but also in Papi's world in Florida. The last time he had such publicity was in 1978 when the "War Criminal" coverage flooded the local news.

We knew that by this time Papi had several lovely lady friends who kept him company for dinner outings, concerts and parties. The article about the TV interview attracted the attention of one of the women from his church, a lady named Mary whom neither Bebe nor Papi had known. She invited Papi and Anne to join her for dinner the next Sunday after church. They had dinner together for the next two Sundays. Mary lived in a trailer park about fifty miles from Astor Park and within a short time she moved her trailer to a park across from Papi's home in Astor Park. A month later she moved her trailer into his yard and terminated Papi's relationship with the other ladies in his life. By November 9 of that year she and Papi were married. He had not said much to me about Mary prior to the wedding. He seemed cheerful about it, and that was good enough for me at the time.

Within a month of Papi's marriage, Mary approached Anne, Geza and me, for financial assistance, telling us that Papi was deeply in debt. At about the same time there were rumors conveyed to us from various close friends of Papi in Astor, that Mary was considering selling the family homestead, the place Papi produced some of his best novels, and considered his refuge and "New World" Szentgothard. Not really knowing Mary very well, and wanting to insure that Papi would always have his home, Geza and Anne suggested an arrangement in Papi's best interest. I had been sending Papi a "contribution" to his mission for many years, as had some other family members. When the idea of taking over the expenses of the house, and providing him with a basic monthly payment was advanced, I agreed. To me this meant that the house was his until his death, and it would revert to us at that time. In the meanwhile we were "purchasing" it with advance time payments. Papi would receive new income of more than \$10,000.00 per year, and we would pay taxes, insurance, the weekly housekeeper, and all maintenance costs. I knew that Papi's pride had to be intact. While he had his University retirement and social security, we knew he was not earning income from his books. He never

mentioned the \$5,000 payment he had received the previous year. Geza, knowing Papi had many unsold books from the Hungarian American Literary Guild days sitting in storage that needed selling, also offered to fund the costs of marketing and selling them. But Papi declined this help, saying he could manage. After some encouragement, Papi and Mary joined Anne's and Geza's families for Christmas at Tomahawk, as had been the occasion for several years.

As the treaty between the NATO and Warsaw Pact countries was being finalized in late 1990, my focus became the complex verification scheme, and how to expedite bringing the national armies into compliance with the treaty. It became a good idea to transfer me to the private office of the Secretary General of NATO, Mr. Manfred Woerner, to advise him on treaty implementation. It was not normal to have a soldier directly on the Secretary General's private staff, so it required the concurrence of all the nations, including the French, who were always jealous of the Americans. Therefore, at a critical time in history, in early 1991, there was an American General with a very Hungarian name, who could speak knowledgeably about Central Europe, on the NATO Secretary General's private office staff. This was just before the new Hungarian, Czech and Polish governments were invited to open an office at NATO headquarters. (Not to inflate the importance of my relatively humble position, I was just one of a large number of "unofficial Hungarian ambassadors" in government, academia, and industry who shaped the attitude of the West toward Hungary, smoothing its return to its natural place in Europe. More credit should go to the man who since 1951 advanced the importance of being "unofficial Hungarian ambassadors" among the Hungarian exile community.)

During this time in Europe, my family and I often visited my mother, Eva, and brother Endre and his family in Hamburg. Endre and Agnes visited Transylvania, and Agnes's family, often, and more frequently now that the government had changed. Thus I began to hear about the work they, together, were doing in Transylvania. They recognized several needs, and began to organize efforts to meet them, most often with their own funds. One was providing what elsewhere are called „micro loans,” small but sufficient amounts of money on generous terms, often on the basis of nothing more than a hand shake, to create a small business. They recognized that the end of communism meant the end of „equal opportunity,” such as it was, for minorities in Romania. Many Hungarian families began losing well earned positions in factories, hospitals, and government to friends and cousins of Romanians. Farm equipment of the old collectives was not allocated to Hungarians at the same rate, thus Hungarian farmers are last in line to rent farm equipment, and at a higher price from Romanian opportunists. Programs to foster cultural pride, such as Hungarian dance troupes and Scout troops became targets for their efforts, as well as churches. And in my telephone calls I informed Papi of Endre's work.

In May 1991, our mother, Eva, died in Hamburg and we five brothers were together for the first time since 1951. During this time we discussed how to pool our resources to work together for the welfare of Hungarians in Transylvania. We also talked about the possibility of getting Papi's permission to publish in Transylvania through our contacts there.

Meanwhile in Florida, Anne was also the first to see the impact of the new marriage was having on Papi's life. Anne called him weekly, and managed to maintain contact. Mary discouraged neighbors from visiting, and limited their circle of friends. On

several occasions, Papi had to entertain guests outside on the porch when they came unannounced. She discouraged the frequent family visits from Anne and Geza and their children. Anne's and Geza's family visits, when they occurred, were often unpleasant because Mary caused some upheaval, either asking for more money or finding fault with someone. Papi, Geza and Anne's sons soon stopped hunting together. Even Papi's dog and cat were banished from the house. Mary assumed total control of his life.

Mary was particularly jealous of Anne's working relationship with Papi. Mary offered to take over the office work for Papi, even though she had no computer skills. Papi and Anne managed to collaborate nonetheless until the manuscript they were working on at the time was finished. But obviously, Anne's long summer visits ended.

The last time Papi went hunting with Geza and Anne's sons was the January of 1991, just after his 83rd birthday. As they reported, although he was 83 years old, he was still able to out shoot them. As Geza then remarked, "Our life with Papi was never again the same. We did not go hunting any more, nor were we able to take Papi on rides through the forest, as we so frequently did in the past."

The changes in Papi's life extended to Poytas, the dog, and Imp, the cat. While Papi had been fond of household pets all of his life, during the previous four years they had been his constant companions. Geza, however, was the first to remark on this change. "Papi had a saying that 'you can judge the character of a person by the way a dog reacts towards them'. It was strange to see the progression which transformed the life of Poytas from a house dog curled up near Papi's feet, to a porch dog, lying alone, waiting for his master. ... The same fate has occurred with Papi's cat, Impy, who used to curl up on his lap." It was difficult for me to picture Papi without Poytas, or one of the long line of his predecessors, laying next to his feet or Impy on his lap. While some readers may not understand, we understood the transition from this type of love for dogs, to having your loyal companion kicked out of the house.

Papi was especially fond of his own grandchildren. He loved to tell stories, which he so eloquently did, and we valued the exposure our children were getting to their heritage and Papi's wisdom. Mary soon let it be known that Papi never liked children, and large family gatherings were no longer welcomed at the old family homestead in Astor Park. On those rare occasions when the family gathered, whether in their home, at Tomahawk Landing, or in some restaurant, most of the time was spent listening to Mary's reiterations of stories from her previous marriage.

Mary proclaimed early in their relationship that Papi did not care for the presence of certain family members. For instance, when brother Joe, who was in a wheel chair, or Bela Atzel, Papi's cousin, came to visit, she would not allow them in the house and Papi had to entertain them on the porch. She also began to play off one family member against another. She let it be known that she favored Vid and Ruby's visits over those from Anne or Geza.

In July of 1991, I returned to the USA with my family. My next assignment was in Kansas, to be the deputy commander of a large and busy Army post, Ft. Riley. Before going to Kansas, I visited Papi and Mary in Astor with my family.

It was a strange and unsatisfying visit. Mary was always at center stage, telling stories about her life with her former husband. At these times Papi sat still and smiled.

We missed the free and easy exchanges at the dining table and Papi's stories, these the children particularly missed. The only opportunity I had to speak with him about his writings, politics, and the work Endre was doing in Transylvania was during our walks in the evenings with Poytas, who now had to stay outside on the porch.

Neither of them raised any issues of financial needs with me during this visit. But money and finances were an important focus for Mary from the beginning, and a constant cause for friction. Mary believed, based on the publicity Papi had received, that she was marrying a man soon to be wealthy. And when our mother passed away a few months prior to this time, Papi told her we would inherit some Siemers wealth. She had once remarked to Anne that Vid had promised to share his inheritance with them. This was, of course untrue, and probably a ploy to stir up jealousy, and it was also an unrealistic expectation at the time because our mother had lived a simple, lower middle class life style in Hamburg, receiving a small monthly stipend from a tightly controlled family trust. But it revealed a preoccupation that would lead to tragedy.

But during this time they were in contact with Papi's publishing "agent" who was reassuring them, therefore hope was still justified in the summer of 1991. At this point it had not occurred to us to inquire into the nature of the arrangements. It would have been an invasion of Papi's independence. And our communications with Papi were being cut off in the ways I have indicated. Later we learned that Papi's letters to this agent painted a grim financial picture, complained about a lack of support from his family. I believe this was more to urge the man, who sounded like a friend, to find a way to pay at least some of the royalties due.

What we learned much later should have sounded alarms. During their long marriage, Bebe, practical and intelligent, had seen to all business affairs so that the Papi could be creative. A simple typewritten „contract" had been drawn up, without legal advice, without particular attention to legal terms, in Hungarian, in an English speaking legal jurisdiction, about publishing books in a country with yet no modern copyright laws, with a man he didn't really know, who resided somewhere in a state three time zones away. Bebe would not have approved!

This person arranged the publication of two books in 1990, probably the ones I saw when I visited Budapest that year. But Papi received no royalties from these. He was simply told that the publisher in Budapest went bankrupt. Papi and this "agent" exchanged correspondence in 1990 and 1991 in which Papi urged him to contact this or that publisher to get more books published. Papi believed the excuses about the royalties and their original agent agreement was notarized for a second time in September 1991, with new hopes of further publishing. But no further books were published and no royalties were ever paid to Papi.

We attended a large family Christmas that winter, in North Florida with Anne's family. Papi was there also and seemed to enjoy the festivities. In January 1992 there was the usual gathering of Anne's and Geza's family with Vid and Ruby to celebrate Papi's 84th birthday in one of the local restaurants. But the old lines of communications with Papi had become strained and it was difficult to have a private conversation with him, and to know what was really happening in his private world.

Family Frictions, Upsets, Disappointments, and Low Points (92-95)

This three-year period from the Spring of 1992 until early 1995 was an unhappy time for the family for several reasons. First, the relationship within the family deteriorated even further. Papi and Mary pulled away from the family, even though telephonic contact and visits, though less frequent, continued.

Each time Anne or Geza visited them, there was always some issue that caused friction. For instance, in the spring of 1992, Mary wanted to start modernizing and redecorating the old house. She and Geza quarreled over both the cost, which we were to assume, and the style. Mary wanted big and dramatic changes in style, Geza thought Papi would like conservative changes. Mary wanted to mortgage the house to pay for changes, and to repay it when Papi's royalties started coming from his publications. Geza did not agree.

This precipitated the first of two moves away from Papi's home in Astor Park. Mary convinced Papi that she had no position in the Astor Park house, and that they needed to find their own nest, away from family interference. Thus they moved closer to the more populated area to the west of the Ocala National Forest, and closer to Papi's and Mary's Church in Eustis. They became friends with an elderly Hungarian, Gabor Kis, and his American wife. Through this relationship they began to meet other Hungarians in Florida who supported Papi's work.

Eventually, word came back to us from various sources of her complaints. Papi's sons and daughter did not love him, forced him to sign the house over, robbed him of his home, and left him destitute. Mary bombarded Papi and their various new friends with this chorus. A theme repeated often enough becomes believable. Papi eventually was also making these claims in his correspondence and discussions with outsiders.

This first move from Astor Park developed into two additional moves, because of landlord problems. The Astor house remained empty during this entire time. They moved back to the house only three years later, in 1995, and stayed there until August of 1997 when Mary wanted to move again.

This low point in relations with Papi also came about for another, indirect, reason. My attention, and those of my brothers and sisters also, was shifted to another problem within the family.

In May of 1992 I was in Washington performing a temporary assignment when Sharon informed me that she had been diagnosed with breast cancer. The next year was a whirlwind of activity divided between my jobs and fighting Sharon's cancer. This was a period of time during which my telephone calls to Papi, and visits were less frequent than usual. By January 1993 the cancer was "in remission," but because there was a high probability of its return, I declined opportunity for promotion, and decided to retire nearby, where I could have access to Army medical care, and an opportunity for a follow-on career teaching at the Command and Staff College, and providing advice to the Army in my areas of expertise.

I did think of retiring near Papi, in fact, I talked to Papi about a place near Astor Park that I like during a brief visit with him in Eustis, where he and Mary were then living. But three things held me back. I still had to pay for the college education of my

children, and Army retired pay would not be sufficient. They were both enrolled in Kansas State University, and doing well there. And, there was an offer of a good position teaching Strategy at the Command and Staff College in Kansas.

One week before my retirement date, in June 1993, Sharon developed Leukemia. Fighting this disease, moving the family, and establishing a new career occupied me fully for the next year and one half. By July of 1994 the struggle was over and Sharon had passed away. The family, without Papi, who could not travel, gathered in Kansas for her funeral. All the brothers and sisters, including Joe, now in a wheel chair, and Endre from Germany, gathered in Kansas to console me. It was a touching show of support.

Vid, Miklos, Geza, Endre and I also met to discuss the way ahead for our projects in Transylvania, including the idea of asking Papi for permission to fund the publishing of his books in Transylvania to do two things. One was to have his books read again in Papi's homeland, the other was to use the income in Romanian money to fund our projects. We also discussed our progress toward establishing a "not for profit" foundation for these enterprises. We learned from Geza and Anne that after the first disappointing attempts to publish in Hungary, Papi began making his own arrangements to publish and by then, July 94, three more books appeared in Budapest, but Papi had not been successful in deriving any income from these. There was always an excuse why they could not send him any payments.

Meanwhile Papi, who was 86, was deciding what to do with his legacy of writings. I had stayed in Kansas that next Christmas with my son and daughter, who came home from the University, and then traveled to Colorado for a skiing holiday with them. Thus I didn't visit Papi and Mary until some time the next spring. They had returned to Astor Park by then. It was a pleasant visit. He and Mary seemed to joke and get along well, but, as before, Papi was overshadowed by Mary's chatter at the table. So, as before, the only quiet time with Papi was walking Pojtas as they played their game. Except this time they were both moving more slowly.

During this time Papi had decided, with some Florida Hungarian friends, to establish a Count Albert Wass de Czege Foundation. The idea was that Papi would entrust this foundation with the copyrights for his books. His hope was to get his work before the public, and to form a responsible caretakership for his legacy. He informed me of his plan when I visited. He didn't say why. (I remember feeling disappointed that Papi had gone outside the family with his legacy, but I thought this is his business, and it's not up to us to interfere. I told him what we were doing with Endre, and that we were looking for a publisher for his books, if he gave permission. He said that would not be a problem.) By the summer of 1995 he had signed over the copyrights to this Foundation. I met some of the members of the Foundation during the visit, and liked them.

The Turning Point (95-97)

I think after his return to Astor Park and the discussions we had during my visit, a turning point in family relations had been achieved. We would all learn to live with Mary, and Papi was beginning to hear about our work with Endre. The transmission of copyrights to the Count Albert Wass de Czege Foundation signaled his continued distrust

of us, but the people seemed honest and well meaning, and I knew that Papi just needed some time and more real evidence of our commitment. I prayed for time.

In August of 1995, there was another large family gathering in Kansas for my wedding. I had fallen in love again and married Elaine, a single schoolteacher and family friend of many years. Papi, being 87, could not attend. Endre came again from Germany, and we brothers again met to advance our plans in Transylvania. We planned a large family trip to Hungary and Transylvania for the next summer. We would become acquainted again with the place of our birth, establish our foundation, visit our projects and explore more possibilities, and arrange the publication of Kard es Kasza.

That trip in the summer of 1996 was a memorable event, and sharing the pictures of the trip with Papi was pure pleasure. The publication of Kard es Kasza had been a success and we wanted to publish more books. We were helping provide jobs to Hungarians in Transylvania by publishing with Mentor Kiado, the books were able to be sold at a low cost, affordable to Hungarians of low incomes, and the income the foundation received from their sale financed several business starts for jobless Hungarians, a boy scout troop, a dance competition, and part of a school dormitory in Regin for 60 Hungarian High School students, among other things.

By the next year we would complete, with the Catholic Church in Regin, our first orphanage project for ethnic Hungarian children, and begin planning for the second in Holtmaros, which now is in operation. The main idea was to bring children out of the large infamous Romanian orphanages into several small ones in Hungarian communities where they will receive more special care and cultural education.

As we brought back the evidence of the work our foundation was doing, slowly Papi began to believe we should have the responsibility for his legacy. The next year two more books appeared, and our projects increased in number. By the summer of 1997, the Dr. Count Albert Wass de Czege Foundation of Florida transferred its copyrights back to Papi, who then transferred them to our Czegei Wass Foundation. Papi, of course, was a charter member of our foundation also. This happened during a joint meeting of representatives of both foundations. Geza, and I represented the Czegei Wass Foundation, and Gabor Kiss, Bela Demeter, and Arpad Erdelyi represented the other foundation.

This event was captured on tape by one of the other foundation members, and is now in our archives. Anne vividly recalls how excited and happy Papi was when he was finally able to give the rights to publish exclusively to the Czegei Wass Foundation and his sons would oversee the publishing of his works! Anne wrote, "Outstanding in my memory was his happiness when he said, 'My five sons and I will return to Hungary together. They will see to my publishing and help the Hungarians.'"

To be sure, the arrangement we had with Papi for the publication of his works would not provide financial rewards to any of us. All of the earnings would belong to the foundation, and would be spent initially in Erdely on the kind of projects we had described to Papi. He understood this, but I'm not sure Mary ever did.

The Last Days

Wass Huba

Between August 1997, when Papi and we sons founded the Czegei Wass Foundation to publish his works and continue the work we had started in Transylvania, and his next birthday, his 90th on January 8th, 1998, we noticed a marked change in Papi.

The stress in the relationship between Papi and Mary had surfaced again. In August 97 Geza received a call from Mary saying that the house was too much for them to maintain, the drive to town was too long, and they were tired of driving back and forth. She asked if we could increase their monthly payment by \$100.00 so they could afford to move to Eustis and rent a small apartment. We agreed, after trying to talk Mary out of another stressful move for Papi. The move lasted two months and they returned home by November. Mary was arguing with Papi about money again. None of us detected any visible signs of mental deterioration or depression with Papi during the Christmas and Birthday visits, but Papi had aged visibly.

Geza and his family, Vid and his wife Ruby, and Elaine and I gathered with Papi and Mary at a nice restaurant overlooking the river, in Astor. We all celebrated the arrival of his 90th year and wished him many more. Papi made some brief, poetic and half-humorous remarks about the curse of aging and no glory in simply attaining such an advanced age. I remember thinking that his mind was still bright and clear, but that he was bitter that his body was failing him. I new the previous move to Eustis, and back again two months later, had been a strain. Papi was always a creature of habit. Nothing would upset Papi more than having his daily routine changed. And from my conversations with him the previous evening while walking Poytas, I knew that Papi was increasingly becoming frustrated with his failing body. He walked with more difficulty. Bladder control was becoming more difficult, and arthritis pain kept him from sleeping. And worst of all, he was having more and more difficulty seeing the keys on his beloved typewriter. Even so, we could not have imagined that in a little more than a month he would no longer be with us.

On January 24th, Agnes Maksay, of Duna TV, conducted a 1 hour 30 minute interview with Papi for a documentary about Erdély between the two World Wars, after which they all went to a Restaurant. This was Papi's last public "performance." When Papi was later questioned about how the interview went, Papi said, "Well, I never liked interviews, but it wasn't very tiring." In fact, he rather enjoyed talking to the "pretty girl" who knew so much about his Erdely homeland and all his past acquaintances. This indicates that he was still able to rise above his physical debilities for a considerable period of time when he was stimulated. But the effort must have been tremendous and the periods between stimulation must have been dark and lonely. In retrospect, he probably returned to the loneliness of his motherless youth in the periods between our visits because Mary had become more a source of friction to avoid than a source of comfort and stimulation.

Soon after this, during the first week of February, Mary called Geza to ask for additional money, because there was an unusually high fuel bill from the previous month, and they couldn't pay it. Geza included the extra sum with the monthly house check.

On February 14th, Valentines Day, Geza and Zsuzsa drove up to visit with Papi, and to take them out to dinner. The visit lasted about four hours and was pleasant. The discussion around the table was typical everyday small talk. After taking Papi and Mary home, Zsuzsa and Geza went to a motel, since it was no longer possible to stay in the big house. They planned to stay in the area to enjoy the St. Johns River and the adjacent forests.

During the next day, the 15th, as they enjoyed their walks and boat trip among the familiar surroundings of some of Papi's favorite places, like the old shell mound near Lake Dexter, they talked about how in the past, Papi would have been with them, enjoying the outing. They saw numerous wildlife, including deer, and turkey. It had been some years since Papi had accompanied them on these "expeditions" by boat into the wild places. They had not even asked Papi if he wanted to go with them because they knew he would have refused. Not because he wasn't up to going, but because Mary would not have approved.

In the morning of February 16th, 1998 Mary called our house. She informed me, without further explanation, that Papi was going to commit suicide because they could not pay their bills. Elaine and I both spoke to Papi. He simply told us he was calling to say goodbye, and what he was going to do, not how and why. He didn't mention finances. Over the years, he had often joked casually about never wanting to have to live in a "warehouse for helpless old people." He was always proud of his independence. He would say something like this, "When I can no longer manage my own affairs, I will simply walk out into the woods with my dog, find a suitable place, dispatch my dog, and then take care of myself." Therefore I knew he was serious. I knew this was not really about money. I believed then, and I still do, that Papi had come to a conclusion. Life was too difficult, too complicated, and too painful. I said to Papi I would contact Anne and Geza, and that I wanted him not to do anything until one of us arrived.

I spoke to Anne, but Mary had already called her and said Papi was threatening suicide. Anne told Papi she was not feeling well and she still needed him, so please not do anything like that. He laughed and made a humorous remark.

When I called Geza's home, he and Zsuzsa had not yet arrived back from their trip. It is a four-hour drive between Geza's and Papi's homes. Papi and Mary had also called Vid, and I knew Vid and his wife were packing to drive to Astor, 10 to 12 hours distant. I made preparations to travel as well.

When Geza called his children at home to inform them of their time of arrival, he received the message to call either Anne or me about an emergency at Astor. It was the middle of the afternoon. After we talked, Geza also called Mary and Papi to let them know he was returning to speak with them. With this he turned back toward Astor Park.

When they arrived, Papi greeted them at the door. He seemed calm, smiling as usual, and jokingly asked why it took them so long to arrive. Papi explained that he was tired, and frustrated. He said his mind wasn't allowing him to remember things. Also,

that his eyes were failing him, to the point that he could no longer see the typewriter keys. He also said that Mary thought they were in financial trouble and had accused him of being incapable of supporting his wife. He ended by saying that life would be much easier for all, if he were no longer a burden to anyone.

Geza then asked Mary to explain the financial problem so he could see how to help. They went over the accounts in detail. Geza could not see a deficit in their budget, only a surplus of several hundred dollars monthly. When Geza couldn't see the problem in the budget, Mary explained that the problem was with large unanticipated fluctuations of winter heating and summer air conditioning expenses. Geza suggested that we could take care of these when they came due, and would do so. Mary then became loud and abusive, saying our help was only "nickels and dimes." She claimed that Papi felt we didn't love him, and said that we were only basking in his glory. Mary asked Geza to leave and take Papi, as she tuned and left the room.

Alone now with Papi, Geza asked him how he truly felt. Papi said that he knew that Geza loved him, but because of Mary's stressed state, they should leave and call back in one or two days to patch things up, and try to resolve the financial problems at that time. Obviously, Papi didn't understand the "financial problem" either. After giving Papi a big hug, and reassuring him of their love, Geza and Zsuzsa left for home feeling confident that all would be well once Mary calmed down. They planned to return the next weekend.

Six or seven hours later, at about two or three o'clock in the morning on the 17th of February, Mary telephoned Anne at home to say that Papi had just shot himself. Anne asked Mary what had caused Papi to wake up in the middle of the night to do that. She replied that they had not gone to bed, but had been arguing. Mary was beside herself and didn't know what to do. Anne immediately called the local sheriff for Astor Park, the housekeeper, and the nearest neighbor. The neighbor, Sam, whom Mary had forbidden to see Papi, was the first there to comfort her. The sheriff's deputy and the housekeeper arrived soon afterward.

Mary gave the deputy sheriff a shocking account of that last night. She said that she was in the living room watching television and Papi had gone into the bedroom and returned to tell her he was going to shoot himself. Mary, not taking him seriously, had then laughed and responded with, "Shoot your dog before you shoot yourself." (This report of the deputy sheriff is on file in the Lake County Court House, in Tavares, Florida, and is available through the "Freedom of Information Act.")

The entire family arrived at Astor Park within the next twelve hours: Vid and his wife from Virginia; Anne and all of her sons and daughters and their children; Geza, Zsuzsa and their children; our brother Joe and his family; our sister Pat and her family; Bela Atzel and his daughter Beatrice. We all stayed at a nearby motel on the St. John's River. Mary's only daughter stayed with her at our home.

There was no financial crisis. We later learned that there were several thousand dollars in Papi's bank account on the day he died. After a couple of weeks Mary went to Arizona to be near her daughter and died a year or so later. It may be that Mary had a neurosis or "complex" about financial security.

I believe to this day that nothing any of us could have done that day, or the next day, or the day after that would have made any difference. Papi was mentally sharp and clear up to the end. His will was intact. He had reached the point beyond which a man of his proud, strong willed, and independent character could not endure life. The shame and indignity of losing control of his bodily functions, and the increasing difficulty of getting out of the house with his dog to walk in the woods played a significant role in Papi's decision. The prospect of what could possibly come next must have been overwhelming that dreary February day. And, having handed over his burden to his sons, he no longer had the motivation to continue the struggle against the indignities and suffering of old age. Who are we to judge?

The family in all of its branches and generations gathered for the memorial service in Astor. The small church was filled to overflowing. Most of the permanent residents of the community and the members of the Kiwanis club were there, as were some of the newspaper reporters who had covered him over the years. Members of the Miami Hungarian Reformed Church, and other Florida Hungarians groups honored him with their presence and representation. Also in attendance was Congressman Bill McCollum, who, as one of his students at the University Florida, had invited him to advise the Young Republicans Club many years before. And the event was reported far and wide wherever Hungarians lived.

I was asked to give the eulogy. I said the true story of Wass Albert is the story of a human being with the strengths and faults of any mortal who tried to make the world a better place. He doesn't leave lands and castles like his many ancestors did. Instead he leaves us with some very concrete ideas about how we humans ought to live among God's bounty on earth.

In Papi's will he requested that his ashes be spread over the forest that he loved so dearly, so that he could become part of the living world around us. This was done. At the gravesite at the Astor Park Memorial Cemetery, a gravestone marked with his name, and some of his ashes were spread under the large live oak tree near the monument, to honor him as a leader of the local community. And the remainder of his ashes were brought back to Transylvania, where he always yearned to be. They are at Marosvecs, near the site of the Helicon Society's meetings.

The Legacy Continues

Wass Huba

But this is not the end of the story. Papi's writings are for timeless generations, and it is no wonder why they have become so popular again. He connects emotionally and intellectually with the conditions of ordinary people, and the message of his writings is of as great relevance today, as it was when he first gained popularity, between the two World Wars.

Even though he was proud of his noble heritage, he valued every human being. This explains his great friendship with Tomasi Aaron, an author of humble origins, and my godfather. This explains why he was productive, well adjusted and comfortable in the period just after WWII when we lived in two upstairs rooms of a Bavarian farmer's house in exchange for daily help with the farm-work. This explains why he got along so well with the construction workers when he was a night watchman in Hamburg between 1948 and 1950. This explains why he threw himself into the farm work in Ohio, and quickly earned the trust of Bebe's father the self made Scotsman, William G. McClain. It also explains why, after I received my appointment to attend the famous US Military Academy at West Point to become an Army officer, he first insisted that I stop my formal schooling at the University of Florida to learn something of real value about social justice and leadership by being a common laborer for at least six months.

After 1989, we often spoke of the similarity, in certain important respects, between the conditions of life in post-Trianon Hungary and neighboring regions and those of post-communist Central Europe. During the confusion of the changeover after communism many of the same kinds of social injustices were caused by the same kind of smart but unscrupulous opportunistic scoundrels. Ordinary, principled human beings did not fare as well in the transition. Bureaucrats, often the same ones, make life difficult for ordinary citizens. Laws favor those in power. Local power remains in the hands of the same rascals in many places. The social discipline of communism is replaced with factions seeking specific advantages by any means available.

Papi's concrete ideas for living also extend to the political realm. His political solutions for earlier periods still make sense today. While in exile, he advocated a Central European or „Danubian” confederation as a buffer between Eastern and Western Europe. When he saw the break-up of the Soviet bloc approaching, he feared the return of national chauvinism, and advocated the absorption of Central Europe into a greater European Union. He clearly saw the advantages for economic development, but he also saw the political benefits deriving from the changes in laws and institutions that candidates for entry must make to join. This would lead to the flowering of true democracy in Central Europe. He often pointed out that in a true democracy the power of the majority to do as it wishes is curbed by laws that protect the basic human rights of the minority. To achieve this aim a society must elect officials who can put aside thoughts of revenge to pass just laws, and the officials of the system of courts must recognize all citizens equally and must be independent of the power of the ruling majority.

Papi's view was that the problem of his rehabilitation would surely be overcome in due time, but that it was a political problem, not a legal one. Those who presided over the 1946 "People's Court" that convicted him of war crimes in-absentia were not particularly interested in justice. In his view, it is not Wass Albert who should be re-judged, *but the politics, processes, procedures, and evidence that were instrumental in convicting him in 1945*. Papi would say it would be wrong to achieve his rehabilitation on some technicality, and not restore the good name of the many others also wrongly accused in the name of chauvinism.

Ordinary Romanians must be informed that Wass Albert was never an enemy of the Romanian people, only to those who refuse the rights of other nationalities to the same piece of this earth under God's long governance. He has often said that the love of its towns, villages, mountains, fields and meadows is not the exclusive right of any one nationality – whether Romanian, Hungarian, German, Armenian, Gypsy or any other.

European integration is compatible with his long held inclusive, rather than exclusive, vision for his homeland. To attain the attractive economic benefits, the requirements of entry will force improvements in Romanian laws and institutions. These will bring with them better guarantees of minority rights, legal safeguards against discrimination, and social justice.

Correcting the myth that Wass Albert was an anti-Semite will take a different approach. Our research has begun to lay this ghost to rest. It reveals that there is no truth to claims that his writings are anti-Semitic. It also reveals what we in the family have known all along, that his actions in life contradict this assertion. But an open debate must be encouraged with those who claim otherwise, and maybe more unbiased research must be encouraged and funded to fully unravel how this stigma came to be believed by so many.

The publication of A Gróf Emigrált, az Író Otthon Marad: Wass Albert Igazsága through Szabad Ter Kiado in Budapest has been the first major step in the direction toward this goal. More research is in progress about the trial, and other injustices of that process. We are exploring every opportunity the Romanian government provides toward our end. As long as the official stigma remains attached to his name, it should be a reminder to those who think, as he does, that there is work left to be done!

The reason Papi transferred the copyrights to the Czegei Wass Foundation was not to provide his heirs with an easy life, but to improve the lives of the Hungarians he left behind when he emigrated. While the foundation has a fairly broad charter, it is not a profit making enterprise. It was organized so that neither Papi nor his descendants would profit financially, only spiritually, from its work. All the income from foundation publications funds the work of the foundation such as the orphanage in Holtmaros in the Maros valley, and in the shadow of the Isten Szek and in other places, like Szasz Regin, and Papi's beloved Mezoseg, where the few remaining Hungarian villages were left behind in development, even in communist times.

What should and could be done is limited because a few months after Papi's death, some one claimed to have the exclusive rights to publish all his works, and the foundation and its work were put in jeopardy. Papi would see in the controversy that evolved over the publication rights an old pattern repeated many times in history. Smart

but unscrupulous opportunistic scoundrels manipulate imperfect laws and bureaucracies to contend for advantage while they line their pockets.

The story of how Papi's intentions could go so far amiss begins in the summer of 1989, two years after Bebe dies, when Papi is 81 years old and living by himself when he signs a simple contract with a person he views as an honest man and simply as his publishing agent. The early part of the story has been told. Papi received an initial payment and no royalties, even though books had been published. Nothing was heard again from this person until after Papi's death in 1998, a period of nearly seven years. The agent simply, and curiously, faded from sight. (California court records indicate that he spent some time in jail during this period for other business dealings.) Now after Papi can no longer contest false claims, and the public has been reintroduced to Papi's work, he claimed exclusive publishing rights, for all of the works of Wass Albert! We are accused of illegal publishing and our good name is attacked in the press.

After Papi's death, the partnership of this agent with a prominent Budapest publisher have attempted to monopolize the publication of Papi's works. (When, of course, he can no longer defend his rights.) They take on the cloak of passionate champions of the author, publicize and commemorate him in public, and contend that the popularity of Wass Albert is due to their making. And at the same time they launch a campaign of rumor and innuendo to blaken the reputation of the author's family. But in reality, the driving force is greed.

At this writing we are still in legal processes in Hungary, Florida and in California to reclaim the rights Papi placed with the foundation. And we are hopeful of good results. The agent has since sold his "rights" to the publisher, who has approached us on more than one occasion to combine forces, and establish a monopoly. He argued that the Hungarian market was small and too many publishers would diminish profits. If we agreed, the Czegei Wass Foundation would be assured of the back royalties due. This, of course, we could not accept. Instead the foundation is reaching into its strained treasury, at the expense of projects left unfunded, to pay capable lawyers on two continents to continue the struggle. Meanwhile the agent and his accomplices have recouped the \$5,000 investment in 1989 one hundred times or more!

If the royalties justly due the author, and now the foundation, had been provided, more Hungarian Children from the large and impersonal Romanian orphanages could have been placed in the small village orphanages such as the one in Holt Maros.

However, Papi would reassure us in this adversity. He would remind us that ordinary people are not stupid, and that you can fool *some* of the people *some* of the time, but you cannot fool *all* of the people *all* of the time. Unscrupulous opportunist don't realize they are riding a tiger, at some point they will fall off, and the tiger will eat them. And you, dear reader, are the tiger!

Finally, not even this dispute matters, really. Papi often spoke to us of the importance of leaving "foot prints" as proof of our passing through life. And that these "foot prints" should be evidence of the things we did that some how, in some way, benefited humanity rather than being mere public memorials to our popularity. We think that Papi's "foot prints" are still being made, and will continue to be made, as long as people read his books, and live life according to his example and wisdom. His books

have been published, read and appreciated and the legacy of his writings will outlive us all.

Biographical Sketch: BG(R) Huba WASS de CZEGE

Brigadier General Huba Wass de Czege, USA Ret., author and since 1994 a frequent consultant to the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command for advanced warfighting experiments, wargames and other studies, was one of the principal developers of the Army's AirLand Battle concept and the founder and first director of the School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He has also served as an advisor on future joint operating concepts for the Joint Staff, Joint Forces Command, and several agencies of the Department of Defense. Between fall 2002 and summer 2004 he served as advisor to the Army Chief of Staff's Task Force Modularity, participating in the most extensive reorganization of the US Army since World War II. More recently, he has participated in the Army's continuing exploration of the nature of military operations in the 21st Century, and the doctrinal and organizational adjustments that will be required. Since the Fall of 2006 he has served as Senior Mentor to the US Army's Information Operations and Electronic Warfare proponents at the Combined Arms Center, Ft Leavenworth Kansas.

Born in Hungary in 1941, his family escaped communism in 1945, and became US citizens in 1957. He graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1964, earned a masters degree in Public Affairs from Harvard University, attended the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, the Army War College, and the Capstone Course at the National Defense University.

His career included service with troops at every echelon from platoon to division in mechanized, airborne, and light infantry units, and teaching international relations at West Point and tactics, operations and strategy at the Command and General Staff College. During the Vietnam War he commanded an Airborne Infantry Company and a Vietnamese Ranger Battalion advisory team. A variety of staff assignments included serving as a special assistant to the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, and later to the Secretary General of NATO. He participated in two influential studies of officer mid-career education. While on active duty he published articles and papers on tactics, operational art, doctrine, leadership, military education, and training.

His most recent publications, on subjects from tactics to strategy and military "transformation," have appeared in Armed Forces Journal, Army Magazine, Military Review, Artillery Journal, Strategic Studies Institute Papers, and in AUSA Land Power Papers.

He retired from active duty in December 1993 as the Assistant Division Commander (Maneuver) of the 1st Infantry Division and lives near Leavenworth, Kansas. His decorations include the Distinguished Service Medal, the Silver Star for gallantry in action, the Defense Superior Service Award, two awards of the Legion of Merit, and five awards of the Bronze Star medal, two for valor in action, and three for meritorious service in ground combat.

Home address: 22247 Turner Road, Easton, Kansas 66020