

# PARALLEL STORIES

## Hungarian and American family narratives

Selected and compiled by Ágnes Boreczky  
Introduction by Ágnes Boreczky



Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ 2001  
ELTE University, Budapest, 2002

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## INTRODUCTION

The family narratives presented here have been selected from the material of a Hungarian pilot research carried out in 1997-98 and from what my American students collected about their own families for the *Social change and families in Hungary* course I taught at Rutgers University in the spring semester of 2001.<sup>1</sup>

I expected to find some similarities<sup>2</sup> between lives organized, experienced and narrated along reasonably parallel lines in *different historical and social realities*; nevertheless the similarities were sometimes striking. This led me to the idea of presenting Hungarian and American family stories<sup>3</sup> parallelly.

The similarities shown by the stories cover a variety of fields, e.g.

1. family structure (complex households, extended families and conjugal families alternate);
2. family functions (old, middle aged and young generations support one another, the range of different 'services' is wide, roles are flexible and they change by the time, family and life cycles, needs and conditions etc.);
3. what family means (attitudes and relationships show that family ties and belongings are very strong, both close and broad families are important);
4. social origin and social mobility (careers follow but a few pathways);
5. narratives (main and hidden themes, central stories, nuclear episodes, turning points, main characters/significant others etc.).

It would be easy to claim that the stories have much in common simply because they are based on the same interview guidelines. While the guideline, which is a part of the script, of course, served the purpose of apparent comparability, it could not twist certain data such as family size or migration. Therefore similarities of family life do not result from flaws of methodology: the story has not changed the data, it has only revealed them.

It is neither the image of the so called modern nuclear family, nor the lack of its ideal reflected in the increase of unmarried cohabitation or in the spread of single parent families that make American and Hungarian narratives alike. Contrary to the fading but still existing sociological myth of the modern nuclear family<sup>4</sup>, it seems that on the one hand it is the more

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<sup>1</sup> I was a visiting professor as a Fulbright grantee at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey. I am very grateful to the Fulbright Commission for the chance to teach in the US and I am also obliged to my students who did a great job.

<sup>2</sup> Some elements, such as correspondences in family structure, were parts of the hypotheses formulated in the project statement, some were newly found.

<sup>3</sup> Family stories were based on the summaries of interviews that were taken with three generations; the students' grandparents, parents and their siblings.

<sup>4</sup> Literature on family structure is abundant and often controversial. For a sum up see for instance the updated version of Anderson's work. Anderson, Michael: *Approaches to the history of the western family, 1500-1914*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995 or Mitterauer, Michael - Sieder, Reinhard: *The European family: patriarchy to partnership from the Middle Ages to the present*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

complex system of the broader family with its kinship<sup>4</sup>, and on the other hand it is the modified extended family model that lie behind, and serve as a ground for, interpretation.

Narrative theories, general concepts of memories (both social and individual) may also help to explain coincidences, nevertheless they do not provide a full interpretative framework, either.

Stories may resemble one another because all but one students involved have a Central/Eastern European background and most of them come from a farmer's or a craftsman's family. It means that they carry the memories of similar historical events, social positions, traditions, and cultural patterns. Occasionally, they still preserve some of these traits as a residual (or non-residual) part of their lifestyle. Perhaps, it can be said, that in spite of various political, social and economic situations, analogous *historical* family backgrounds may result in similar future careers and narratives. Thus, I propose that similarities found are due to the specific role *symbolic families*<sup>5</sup> and *social groups* play in the construction and transmission of narratives, and to the composition and social reproduction of horizontal societies that go far beyond political and geographical borders.

I think that broader family and kinship define local and social spaces and identities through family histories. By myths and by the changing stories that represent a great many careers, positions, statuses and lifestyles<sup>6</sup> etc. families create a delicate *symbolic system*, which both reflects and responds to a social situation, to family and individual features. This system is very efficient; its efficiency is maintained by a controversial cohesiveness: compared to any other social institution the family is far more stable and far more changeable or flexible at the same time.

Since the studies of Herbert Mead or Berger and Luckmann, it is well-known that in the course of socialization a family does not only inherits values, attitudes and behavioral patterns, it also transmits a genuine, emotionally colored interpretation of the social world and history. Moreover, it seems<sup>7</sup> that times and distances we can cover and social spaces we can occupy are shaped by the family unconscious<sup>8</sup>, by the past constructed from personal histories of our ancestors, and by the stories narrated. As families hand down their past story or stories

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<sup>4</sup> Extended families and kinship are somewhat neglected by mainstream family surveys, or they are treated as multicultural phenomena.

<sup>5</sup> I borrowed the term from the works of John Gillis. See e.g. Gillis, John: *A World of Their Own Making: Myth, Ritual, and the Quest for Family Values*. New York: Basic Books, 1996

<sup>6</sup> As Thompson says "Telling one's own life story requires not only recounting directly remembered experience, but also drawing on information and stories transmitted across the generations, both about the years too early in childhood to remember, and also further back in time beyond one's own birth." Bertaux, D. and Thompson, P.: *Pathways to Social Class*, Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1997, 33.p.

This is particularly true for family stories, which are a special set of individual stories put together and reinterpreted from time to time.

<sup>7</sup> Bertaux and Thompson have, similarly formulated the function of the family as a system like this. "... individuals are embedded within family, occupational and local context, and mobility is as much a matter of family praxis as individual agency, for it is families which produce and rear individuals with specific characteristics and social skills, endowing them with their original moral and psychic energy and with economic, cultural and relational resources. Equally, as Schumpeter once remarked, social- as opposed to occupational- status is primarily carried by families rather than individuals." Bertaux, D. and Thompson, P.: *Pathways to Social Class*, Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1997. 7.p.

<sup>8</sup> See the psychoanalytic works of Leopold Szondi.

to the next generations, individuals can define and place themselves in the context of a symbolic system that also provides them with a special set of generalizations on the history of the group and the region, constructed and told from the aspect of the family's perception of its own prospects.

From time to time stories sink into oblivion. Then for some reason they are evoked, rearranged and retold. Different versions help individuals to adjust themselves to current circumstances and to readjust themselves to social changes. These versions can modify or rationalize decisions on career pathways otherwise marked by major social trends; they often have an effect through family patterns. In this way, narratives provide models within symbolic *family times* and *symbolic family spaces*. They may even increase mobility chances by means of this symbolic system.

Family history also represents a collection of compulsions and opportunities to choose from. It does so not just in the simple sense of duties, or by the particular roles in the narratives members can identify with, but by the selected elements of the story that comprise an own version of an individual family member. I suggest that in the construction of such a version<sup>9</sup> one of the constructed families joined by marriage becomes *dominant*, while the other one stays *latent* until there is a strong need for reinterpretation and certain parts of the latent story seem to be more adequate for the new situation.

I hope that the *eight stories* presented in the book support the above argument. Family stories have been grouped on the basis of their main themes, but they evidently overlap one another. The family history of Mark James Lolacano for instance has some elements (e.g. status loss, impoverishment, struggling with harsh conditions, like unemployment) that remind the reader of the story of Mariann Szekeres. On the other hand, Mariann Szekeres's story refers to the presence of picturesque "invented traditions" in the family - just like Pat Kosek's text. Mariann's story is focused on a strong and ambitious grandfather, and the painful loss of a world that produced characters like him. In a way the text written by Kabuo Watabe's has a similar hidden agenda, although attitudes to the fall of a strictly traditional world seem to be different. The typical career paths shown in Pat's and Szilvia's story are related to an almost identical occupational structure in both families, and the same is true in the case of Mark James or Andrea. The list of similarities is far from being complete. A lot more comparative studies of family narratives would be needed to complete it. This collection of stories is intended to give readers the opportunity to look into worlds that seem to be so entirely different and ask the question "are they really so much different?"

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<sup>9</sup> See "conversation" by Berger - Kellner. Berger, P.L. – Kellner, H.: Marriage and the Construction of Reality in Recent Sociology. No.2 Patterns of Communicative Behavior. (ed. Dreitzel, H-P.) Macmillan: London, 1970, 50-72.p.

## **PART I.**

### **A LONG WAY to COLLEGE and to the PROFESSIONAL CLASS**

#### *My Family History - narrated by Mark James Lolacano*

My name is Mark James Lolacano and I was born in Iselin, NJ. MY family has been a middle class family throughout the history that I was able to go as far back to. Nobody I researched and asked questions about was never higher or lower.

My father's side is a little more diverse than my moms' are. My grandmother's parents on my father's side were both from Sicily, Italy. Grandmother's mother was a housewife, who only had elementary school education; her father was a cabinetmaker, who finished high school. They came to the United States in 1898. My ancestors on my father's side came from the Ukraine; grandfather's mother was a housewife while his father made pickles. That is all I know about them.

My father's mother was born in New York and moved to Kearney, NJ at the age of four. My father's dad was born in Elizabeth, NJ. When they got married, grandmother moved to Elizabeth, where they lived with the family until they bought their house in Iselin, NJ. My father was still born in Elizabeth, NJ on December 27, 1948, he moved to Iselin, NJ in 1955, when he was already 7 years old.

Great grandfather, my grandmother's father on my mother's side, who came from a Scotch family and lived in Pennsylvania, was a graduate from Stroudsburg College and became a teacher. Grandfather's father, who was brought up in Pennsylvania also, graduated from Saint Bonaventures in New York. They both owned a restaurant and they both lost it in the depression. Another side of my mother's family is from Pennsylvania as well, they were farmers till they died and also had apple orchids.

Mother's mother was born in Archbald, Pennsylvania; her father was born in Lake Ariel, Pennsylvania. After marriage they moved to Linden, NJ, then in 1966 to Iselin, NJ. My grandmother was a homemaker and a secretary later on; she had a high school degree. My grandfather was a coal miner and had only an eighth grade education. He died in August of 1981 from lung cancer.

My mother was born on November 25, 1949 in Linden, NJ in 1953. Later she moved to Iselin, NJ. This was her final residence until she got married. Actually my mother and father went to the same high school together. Though, they met in a bar at Staten Island, N.Y. in October of 1968, which was their high schools hangout on the weekends. My mother's name at this time was Anne Jean Thomas and my Father's was John Matthew Lolacano. Obviously they hit it off very well because they were shortly engaged on Valentines Day (February 14) in 1969 and got married on September 27, 1969 at Saint Cecilia's church in Iselin, NJ. Two weeks after they were married my father had to go to the National Guard to serve for active duty. At this time my mother stayed with her parents, sister, and brother. She was also pregnant with their first sibling when my dad left. My father came back from active duty in the end of March 1970. He got back just in time to see their first child born on April 22, 1970 (my oldest sister). They named her Catherine Lolacano. She was baptized as soon as possible. But even before my father could get to enjoy her he was sent back for his last two weeks of active duty in May.

Once he got back they moved into their first apartment on Amboy Ave in Metuchen, NJ that consisted of the second floor of a semidetached family house. The apartment was only a one-bedroom apartment with one bathroom (that had only a cast iron tub) and a living room and kitchen. My father started his first job in a reproduction department of an Italian company for a couple months in 1970. Then he got a job at Xerox as an offset printer. The three of them lived here for almost six years and during it Catherine started to attend Catholic school at Saint Francis Cabrini School in Piscataway.

Then on February 3, 1976 my parents had their second child, Marie Gabriella Lolacano. And just like Catherine, Marie was baptized as soon as possible. The following May after Marie was born, my parents bought a house in Iselin, NJ. They could not move into it until August and they had to be out of their apartment on May 31, 1976. Once their lease ran out on their apartment they moved into my father's parent's house (my Nan & Pop) on Sherwood Road in Iselin, NJ. When August came they moved into their house, which consisted of two bedrooms, one bath, full attic room, kitchen, dining room, a living room with a fireplace, full basement, and a yard with a vegetable garden. At this point my father really wanted a son now that he had two girls so that the boy could live the name on as well.

Only three and a half years after Marie was born my father finally got his wish and I was born on November 14, 1979. Just like my two sisters, I was baptized. I was the only child born into the house on Middlesex Ave. Marie was four and just started going to school and Catherine was ten. My family always talks about how excited my father was when he found out he had a boy. I don't remember too much but my parents always say that I was a great baby. They said it was funny to watch me because I would always amuse myself by playing with legos (my all time favorite toy to play with) or other toys and the next time they would turn around I would be asleep in whatever I was building or playing with. My two sisters and I definitely never had a shortage of toys. We were and still are extremely spoiled.

One thing that I do remember from my early age on Middlesex Ave was how I always fell asleep wherever my father did. It did not matter where; as long he was next to me I was comfortable. My father and family told me not too long ago that my mom use to get mad because she would take care of me all day until he came home and I wanted nothing to do with her until he was gone. Another family moment always talked about that happened in this house was my sisters were spraying Windex out the open windows while my father was siding the outside of the house and the sprayed him by accident and he lost his footing on the ladder and fell. My father laughs about it now but not at the time. One time when my sister Marie was little she went outside and sat on the curb naked and my parents never knew until they got a call from one of our neighbors. Everyone always gets a laugh off with this story. My all time favorite story is about my sister Catherine when she stuck a Barbie shoe up her nose. This is the extent of my memories and stories of this house.

In June of 1984 we moved into our brand new house in Island Heights, NJ on the water. When my parents bought the house it was still being built. It is a ranch that has four bedrooms, one and a half baths, living room, dining room, kitchen, a two-car garage, and a large back yard with a lagoon. My parents sold our house in the beginning of January so we stayed with my mother's parents from January to June because my parents wanted Catherine to finish eighth grade while Marie finished second grade. When we moved into our house in Island Heights I was four years old and it was like a dream come true for my parents because they always wanted to live on the water. My mother had to go to work at this point so she got a job as a supervisor at a company in 1985.

When our first summer ended it was time for my sisters to start a new school and for me to start school. Catherine attended a public school called Central Regional High School and

Marie started second grade at Island Heights Elementary Grade School. I attended preschool, kindergarten, and summer camps there. I have many memories of kindergarten because one time during nap time a kid there dared me to swallow a quarter, so I tried it and started choking until a teacher heard me and helped me get it out. Another time was during recess when we were playing tag where the playground was and I was running around a shed and a girl also ran around the opposite side and we collided. Her head hit me in the eye so bad that I swelled up like a softball immediately, so they called the ambulance and after many x-rays found out that I fractured my orbit in my right eye.

In the summer of 1992 we had to put an addition on our house because the man my grandmother was staying with had just passed away. This was my mother's mother and our house in Island Heights now consisted of my parents, Catherine, Marie, my grandmother, my brother-in-law, and myself. At first it was easy to deal with but the last couple years have been very difficult because she is extremely sick with many ailments. It is extremely hard on my mom because it's her mother and also because my mom is the primary care giver.

After kindergarten I attended the same school as my sister from first through sixth grade. I also started playing soccer on a recreational league in town. In 1987 my father started a part time mechanics job. My mother also had to get a new job because her previous work closed down so she started working at Duferco as a distribution manager. By the time I finished second grade Catherine had graduated high school in 1988 and moved on to Cittance Institute for Court Reporting School. She was very successful in it and passed the test to get certified at the end of schooling with flying colors and made my whole family proud. My father was laid-off by Xerox in 1994 and started full-time at Kinko's Marie graduated high school in 1995 and tried the college thing, but it wasn't meant to be. She found her knack in the dental industry as a secretary and is currently going to school to be an assistant. I was just entering high school as Marie graduated. Catherine got married to Christopher Carleoni on May 12, 1995 and they moved to an apartment in Matawan. I was an usher in the wedding. Catherine was like my best friend as I was growing up so it was a very special time for me. As for my brother-in-law, in most cases I don't even refer to him as that, I usually just call him my brother. He has been around ever since we moved to Island Heights and I ended up getting very close to him as well, obviously. I seriously don't think there is a better man out there. The wedding was the most beautiful wedding anyone could dream of. Catherine looked more beautiful than ever and Chris looked extremely handsome. I love them both dearly. During this time my mom was out of a job because she got laid-off so she went to Ocean County College for a year. After the year she found a job as an office manager and assistant customer service manager in 1996.

I was really excited to enter high school because of the higher level of soccer that is played. I could care less about learning because soccer was my life. My mother and father always told me that it was the worst attitude I could have and that they prayed everyday that I would straighten myself out. I ended up playing some Varsity as a freshman and started as a sophomore at sweeper. My junior year I was Captain and made all state, all county, all conference, and coaches choice team. My junior year we also won South Jersey Group Three Regions.

After this season I had a club team that I played for that traveled around to the bordering states for tournaments and in one of the tournaments the most dramatic event in my life occurred. I was dribbling down the field and I had just shot the ball and was taken out from behind by a kid on the other team. My whole team came running over to celebrate the go-ahead-goal that I had scored but all I knew was that I was experiencing the worst pain I have ever felt in my life before. I thought that this was the end of my career forever. I was devastated. I went to the doctors and he told me that I had torn my ACL, LCL, MCL, (all

extremely important ligaments) and my Meniscus Cartilage. The doctor said that I could play soccer my senior year if I get the cartilage fixed and wear a special brace to keep my leg straight at all times. So I said anything to give me the chance to finish my high school career. So I went through with the first surgery which was just to fix the cartilage and drain the knee of any fluids and torn cartilage.

As summer practice rolled up for my senior year I did what I could but usually took it very easy. By the time season came I was about 85% because my knee was always sore and I lost speed since the brace was so big. I managed to pull through and was returning captain and got pretty much the same honors as my junior year. Once the season was over I had gone into surgery on November 17, 1997. I was terrified because this was my first major surgery that I was about to experience. I was under the knife for four hours and when I finally came to they rolled me into my room where all my family and friends were (mostly family). It was so nice to see everyone. I had four days of rest and then went in to a painful three-month rehab process and was out and playing in three months. The physical therapist told me I was his fastest healing knee injury yet. I was playing with full strength by four months and could have never done it without my family's support.

My mom always told me that if I kept my faith with God and never gave up on him he would eventually help me out. My mom for as long as I can remember was always and still is pretty religious. She had all three of us go to CCD so we could receive our first Communion and Confirmation. We have always regularly attended church on Sundays as well. I can't remember the last time we missed it as a family, even up to now. My father never showed his religious ways in the open like my mother but we could always tell it was very important to him.

At this point I finished high school in 1998 and gave up a few scholarships to four-year colleges and went to Ocean County College. I felt this was a safer way to ease into college and make sure it was for me. Then I entered Rutgers for my first semester in the fall of 2000. I like it a lot; and it is definitely an experience I will never forget. Classes were very hard but I managed.

Before I went to Ocean County College, the whole summer my grandfather (my father's father who is also known as my Pop) was sick off and on and sometimes in and out of the hospital. So my grandparents on my father's side came down a lot to my sister and brother-in-law's new house just a block away from both their parents. We also went up to my grandparent's house a lot too. We always tried to see them more than just birthdays and holidays. As the summer comes to an end and school starts up my Pop was in the hospital for a long time. The day my mom called from the hospital my Pop was at and told me to pick up my father and take him up there. At this point we both knew something was wrong. My father literally kicked me out of the driver seat so he could drive; I was not about to argue with him. When we had arrived to the hospital he had just died of chronic lung disease. It was December of 1998 and this has stayed with me ever since because I could not believe he was gone and for a while, I was in denial. He was the most loving and compassionate man who had the sense of humor to knock you off your seat. Since he was my only living grandfather I was pretty close with him. After the viewing we went to the mass for him. I still was not showing any emotion except for when we said Our Father and I literally just broke down in the middle of mass. Ever since that day whenever I say Our Father I feel like I am speaking directly to my Pop. In a way that is my prayer to him.

The other thing that made this time period rough for my family was that my Uncle George (my father's brother) was also extremely sick while my Pop was. At first the doctors said that he was going to be all right and then they said he wasn't and it really just seemed like

whenever we got our hopes up we were being shot down. We didn't get to see my uncle much but when we did he was a blast to be with. He definitely inherited my pop's humor. In January of 1999 my uncle had died of leukemia. So at this point my Nan and my father especially are hurting inside deeply. It was tough but with the extremely loving supportive family we have all of us can get through anything.

With all this pain and suffering my family had experienced within a one-month span it was almost numbed in a way because Catherine had just given birth to George Carleoni on January 25, 1999. He was the most beautiful baby I have ever seen. At the hospital Catherine and Chris named Marie and I George's Godparents. We were both so excited. Watching him grow up is one of the most beautiful experiences to watch. He is two years old as of right now and he has changed dramatically from when he was brought home from the hospital. Every time I see him he looks more and more like a little man. He talks a tiny bit but he is just a bundle of joy to be around. It feels like almost yesterday that Marie and I were holding him in church when he was baptized. Catherine and Chris are very good to him and are taking the role of parenting up very well. I always told those two that they were going to be good parents one day because it sometimes felt like I was their child. Catherine and Chris have always been extremely close with my parents but especially since the baby came. You cannot be unhappy if you are in the same room as George because he is such a happy baby. He has so many toys I don't know how he couldn't be. He has anything a kid could possibly want and more.

I know I talked a little about how close my family is but I am going to go into it a little more. With my family everyone was always working very hard constantly so we didn't see as much as we would have liked. Thus Sundays is almost like our family day. We all go to church together in the morning and have an extremely large dinner around six o'clock. This is like a tradition for us. After everyone is done with dinner we have coffee and desert and just talk. We usually talk about family stories that are very embarrassing or personal, but all in all it is a great time. My friends always get a kick out of us when they eat over. They also want to come over to eat up all my moms awesome cooking. (The company my mom had worked for closed in December and she has been looking for a job since).

One memory I want to mention is a cumulative one from childhood all the up to the present day, which is April 18, 2001, is about my father. My father is the type of guy who can fix pretty much anything around the house and anything that had to do with automobiles. To me that was amazing to watch as a child and know. It is a real respectable quality that I hope one day to acquire. I never saw him not able to fix whatever was wrong in the house and since he is and has been for a long time an A.S.E certified mechanic he is always able to fix our car problems. I always try to be there and help but also so I can learn so one day my child would want to learn from me.

The last memory is on how we celebrate our holidays. We celebrate all Catholic holidays along with birthdays, anniversaries, and general holidays. This is where my family goes extremely overboard on gifts. Not so much the general holidays but with the others it is out of control. My parents especially on Christmas time will do anything to get what we want even if they didn't have the money. We would know that they didn't have the money but they would still get whatever it was and more. Their love runs so deep and I thank God everyday for them. They are definitely my idols because they showed me the meaning of caring and loving for my family. I sometimes don't think of them as parents; I like to think of them as HEROS.

## *My Family History - narrated by Mária Kovács*

I start with my father's family. On my father's side one gets back to Slovakia. The family lived in Dolnie Saliby for a long time; they came to Hungary after World War II. They were forced to move as the exchange of population between Czechoslovakia and Hungary got under way. They settled down in Kakasd in Tolna County. My father was already born there, but he left the village early as he went to high school in Gyönk, and then he studied in Székesfehérvár. After his marriage with my mother, he moved to Sárosd.

On my mother's side people did not migrate too much, a part of the family, my grandma, still lives in Kakasd. The others came to where they live now from the neighboring villages. They mostly moved here because they married someone from the village or decided to build a house there. My great-great-grandfather from Vajta also got to Sárosd in the same way, he married Sara Bodros from Szilas, and they built their home in Sárosd. My mother's mother was from here; she married the son of a gardener from the neighboring little town. My maternal great grandfather was born in Sárosd, but he married a girl from the next village. He brought the girl to Sárosd and they lived there. As their finances improved, and the family grew in number, they moved to a bigger house. That is the reason why we, my closest family, live in Sárosd, as well.

My great grandparents were all peasants. At that time schooling did not matter, it was enough to read and write. Village and rural life meant farming.

The first occupational change happened in my family when my paternal great grandfather, who did not like manual work and preferred to use his brain instead of his hands, became a wholesale trader and transporter, who had employees. He bought local agricultural products, and he made quite a good profit by selling them to other wholesale buyers.

Perhaps my grandfather inherited his talent. Despite the fact that he only finished 8 grades (he finished the 7th and the 8th grade at an evening course), as far as I know, he became the manager of the co-operative by the majority of the villagers' votes. My maternal grandmother was brought up as a smallholder's daughter. Her father had received a piece of land and the title of 'vitéz' (=knight) as an award for his war merits. She was a very smart girl, and after the four year elementary school, she went to the 'polgári' (4 year sec. school.) She wanted to be a teacher, that was her dream, but it never came true, because of the Second World War. So most of the time she was a clerk, first she worked at the post office, then in the office of the Agricultural Trading Co. In 1968 she was one of the founders of the local savings bank, she retired from there. Thus it was quite natural, that my mom, who was a single child, went to a secondary school, where she studied economics, and took the job of my grandmother, as the manager of the bank. She works there.

My father's family was a farmer's family, too, but as time passed, they got far from farming. My grandfather had many brothers and sisters, none of them were highly educated, but they had a special interest in technology and they were extremely handy in the field of woodcraft. When the 'station of agricultural machinery' was set up, he started to work there, and soon he became the manager. So it is not surprising that my father's choice was to become a mechanic, an electrical mechanic, in fact, he finished a secondary technical school and became a technician.

My family always lived in a village; it was always a rural family. My great grandparents all had many sisters and brothers, so they all grew up in a big family. Hard times, childhood

experiences, work made the family very close knit, they worked together, and even the children had a part in farming. They spent the days together, all joyful or sad events of the family were common experiences, they always helped the ones who were in trouble. Their door was always open to them. Then families got smaller and smaller, they only had 1-2 children. They hoped that their life would be easier that way. It is easier to bring up fewer children, to help their future life, they thought they would be able to provide more help and support to their kids, more than the one they received from their own parents. Apart from the illness of my grandmother, this is the reason why my mom is an only child. She always says she did not miss a brother or a sister when she was a child, but now as a grown-up she would really like to have at least one. Thus, I have only one sister, but I have a sister, at least.

My father's family has changed similarly. My grandfather had 6 siblings, but as life is cruel, the ones who had children, died early, so my father also lost his father at the age of 9. It was the sisters and brothers who were alive who helped to bring up the orphans. Family life was much closer knit at the time when he was a child. Nowadays we do not visit relatives without asking them whether they have time for us. Now we meet at weddings and funerals, the younger ones may not even know one another.

The distribution of work in the family changed with the changes of lifestyle. My great grandparents worked a lot in the fields. They often worked instead of going to school, my grandmother had duties in the household (cooking, cleaning), just like my mother, who, however, only had to do the cleaning and participate in domestic duties on special occasions, like wine-harvesting. My father's father worked a lot as a child, but my grandmother on his side was exempted from all manual work. (She had to struggle later when she was widowed and had to bring up my father and his brother as a single mother.) We, children, did not have to do any hard work when we were small, we only started to help with cooking when we were in our teens.

The quality of life also changed similarly in both of my (paternal and maternal) families. My great grandparents were born, and lived their life in, old-style, long farmers' cottages. 6-8 children were brought up in one room, but for the occasional guest they had a "tiszta szoba" (clean room). They only used it occasionally. Children highly respected their parents; there was a serving order for the food, which was taken after prayer. Most of my grandparents lived in smaller families, with slightly improving living conditions. But before agricultural co-operatives were formed, they tried to buy more land. So they did not really think about remodeling or redecorating the house, but they thought of supporting their children with a piece of land and agricultural tools, when they got married. My grandparents' life was significantly influenced by the collectivization of lands; after the first shock, the co-op became quite efficient by the middle of the sixties. My parents were children in this transitional, old-new world.

My mother was born in a room with an earthen floor, but when she was ten, the family moved to a new house. The house had wooden floor, and carpets, and it was furnished by pieces that were bought in Budapest. My grandparents were among the first ones, who had a TV set and a record player. My father's family started their life in the same way, but my grandfather's death got them into dire straits. My grandmother was able to ensure better living conditions and educational opportunities for her children by her perseverance and with the help of her in-laws. In both cases, family relations are very good; they can rely on one another. But they still express their respect by addressing their parents in the formal way. We, my sister, and me use the informal language when we talk to our parents. Our family is not strict, they think they set a model for us by their life and by the warm atmosphere of the family.

Our changing world basically transformed the quality of life and the role of the child in it. In our great grandparents' time, children were liked, but parents neither spoiled, pampered their children, nor cared about them individually. This was partly the result of the mothers' burdens and lack of time, partly because they gave birth to a child every year or every two years. Besides the care of the many children and the housework, they had to work in the fields, as well. So children educated one another, the bigger ones took care of the younger ones. Their toys were very simple, the girls made dolls out of the corns' husk, and so they combed the dolls. They made cradles for the dolls out of a pumpkin. On winter nights they played board games with beans and maize. Children in big families listened to old stories, which were told when the broader family and the neighbors were together. They heard magical stories. These were their tales. In summer they played in the sand, wandered in the fields and meadows, they knew every "corner" of the village. My grandparents' childhood was somewhat similar, but they already had 1-2 real dolls, they regularly went to school, where they played hide and seek, hopscotch, chase or the girls played with pieces of thread. My maternal grandmother's father served in the army for years: my granny's house or the barber's shop was full of people, when he started to talk about his experiences. Her lively and cheerful paternal grandmother told my mother stories. My grandmother also used to tell stories to us, she still keeps telling stories, and she talks about past events and things.

My mother had no siblings, so she considered everybody in the village as a friend. She had books, but she liked reading so much, that only the library could satisfy her "hunger". From spring to fall, after doing the school assignments, she played with her friends till darkness came. They skipped rope and played football with the boys. They played chase in the field, and they played war-games. In my father's family his uncles and aunts were the great storytellers. As the children were always around them, they heard old stories even unwillingly.

My parents were 12-13 years old, when television broadcasting began in Hungary. Television had less influence on their life than on ours. My sister and me spent a lot of time watching TV or in front of the computer. But the evening tale told by mom could not be missed; she had to tell us bedside stories before going to bed every night. As there were no more grandchildren in the family, we were dumped with love and with its representation, the toys. As my father's aunt liked animals she presented us with a lot of soft, plush, cuddle toy-animals. As my father's brother has a technological vein, he brought us remote control cars, telephones, etc. on family occasions. From our parents we got many books, coloring books, board games and puzzles. On the other hand we did not spend too much time outdoors. After the age of six, we hardly ever played outside. This might be due to the fact that we went to school to the neighboring village by bus. When the weather was hot, we longed for the cool room, and after waiting for the bus in the cold, we did not even feel like making and throwing snowballs.

## *My Family History - narrated by Andrea Tamási*

My grandmother, my mother's mother, comes from a farming family. In her childhood, they lived in uptown Székesfehérvár, where most inhabitants were farmers. They had a cottage, which consisted of a room and a kitchen, and the parents and their two daughters lived there. They owned some land at the periphery of town, and they lived from the land. There were other farm-buildings around the house, where they kept the crops and the animals. In summer, the parents worked from dawn to dusk and met their children only in the evening.

The war changed their life completely. Their father disappeared in the war. The house burned down..... Granny found shelter at various places during the war with her mother and sister. An acquaintance helped them get an apartment in a block after the war. Now, at least, they had a place to live at, but my great-granny always dreamed about having her own house again. She could build one in the 60s.

My grandmother was married in 1951. One year later my mother was born followed by my uncle another two years later. The family lived in a two-room apartment in a tenement block. But they started building their own house at the end of the 50s, as my granny also wanted to have one. They built a house with two rooms and a kitchen, but, at least, there was a garden and a yard. The four of them lived there until my mother got married in 1971. My parents built a house with one room and a kitchen on my father's parents' building plot. I lived in that house from my birth until I was two. In 1976, my parents bought an apartment in a panel block with my grandparents' help. My brother was already born into that apartment. As the apartment did not have a garden, my parents bought a garden not far from the town, and we all spent almost every weekend there. In 1991, my grandmother was already a widow, and she was often ill. The house that they had built had also grown old; so we sold it, and bought an apartment instead. I moved in with my granny so that she would not be alone. I still live with her.....

My great-grandparents were not educated. When great-granny had to look for a job after the war, she was sorry she had not studied before. But she was prudent and clever, and she could learn many trades; she became a storeroom manageress at a factory. This is how a farming woman became a factory clerk, at the local Ikarus bus factory. My grandmother had finished 8 grades at school, and then she learned to be a typist, while her brother became a technician at Videoton. My grandmother thought one could make better progress in life if they were educated, so my mother started her secondary education at a school of economics, while her brother continued my grandfather's trade; he also became an electrician. My mother never liked the school, which her parents had chosen for her; she played truant, told lies, and could not care less with studying. She got what she sought for, and she did not have to go to school any longer: she was dismissed for truancy. My grandparents told her to go and work. She was an office helper at one of the offices of Ikarus. Then she thought that it was still better to study. She finished a typist course, and was employed by a construction company. She worked with architects, and got to like architecture. In the 70s she enrolled at a correspondence course of a secondary technical school. When it was my turn, and my brother's, to choose a profession, she recommended this secondary school. I did not want to go to that school but I had to, as my mother insisted on it. In the last years of secondary school, I was already aware of the fact that the construction trade (and architecture) was not attractive for me. I found private tutors, and took extra hours in literature, grammar and English, because I wanted to be a teacher of Hungarian and English. My mother did not think much of it, as she

does not feel the need for study and qualification. I had gone into the wrong school at 14, and as a result, I was disadvantaged at the entrance examination compared to those applicants who had attended 'gymnasium'. At the entrance oral examination, the examiner started by asking what I was doing there at all.

As regards family customs and family life, my grandmother's birth in 1934 was much celebrated. My great-granny had to work even when she was pregnant, but she worked less and did lighter jobs. A midwife helped with the delivery, and my great-granny's mother was there, too. This tradition was maintained: her mother introduced my grandmother into the skills of childbearing, and my grandmother helped my mother to deliver and take care of me. The child, i.e. my grandmother, had a place at a corner of the room. Baptism was very important; no one could ever think of *not* having a child baptized. Neighbors, acquaintances, everybody would have had bad opinion of the parents.

My grandfather was a worrying type. At the slightest symptom of an illness, he sent for a doctor. Sometimes, he did not believe what the first doctor said, so he called another, then yet another. In 1974, I was born in a hospital. My parents and grandparents had bought everything a newborn baby would need in advance. True, my grandparents were not happy first, because they hoped that my mother's marriage would not last long. But by the time I was born they were already rivaling in whom I resembled most. As I said, my grandmother helped my mother, and my grandfather never ceased to worry. I was baptized only because it was a custom to do so, and so was my brother, who was born in 1977. My parents discussed it with me, and asked for my opinion even about his name. I had been waiting for my brother's birth with great expectations, but when he was born, I saw it was not such a great thing.

When the children were small, my great-granny worked, and granny looked after the little ones. Parents were only at home on winter days, when there was no work in the fields. They could be with their children only then. Her grandmother also looked after my mother. My mother could have gone to kindergarten but my grandfather did not find it a good idea because he wanted to know what was happening to his daughter all day. When she was in the first few years of school, my mother was sorry she had not been at kindergarten. She had stayed mostly with grown-ups before, and she could not develop contacts with children until she learned the ways at school. E.g. when she thought she had enough, she went home. I stayed at home with my mother for only two and a half years, when my brother was born. I went to kindergarten for two and a half years before school, and my brother was already taken to a crèche. I did not have friends at the kindergarten; I found it hard to fit in. My brother did better, as he had adapted to being with other children at the crèche. Though my mother stayed at home with us for a few years, my grandparents, my mother's parents also played a great role in my upbringing. We always spent the weekends with them, and spent much time with great-granny and my granny's sister, too.

In my grandmother's childhood, the father did not neglect his children, he would even bring them candy at the weekend, but he did not play an important role in their upbringing. Though both parents worked, the mother, except for illnesses took all important decisions. In my mother's family, father and mother did everything together, and took equal share in the education of their children. In my family, too, both parents worked when we were at school, and my father helped with the housework, but it was my mother who would always help us do our homework, checked it, helped us pack our schoolbag for next day. Every evening we prepared ritualistically for the next day at school. We prepared the clothes, the pencils, etc.

In my grandmother's childhood, the most important holidays were Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. They loved Christmas and Easter most, because then they got presents. They would get the same present or the two of them would receive a present together. My granny

remembers a time when she and her sister both got a doll, whose head looked alike and it was made of china. Her sister's doll fell down, and got broken. They did not celebrate birthdays and name days. On greater holidays, godparents, uncles, aunts and cousins also visited them. The smaller family in the strict sense consisted of grandparents, parents and children, who met every day, whereas they met the others only at the weekend. Christmas was the most important holiday in my mother's family, too, although they already celebrated birthdays and name days, too. They spent every weekend together with their grandparents. My brother and me loved every holiday. In my childhood, Christmas had a ritual. Grandpa came to take us in the afternoon to their place to see what Little Jesus had brought to us. By the time we got back, my parents had already decorated the Christmas tree, and placed the gifts under it. We mostly got chocolate for Easter, which made this holiday dear. We always got a cake and presents on our birthdays; our parents took photos of us. Holidays were spent together with the smaller and greater family; which included my grandmother her sister great-granny my father's parents brothers and sisters, our godparents, and us. As I have said before, we met the smaller family even during the week, and we always met them at the weekend. It was always holiday to be with them, but my father's relatives spoiled everything. They never came because they loved us, but only because it was their duty. They gave us presents, which we seldom liked, but, of course, they never brought them in order to make us happy. Then they had a big row, and left. (My father has three siblings. Their father did not care much with them, and the parents did not have a good relationship with their children. They were not much loved, and their parents never wanted to understand them.)

## **PART II**

### **SOCIAL MOBILITY: PATHWAYS through the ARMED FORCES**

#### *My Family History - narrated by Pat Kosek*

I grew hearing endless family stories. I felt extremely close to people, who I have never even met, because of death or mere distance, due to the stories shared through family gatherings. My parents, my brother and I are extremely close, and family is the most important thing to us. Although there are some individuals in our extensive family who we are not in contact with, I still hear all the stories; good and bad accompany their names.

My great grandparents (on my father's mother's side) came to the US from Hungary. My grandfather, John Palántai was married to my grandmother, Mary Pellion in Hungary. They moved to New Brunswick, New Jersey and had three children: John, Jake and Margaret. My great grandfather worked as a driver for a trucking company, while my great grandmother was a dress-maker and a housewife. They spoke both Hungarian and English at home. Great Grandma also loved her garden and had one with a large variety of roses, as well as a grape arbor, and she and great grandpa would make wine from the grapes they would grow.

On my father's side both my great grandfather, John Kosek and my great grandmother Anna Barlow, were born in Spring Hill, Pennsylvania. They had three children, John, Lee and Peter, to whom they spoke both English and Czech in their house. Great grandfather worked as a coal miner, and after his death my great grandma remarried Mr. Balinek and moved to New Brunswick, NJ, where she lived in a two family home, and rented out the second floor for income. ....

Grandfather was in his late teens, when he moved from Spring Hill to New Brunswick. He attended a catholic school and was a high school graduate. In order to help earn some money for his family, my grandfather played the violin at weddings and other celebrations. He married my grandmother, Margaret Palántai, who was born in New Brunswick, had also attended a catholic school, graduated from high school and spoke both English and Hungarian fluently.

Grandpa worked in the civilian Conservation Corps during World War II and then became a security officer. He loved woodworking and remodeled their entire house in one summer. This job included the heating system, electrical, plumbing, removing all the plaster (with the help from the family), and installing sheet rock and paneling. In addition to this, he also designed the kitchen cabinets, bookshelves, and room dividers. His vacations were often spent working on projects around the home. My grandma worked in a leather factory as well as did the house cleaning and childcare. They had three children: Catherine, John Jr. and my father, Frank. Once the second child was born she stayed home to raise and care for them. She carried on traditions of making special meals and desserts for holidays, birthdays and other special occasions, which were often Hungarian dishes. For birthdays she would always invite the relatives over and have a party. She would make each person's favorite cake on his or her birthday. She always helped grandpa with the projects he was working on. Grandma loved life and couldn't wait to „spoil” her grandchildren, especially if she had a granddaughter. Unfortunately, she died of cancer before I was born. My grandfather also died before he could see any of his grandchildren born, he died of a massive heart attack.

My father was born in New Brunswick, New Jersey in 1951. He lived in a two-bedroom home with his parents and siblings. Dad and his brother slept on a convertible sofa and then, when they were older they slept on convertible chairs in the living room. They never had their own rooms. From birth to five years of age he spent the days with his mother (he was not formally taught a language, but he did learn some Hungarian from his mother), and after five he spent the days at school or with his friends.

.....When he was younger, my dad enjoyed playing with army men and trucks. As he got older, his interest turned to sports like stickball, basketball, baseball, and he also started to build models and slot cars. When he would get good hits on baseball, he would get either money or toys as a reward, and he also remembers having ice cream as a reward for other accomplishments.

His duties around the house consisted of going to the grocery store, and going to pay the bills on his bicycle. His bicycle was actually part of one of his worst childhood memories, because a car hit him, when he was riding his brand new bike, which made him very up.

He was a mischievous boy and used to throw stuffed dummies in front of cars as they drove by, he also used to pretend to pull on a rope in front of cabs so they would slam on their brakes. Another way to be mischievous was to pull pranks on his older brother. Once he put a bunch of cigarette explosives in his brother's cigarettes and he said it looked just like the cartoons, when it exploded! As punishments for these misdeeds, dad was either not allowed to go outside to play, or he was not allowed to watch TV.

Instead of going on vacation, his parents bought an above ground pool which was enjoyed by the family during summer. One of dad's favorite family stories was when he scared his aunt with a rubber snake and she fell into the pool. In the summertime, holidays were celebrated with a pool party and barbecues. At one of the picnics grandma was throwing away a tomato, and it stuck to grandpa's forehead! In summer day trips were occasionally taken to the beach, but my dad's family frequently took drives year round on the weekends, a sort of mini vacation to look forward to the end of the week. They would explore new places to shop or just to visit. For one week in the summer his mother and her friend, Kitty, who is my Godmother would go down to Seaside Heights. Kitty's son, James, grew up with my dad; they were good friends, so they enjoyed that time together, as well.

He also remembers walking with his mother, brother and sister downtown New Brunswick on Thursday evenings, when his dad was working, to go window shopping at Sears, Arnold Constable and the 5 and 10's. When they were coming back, they would stop for an ice cream. When he was about ten, he was allowed to the movies in town with his friends, at that time it cost only 50 cents to see a new release. He was also allowed to go to the park.

Dad played Little League Baseball each summer, and in middle school he joined a recreation league basketball team. He used to go to his grandmother's house every Sunday after church, and she always made homemade baked goods and would give him and his siblings some „potted coffee” on cold days. He was very saddened by her death, and this was one of his worst childhood memories.

The neighborhood my dad lived in was mostly of Hungarian descent. When he was in his teens however, the elder people started to pass away, and new people of all different ethnic backgrounds started to move in. He said he witnessed his neighborhood deteriorate over the next ten years or so. Crime rate increased, the upkeep of homes did not appear to be important to the owners any more, and property value decreased.

When my dad was a teenager, his family would go to Pennsylvania together to buy large orders of beef, pork and chicken to stock the large freezer they kept in the basement (this is a tradition my family has kept). His parents would purchase a quarter of beef, a pig, and chickens, and would either have them butchered or do it themselves.

One of my father's worse childhood memories was attending Catholic school through the fifth grade. At this point, he begged his parents to be transferred, because his grades were suffering and he disliked the teachers and the methods of discipline of the nuns. He entered public school in the sixth grade, and had a hard time adjusting for the first marking period, but then he overcame his problems and improved his grades. He graduated from high school in 1969.

Since grade school my father has been fascinated by fish, and he began keeping a salt-water aquarium with various types of fish, that became available to him, like seahorses, damsels, anemones, lionfish etc. He has had an aquarium since then, and we currently have a 65-gallon salt-water tank in our home. My dad wasn't a big book reader, but his favorite books to read are about aquariums, model buildings and cars.

After finishing high school, my father worked as a contract painter, until he was drafted into the US Army in 1972. He enlisted for a three-year term to get preferred schooling as a Military Policeman. He was stationed in New Jersey for the three-year term of service, except for a six-month temporary assignment to New York. Dad attained the rank of Specialist 4<sup>th</sup> Class and was an Acting Sergeant in charge of duty squads. It is here where he met my mother, Monica Hobbes, and they were engaged to be married after they both completed military service. He ended his term of service from the US Army in 1975. Being hired by the State Police in June of 1975, he immediately started the police academy. He was married to my mother on June 21, 1975, but they didn't go on a honeymoon because he was in the police academy. He is working on his 26<sup>th</sup> year with the police and currently a captain of the force. His worst adult memories were the death of his parents, the death of his grandmother Balinek and the death of my mother's parents. His dearest memories are his marriage, the birth of my brother and I, and graduating from the police academy.

My great grandparents on my mother's side came from Scotland. My great grandfather William Mortgage, lived in Spokane, Washington. He helped to build the Panama Canal as a civilian, but he contracted malaria and was sent back home before the canal was finished. Afterwards, he was a railroad engineer with the Union Pacific Railroad. Great Grandpa was married and had 5 daughters that were born and raised in .....My great grandma died in 1951, so he lived with his daughter, my mother's mom, Liz. At her home he became very close with his grandchildren and played with them all the time. They would go down to the railroad track to wave to him when he brought the train through and he'd throw candy to them and their friends. He was always wearing his traditional railroad engineers outfit, which consisted of a blue striped uniform; blue striped hat and red neckerchief. Great grandpa would always have surprises for his grandchildren in his lunch box at the day's end. This is one of my mother's fondest childhood memories.

He always used to sneak them into his room at night to watch scary movies. One of my mother's worst memories as a child was when he died in 1955 of a massive heart attack in the back yard, while he was watching her and her siblings play in their wading pool.

On my mother's father's side, my great grandparents came to the United States from Germany. My great grandfather Walter Hobbes, was born and raised in Auburn, Nebraska, and he worked as a neighborhood bakery deliveryman. He married Catherine Blauber, who was also born and raised in Auburn, Nebraska. They were married for over fifty years, and lived their whole life in the same place. My great grandparents had five children, three boys and two girls. When their next to last child was born, they named him Weldon, referring to a

„job well done”. Then later she became unexpectedly pregnant again, and they named their last daughter Dot, as in „finished now”. Great grandpa loved to find, clean and polish wood burls (knotted tree sections) to decorate the yard, and when he would come to visit my mom’s family in Oregon, he would go into the woods to find some more and take them back to Nebraska with him. On those visits great grandma would take my mom and her siblings to the top of the mountains and they would slide down on their butts. These visits were dear childhood memories for my mother. Great grandfather passed away in 1963, and my great grandmother in 1977. My father was able to meet my great grandmother before her death, and he remembered that at meals she would stuff them with food. My mother said that when they used to visit them in Nebraska, she and her siblings would look forward to seeing them, but they dreaded the long drive from Oregon to Nebraska. She said they were also frightened because there were always tornado warnings and watches. My great grandparents had a basement that they used as a storm cellar. It had beds, a kitchen, and supplies etc. just in case a tornado would hit the area. There were always huge family gatherings; my grandmother’s family all lived within a block. The Sunday tradition was dinner at my great grandparents’. The main meal however was at noon, supper was later in the evening and consisted of sausages, cheese, bread, etc. because my great grandma grew up with German traditions.

My grandfather was born and raised in Auburn, Nebraska. After high school graduation he entered the United States Air Force. While stationed in the Air Force Base in Washington, he met and married my grandmother, Liz Mortgage. She already had two children from a previous marriage. Grandpa raised them like his own on top of that they had four children together. Grandmother was from Moses Lake, Washington. She had four sisters; she was a high school graduate and had a job at a grocery store. During this time my grandfather served as part of the Air Force Strategic Air Command and was often on tours of duty in other areas of the US, or out of the country to serve in war, such as World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War, as well as many other conflicts. As a child my mom was unfortunate to have to face the fears involved when his father was sent to war, she said this was one of her worst childhood memories. For his duties grandfather received a Bronze Star with 3 oak leaf clusters, a Silver Star and a Purple Heart. He never spoke of his medals, or he never said why he received them, he simply stated ”they chose to give me a medal for doing what I thought was my job”. He never considered himself a hero. He was a proud, patriotic man always there for his country and family. He chose not to move his family around with him when he went away so that they could have a more stable life. On the other hand they lived so close to the Air Force Base, that they were drilled in civil defense procedure. Schools also practiced air raid drill regularly, and houses were equipped with a supply of water, canned food, flashlights, batteries, transistor radios etc. My mother’s family, as well as everyone else, knew where the nearest Air Raid Shelter was and the evacuation routes. My mother’s house, being a military one, had to have an ID sticker in the window to identify them, as such. Her father was always on alert, because he was part of the Strategic Air Command. Mom remembers that one family weekend at a lake in Idaho was interrupted by a military vehicle informing her father that there was a full military alert and he was to report to base immediately. They had to cut their weekend short and rush back to their home so that he could pack and leave for the base. There were times when grandpa would have to leave for long periods of time, but his family could not know where he was because of his tight security clearance. Part of his duties were to fly with the crew of the B52 bombers, he was also a gunner in the turret of some of the aircraft. It was only after his death that we found out that he had been held prisoner by the Japanese during the war. During his service in the Air Force, grandpa also participated in the Golden Gloves Boxing Tournament. After he retired in 1960 at the rank of Master Sergeant, he moved his family to a 55-acre farm in Oregon. When they were moving here however, a terrible rainstorm hit and washed out the bridges that accessed their property and the moving

van couldn't get to the house for a week and a half after they arrived. It was a remote area 30 miles from Corvallis and 40 miles from the Pacific Ocean. Alsea was a tiny town 3 miles from their home that had wooden sidewalks and western facades. The businesses were a mercantile, a gas station, a tavern, a cafe, a beauty shop and a feed and seed shop. Grandpa was a millworker in a plywood mill located 50 miles from their home. Grandma spent days canning homegrown fruits and vegetables. Grandma loved to cook and bake! In 1971 the family moved again to Corvallis, Oregon. While living here, grandma helped care for two children while their parents were at work. She continued her love of cooking, baking and caring for her family until her death from cancer in 1973. A year later grandpa met Shirley Jeane. He retired from the lumber mill and they moved to Springfield, Oregon, then Detroit Lake, Minnesota, then Las Vegas Nevada, then to North Dakota, and finally their last move was to Fergus Falls, Minnesota. It is here that he stayed until his death in 1995.

My mother was born in Moses Lake Washington in 1951 at Larson AFB (Moses Lake AFB), she was the only child born at a military base. They lived in a suburb of Moses Lake in a 4-bedroom home. Their house was 4 blocks from the City Park. Up to the age of 5 my mother spent her time with her mother at home and then afterwards she spent her days at school and with friends. In Moses Lake, mom played with Dorothy Hauser mostly and her favorite toys at the time were dolls and cooking toys, while her favorite game was hide and seek. She had too many books to count, but her favorites were nursery rhymes, fairy tales, Nancy Drew mysteries, and the Caine Mutiny. My mom had 3 brothers and 2 sisters, however one sister and one brother were her half brother and sister, because they came from her mother's first marriage. Her half sister, Barbara was married when she was 16 and did not live at home when my mother was born. Her half brother Ed still lived at home before he married and moved to Pullman, Washington. Many years after leaving Washington for Oregon, they learned that their beautiful neighborhood had become one of the slum areas and had a high crime rate.

My mother's schooling in Alsea, Oregon was very different from what we have today. The elementary school and the high school were combined. Her total high school student body was 66 students. This included all students from grade 7 to 12. Her graduating class consisted of 9 people and they had to walk around the gym twice so Pomp and Circumstance could finish playing. Needless to say that the school was a very closed knit community where everybody knew everybody.

The low number of people was also an advantage: it gave everyone an opportunity to participate in all activities. In sixth grade she was able to take German in school. One of my mom's favorite family stories occurred, when her brother was in high school. He got drunk, fell and cut his head so bad that he needed stitches. He told his parents that he was hunting a raccoon in the dark and ran into a tree, and the worst part of it was that he actually got away with that story!

Some activities that my mother and her siblings did when they were living in the country were fishing, hunting and farming. They had 16 head of cattle, 1 milk cow, a sheep, 2 goats and a pony. The family would trade the milk and the beef for items they didn't have on the farm, like poultry, pork and eggs. They also used to can their home grown fruits and vegetables, and make their own ice cream, cottage cheese and butter. The jobs that mom was responsible for were chopping wood, milking the cow, cleaning the barn, feeding the animals, picking fruits and vegetables from the gardens and orchards, and then canning them, cleaning her room, doing the laundry, ironing and cooking. It is evident that there were a lot more jobs that had to be done on the farm than in Moses Lake, where she only had to clean her room and help with the dishes. While on the farms my mother earned money by peeling and selling bark off the chittum tree, which was used by drug manufacturers in laxatives. The manufacturers would

also buy pinecones that my mother harvested and sold. Another way to get money was to collect bottles and return them to the stores for the cash deposit value. ....When she was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, her parents started to allow her to walk to friends' houses and stay overnight. Her favorite activity was playing baseball in the pasture (using cow chips for bases), as well as playing monopoly and cards. She said she was a very good child, although my uncle did start laughing when she said that! She said her only misdeeds were lying, which she received Tabasco sauce on the tongue for, and telling on her little sister. Other punishment she received, when she was bad were to be grounded or get the TV taken away. As a reward, she remembers going over the mountain to the city for movies and dinner at a restaurant.

When the family sold the farm in 1971, my mother was attending Oregon State University as an Elementary Education major. Her family had rented a 3-bedroom home in the suburb of Corvallis where she lived with them until 1972, when she left college to enlist in the United States Army Medical Specialist School. ....Mom enlisted in the US Women's Army Corp, where she served as a medical specialist until the end of the term of service in January of 1975. Once out of the Army my mother worked at the .... College Registrar until 1977. Then she moved back to her medical interest and became a medical specialist for a rehabilitation center. She was only able to work there for a year however, because it went bankrupt. From there she went to Fleet Bank and worked there until my brother was born a year later. In 1981 she went back to work again and drove back again into her Army training, when she became a medical specialist. Again she only worked a year and then had to leave when I was born. Since my birth in 1982, mom has been working as a day care provider in our home. She made this decision because it enabled her to spend time with my brother and I.

Some of the best memories that my mother had was going "trick or treating" in her neighborhood in Washington and then getting picked up by her sister, Barbara who would take them to her neighborhood. They were able to fill entire pillowcases with candy and it lasted forever! She also loved going to the Air Force Base to visit her father at work and seeing all the airplanes in the hanger. The worst memories of her adult life were the death of her parents, the death of my father's parent, and the mental condition of the POW's she helped to care for when they returned from Vietnam. Mom experienced many good moments in her adult life as well, the most prominent examples she could think of were meeting and marrying my father, the birth of my brother and I, and working as a Medical Specialist in the Army.

After my mother left the service in January 1975, my father's parents insisted that she live with them in their home until my dad left the service 4 months later. On June 21, 1975 my parents were married at ....Elisabeth Rodman Virhees Chapel and moved into an apartment in Kendall Park. In 1978 they purchased a home in Kendall Park, where we still reside today. A year later, my brother, Frank Kosek Jr. was born. During her pregnancy mom became diabetic but it went away after Frank was born. My mother went into labor at 2 am in the middle of a blizzard and my dad had to rush her into the hospital. While she was in labor, my dad fell asleep in a chair next to the bed. Mom looked over in the middle of a contraction to see him sleeping and was quite unhappy and dad made it worse when he woke up and said "wow.... That was a big one, it went right off the chart"! She had to have an emergency C-section, because Frank would not drop down. My brother was born at 10. 15 at St. Peter's Hospital in New Brunswick and weighed 7 pounds, 15 ounces and was 19 inches long. Mom was very sick; she was not able to touch him for a few days, so dad had to feed him. After a lot of begging on my parents' part, the doctors allowed my mother to go home on Christmas Eve only on the condition that she would not get up to do anything but go to the bathroom or hold and feed the baby. My dad therefore cooked the entire Christmas dinner and did everything else that needed to be done (He also did this for her after I was born).

Up to the age of one my brother spent days with my mother. At this point however she decided to go back to work, so grandma watched while my mom and dad were working. When he was two, I was born and my mother decided to do day care at the home, so Frank spent the day with mom. He started school at the age of 5, and since then he has spent his days either at school or with friends. ....When he was younger, he loved to play with action figures like GI Joe, Star Wars, Hi-Man, and Thundercats, and he was always riding around on his Big Wheel bike. As he became older, his interest turned more towards sports and he participated in basketball, baseball, football, soccer, roller hockey, and track. He was also a big fan of video games.....you name it, we had it! When he was in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, he was allowed to go to the playground with his friends, in 5<sup>th</sup> grade he was able to be dropped off and picked up at the movies, and in 6<sup>th</sup> grade he was able to be picked up and dropped off at the mall. Like dad, he was a very mischievous child. I can't even count the number of times that he used to tell on me for doing things that he had done to me first. Being a good sister however I hardly ever ratted him out. When we were caught lying we were given the same punishment our mother got, Tabasco sauces on the tongue..... and that was quite unpleasant!

Frank is deathly afraid of needles or anything that could draw blood or make you have to go to the hospital. I remember countless trips to the doctor for our routine shots or blood test that ended with my brother passed out on the floor while nurses leaned over him with the smelling salt. This fear of his caused him to do some pretty stupid stuff in his lifetime. The worst case of this would have to be when he was building a model car one-day when he stayed home sick from school. Out of the corner of his eye my brother saw a "pencil" rolling off his desk into the floor. He caught it with his legs before it hit the ground; however, he looked down and realized that it was not a pencil at all, but a Xacto knife that now was sunken up to the handle in his thigh muscle. Automatically he freaked out, because he knew if he told my mother, he would have to go to the hospital and get a shot and several stitches. Since none was with him, when the incident happened, he decided to hide it to avoid all pointed objects. My Aunt Barbara was visiting at the time, and her and my mother were in our living room conversing so Frank ran past the living room and took a shower. He made sure to clean properly and tried to bandage it, but he wasn't very successful so he acquired my help. I promised not to say a word to our parents and helped him to stop the bleeding and bandage it properly. Months later, when the wound was healed, my mom saw the scar and asked Frank about it, and after a while the true story came out.

Besides needles the other horror in Frank's life was his first grade teacher. She was a very nasty woman who disliked Frank, because he was more advanced than the other children were. She would give him detention during recess if he squeak the chalk, yet every time the kids would go to write on the board, she would give them a new piece so the squeaking was inevitable. He was once given detention, because he did not know how to skip, although he did know how to do it, but he did not know, it was called skipping. The teacher gave him a bad grade on an assignment, because she said he was incorrect. They had to color a picture according to the phrase; "Susie had jam on her face". Frank therefore colored the towels in the bathroom and the sink purple, and she marked it wrong, and said her face would be purple. My mom explained that Frank understood that HAD was past tense, and therefore he knew that it meant, Susie didn't have jam on her face any more. The teacher said it was marked wrong, because he should not understand that yet, and none of the other kids in the class understood that concept, so she thought Frank should be marked incorrectly. These are only a few of the best horror stories of the first grade, and the worst part was, that when I reached that school I had the same teacher as well, as she acted the same way to me as she acted to my brother, (although not as severe).

One of Frank's dearest memories was, when I was born on March 24, 1982. My parents had known ahead of time that they would be performing C-section for my birth, so they could pick my birth-date. As in her first pregnancy, mom got a virus when she was pregnant with me, and I stopped moving for a while, so the doctors made her drink orange juice to get me active again. Everything turned out to be OK, and I was born at 9.16 am, and was 8 pounds 6 ounces and 20 inches long with tons of dark hair. The same doctor, Dr. Calis delivered both my brother and I, and we had the same pediatrician as well.

I was jaundice at births so I was kept in a special room under lights to bring out the billirubin and get rid of my yellow color. While at the hospital I stayed in my mother's room all day, when she was in there, but when she had to leave or at night time they would take me back to the nursery, because at that time baby stealing was happening at a very high rate. When I was born, it was a still a rule, that none could come into the mother's room, and the babies were viewed at the nursery. This caused quite a bit of trouble for my parents after I came home. While My parents and I were still at the hospital, my brother stayed with our neighbor, and when I came on March 27, in my pink outfit that read "Daddy's Little Girl" (which I still have today), our house was decorated to welcome me to my new home. As soon as Frank saw me, he started crying hysterically and screaming. My parents were upset, because before he was happy about having a sister, and they did not know what was wrong. He kept screaming, "What about the other one? You forgot it!" My parents after quite some time finally figured it out. When visitors wanted to see the babies, they could only view them through the nursery, because at that time none was allowed into the hospital rooms. When the nurse would show the baby, she would always have two in her arms, so Frank thought that they "were both his babies" and when he saw only me the day I came home, he thought my parents had forgotten the other baby at hospital. It took some time to explain this to Frank, but he finally understood it, he was happy with me.

Another big family story is when Frank tried to help my parents with me by picking me up, but this was after hours of my parents trying to get me to fall asleep. They were finally able to relax, because I had stopped crying and fell asleep, when they heard a big thud, and both Frank and I crying. They ran to the room to find me on the floor with Frank standing over me. In an attempt to help my parents Frank dropped me on my head, while lifting me out of the bassinet. I was fine but he never tried it again!

Like my brother I stayed in the bassinet of my parents for a few weeks after I came home, and then I was moved over to the nursery.

From birth to 5 years of age I stayed with my mother at home, and after that I spent the days at school or with my friends. ....When I was younger I used to love the games Dizzy Dizzy Dinosaur, Cooties and Uncle Wiggly; I also enjoyed playing with horses and Barbie's. As I became older I enjoyed playing card games and Play Station games, but I still love the old children's games the best. When I was in about 5<sup>th</sup> grade, I was able to walk with a group of my friends to the nearby mall and movies but only during daylight. If it were dark or bad weather, one of our parents would drop us off or pick us up. This is how I spent most of my summers. There was however a two-week period, when we go on a family vacation. Most summers we go to Walt Disney World and no matter how old we are it just keeps getting better and better. Our first trip is actually both Frank's and my dearest memory. It gives the four of us time to relax and not to be distracted by phones or work, just two weeks of complete family bonding. A few years we have gone other laces, some of them include North Dakota and the surrounding states to visit my uncle and his family, and to tour the sight by them. We also went to a family reunion for my grandfather's 60. birthday. This was great because most of my mom's side of the family lives in the West Coast in the same area, and we hardly ever get to see them. My grandfather made this thing called a garbage can dinner,

where he would buy a clean garbage can, wrap all the pieces of the meal in pieces of foil, and then sack them on top of each other in the garbage can. The can was then placed in the fire and every part of the meal would cook at the same time, and for the same amount of time. My brother not initially understanding the concept of this was sick for most of the trip, because he had the idea in his head, that we would be eating out of a used garbage can. Once my parents cleared up the confusion, and reassured him that it was a new garbage can, and explained how one would make a garbage can dinner, he was fine for the rest of the trip, and couldn't wait to dig in the day of the picnic. We all loved my grandfather dearly, and although we did not see him often, it was one of my brother's and my worst memories, when he passed away in 1995.

Talking about my grandparents on both sides, especially the ones that I never had the chance to meet, is one of my dearest memories. I know so much about them, that it is as if they were alive today!

As we were growing up, my brother and I were really close, and we still are today. One of my fondest memories is from the time, when we were in preschool together. There were some days when I would cry endlessly until they would walk me over to my brother's room, and let me sit next to him, and watch a movie. Then I would have to go back to my own room, but I was still content with that. We used to get in so much trouble, because we act up when we were in supermarkets or other store. Once we were playing a game with the tiles on the supermarket floor, and after being told several times to stop, our parents finally said we could not go and see the new Disney movie *The Great Mouse Detective* with our friend that night. Another incident that happened when we were together was the breaking of a few Christmas decorations while our parents were out for the night. Frank and I had decided to throw a ball around in the house and in the process the ball went flying into the living room and started bouncing on different Christmas collectibles that we had. We ended up breaking the horn off a crystal reindeer, breaking the head of a wooden reindeer, and thanks to the great catch made by Frank, we almost shattered one of my mother's porcelain collector's dolls. Needless to say we never did that again.

Everyone shares different jobs around the house now; we just do what we see needs to be done. When we were younger, however my brother and I, each had a list of things we had to do. I was responsible for washing the dishes, feeding the dog and our numerous other animals, cleaning my room, cleaning the bathroom and doing the laundry. Frank was in charge of the garbage, cleaning his room, mowing the other maintenance for the lawn, shoveling the snow in the winter and helping me with the laundry and the dishes. If we did our course we could receive a weekly allowance. If we did our jobs well, or had an achievement in school, or even sometimes when we were just being good, our parents would buy us a special toy, take us to various zoos and aquariums or parks, take us to the circus or to see ice shows, or take us out for an ice-cream.

Studies are very important to my family. We always had too many books to count, but we each had our favorite books. Frank's favorites were *Cars and Trucks and Things That Go*, *Go Dog, Go, Cat and the Hat*, and *There's a Monster at the End of This Book*.

Personally I enjoyed *The Hero of the Crown*, and all the books that were Frank's favorites. Both my brother and I took a foreign language from 6<sup>th</sup> to 11th grade; he took French while I took German. We often teach each other something we learned in those classes, because Frank gets a kick out of speaking German. We both graduated from high school, Frank in 1998, and me two years later in 2000.

My best memories from high school came from football managing, and throwing the shot put, discus, and javelin in track. Track, however also spawned one of my worst memories, getting ankle surgery in my junior year due to track injuries.

Frank was accepted into Rutgers University, and will be graduating next year as a history major. He has also been accepted into the Graduate School of Education, where he will graduate in 2003 with a master's in education. He plans to become a history teacher in our school, as well as a track or football coach. I am currently a student at Rutgers University; I plan to graduate in 2004, as an animal science major, specializing in

Equine Sciences and I am a minor in marine science. I hope to move to Florida after graduation and become a marine mammal trainer at Sea World or Walt Disney World.

## *My Family History - narrated by Szilvia Gyurcsák*

My grandfather was born in a small village in Zemplén County in 1919. He was the fourth child of a farmer's family. He spent his childhood and his adolescent years in this village. His father died early, so great grandmother had to struggle a lot until she brought up her children and sent them to school. They lived in a farmhouse with two rooms and without comforts.....Grandfather only left his home when he got married. But he did not go far; he only went to the neighboring village. He found a wife there, grandmother, who was born in 1921. Her parents were also farmers. She was the eldest child, she had seven siblings, and the family was considered to be a big one. She spent her whole childhood in.... she even finished primary school there. As the eldest child in the family and as a girl, she could not go to high school. While her parents were working in the fields, she had to look after her smaller sisters and brothers. The house she grew up in was no different from the one grandfather had spent his first years in. It was a farmhouse with a barn, a yard and a little garden.

After they got married they moved to a little but separate house. Grandfather was a blacksmith; grandmother was running the house. Their first child, my father was born here in 1945, and 13 months later a second boy followed him. As a result of birth control, the family had no more kids. Grandmother gave birth to the baby at home; she had a helper, a midwife. The babies were only fed by breast milk for a long time. Childbirth was a great joy for the family, especially if the baby was a boy. The parents tried to have the child baptized soon after birth, and a big family meeting followed the ceremony.

As babies were only breast-fed, they were more resistant to illnesses. But if they happened to be ill, parents did not run to the doctor with simple and everyday problems, they rather used herbs to cure their kids instead. When my father was three, the family moved to a small town called Sárospatak.

Now that they lived in a town and grandfather became a lorry driver the life of the family changed radically. Instead of a house they lived in a small apartment that consisted of a room and a kitchen but it had a little garden. My father went to the nursery school, and he also started his first primary school years in this town. The town had a very great effect on his childhood. He talked a lot about his roaming with his playmates in the castle, in the court of the castle or in the schoolyard; he told me how they played with the rag-ball. He talked a lot about bathing in the River Bodrog, which was forbidden, so he always ended up being spanked at home. I find it surprising that they spent their entire free time outdoors, they never played inside or never played board games. When grandfather was about ten, the family moved again. The new town, and the new school brought great changes into grandfather's and the family's life.

Sátorajáújhely, the new town and the new situation opened up new chances for the whole family. Grandfather became an ambulance driver and grandmother started to work at the local hospital. After some years her dream came true, as well. She completed an evening course and became a certified childcare nurse. The children went on with their studies in an old, well-known school-town. Their housing conditions also improved, the family moved to a house with comforts. On the other hand these changes also meant the end of a cloudless and careless childhood for my father. He had to help the family, to do some of the gardening, and to chop wood etc. As he grew a bit older he regularly worked during the summer vacation. He

carried water-cans to the harvesters, he was a tracklayer at the railroad, he carried fruit-boxes for ZÖLDÉRT, the fruit and vegetable wholesale company.

Despite the fact that children had their own tasks, traditional roles in the family prevailed. While grandmother had a full time job and attended an evening course, she was responsible for the children and the household, grandfather was the head of the family and the “bread winner”.

Though my father’s parents worked a lot, they always cared for their children and paid attention to the parent- child relationship. Sundays were real holidays, crowned by the Sunday dinner and the delicious cakes my grandmother made. The greatest family occasion was Christmas, though. The close family celebrated Christmas, but it was always very intimate. They did not have big family occasions or reunions because in the course of time relatives had spread all over the country. My father also got away from his home and after his military service he became a student at the Military Academy in .... Childhood and adolescence were over forever.

My grandfather on my mother’s side was born some kilometers away from Pácin, in Karcsa in the fall of 1914. His family background and milieu were similar to those of my other grandfather. His parents were farmers and they had five children, two boys and three girls. They also lived in a traditional farmhouse, with a big garden, a yard and a vineyard; they had a lot of farm animals. The girls married early and according to traditions their main job was motherhood.

Instead of farming the boys decided to study. My grandfather became a non-commissioned officer; later he became an army officer. His future wife was very young when they got acquainted, so he had to wait long till she finished school and they could get married. They had other problems, as well; they belonged to different denominations. Grandfather was a Calvinist; grandmother belonged to the Greek Orthodox Church. Then they had other difficulties with the dowry. Great grandmother was not able to give her the dowry that was required from an officer’s wife. Finally just, like in a fairy tale all difficulties were over, and they got married in the middle of the war, in 1942.

Grandmother was born in Luka, in the same county. Now it is called Bodroghalom, Ferenc Kazinczy, (who was a 19<sup>th</sup> century Hungarian poet who played an eminent role in the Hungarian language reform), gave it this name. Her father was a carrier/transporter, who died early. Her mother was a young girl, when she started to work at the Tobacco Company in Sátoraljaújhely. Grandmother was an only child and great grandmother paid a lot of attention to her, brought her up with great care and sent her to school. She tried to provide her daughter with everything possible far beyond her means. Grandmother went to a church school maintained by nuns and she also completed the four year “polgári”. Then she studied typing. She was an excellent student and a beautiful girl, no wonder she caught grandfather’s eyes.

Their first child, my mother was born in Sátoraljaújhely on Twelfth Night in 1943. Grandfather served in the army, grandmother’s days were spent on taking care of her daughter. This went on for some years, and then after the Liberation she started to work at the District Council. At that time it was great grandmother who looked after my mother, who lived with them in a detached house with three rooms, a kitchen and a ....There was a little garden and a yard around the house. They really needed a big house like this, because kids were born one after the other. Apart from my mom there were four kids born, one of them died at the age of one from pneumonia. True, penicillin was already discovered, but as it was 1945, a troubled time, the parents were not able to get the medicine needed despite all efforts. Out of the five children, only the youngest was born in a hospital. All the others were born at home with the help of a midwife. As grandmother was working and, at that time, maternity

leave was only six weeks long, she could only breast-feed the babies in the mornings and in the evenings, during the daytime they were fed with goat milk. ....

Great grandmother respected goats as sacred animals, for it was goat milk that saved the family from famine during the war. So she still had a goat when she already did not need it any more. Great grandmother's tasks and responsibilities were growing and getting more and more important as my mother's siblings were born. Moreover grandfather was far away from home. He served in the newly formed People's Army and earned his salary while working in another town. He and the family lived separately till 1954, when grandfather got ill and retired from the army. Since that time a deeper parent- child relationship developed between him and his children, my mother still has good memories of the time they spent together, the excursions they made in the mountains and the summer vacations.

The close family was big enough, but in the meantime it grew even bigger, as my grandfather became the guardian of an adolescent boy, who lost his parents. The family always celebrated birthdays and name days. The greatest holiday though, was Easter, which began with a traditional Easter breakfast (ham, eggs and cake) under the walnut tree and was followed by the exciting preparation for Easter Monday, when boys came to visit and sprinkle the girls with water. Christmas was also an important holiday. My mother still remembers the preparations, a week before Christmas grandmother started to make her delicious cakes and cookies. The sweet smell of vanilla filled the whole house. They even made candies themselves to decorate the Christmas tree. These evenings were the most intimate, no one can forget about them.

My mother went to the same high school as my father did, but they did not know each other at that time. After finishing high school my mother went to Budapest, and took up nursing at school. She finished school in 1963, and started to work as a nurse. This time the family went through a tragedy. It turned out that grandmother had cancer. She was operated, but it was late, she already had metastasis, and the doctors could not help her. She suffered for three years, out of which she stayed in bed for 13 months. Grandfather and my mother were at her bedside in turns; they both took care of her. She was very young, only 42 years old, when the family lost her.

Grandfather threw himself into work; perhaps he wanted to forget about the death of his wife this way. He found a job at the County Court; he became a clerk there.

.....My mother had a really beautiful childhood. When she helped with the housework, she did it playfully. She helped to shell peas, to crack walnuts, to pick fruit, to bring water from the well. She grazed goats on the hillside, and while the goats were grazing, she was reading. She just loved it.

She played a lot with her siblings. They had all kinds of classical toys: marbles dishes, doll clothes, a cradle, a pram etc., but they had their baby sisters and brothers as dolls, too. But they had a wooden rocking horse, a sword and a shako, balls, balloons, skipping ropes and hoops, as well. They also played with their parents, they played cards, dominoes or they solved crosswords together. Since there was no TV broadcasting at that time, in the evenings they listened to the radio together..... The children learned music, they had a piano and a violin.

While grandmother was ill, and when she died, great grandma had a breakdown, so my mother did grandmother's previous duties. Great grandma stayed with them, but she was not able to play an important role any more. This was the time, when my mother met my father. After a year (more than 30 years ago) they got married. I was born in this family as a third child 19 years ago. I was born in Gyömrő. My parents started their life in Kiskunhalas. My

father is an army officer; my mother is a nurse. As soon as they got married they were given a small apartment by the army. The apartment consisted of a room and a kitchen, it was without comforts, and it looked on the yard. Here they had their first child, my brother, who they expected very much and who was born on Oct. 1, 1968. My mother's pregnancy was an easy one. She was so slim that no one could see she was pregnant. Her colleagues used to say she was expecting a little berry. That's how my brother, the little newcomer got a nickname: Bogyó (Berry). He is 32 years old now, he himself has a child, and nevertheless everyone calls him Bogyó. As Bogyó was growing, the family moved to a bigger apartment. They rented it from the army; it was a nice, two-room apartment with all amenities. So Bogyó had his own room, his nursery was full of toys, books and plush animals, because he loved animals. He still loves them.

At that time he went to the nursery school, where he had a very good time. He had friends and he started to beg mother to have a baby. In the meantime daddy was sent to the Military Academy in Budapest. The Academy was three years, so the whole family should have had to move. Finally mother decided to stay in the comfortable apartment and at the place they were used to. She decided to have the baby there. They really missed a little girl, they planned her so that the 'stork would drop her' as a birthday present for my father. She was half a day late, and she was born on Aug. 12, 1973. She also has a nickname, she is called Baba.

Mother's pregnancy with Baba was complicated, and she also had problems with the baby after she was born. Thus the situation got harder than she ever expected. Father was studying at the Academy; he only came home at the weekends. He tried to help and deal with the children, but time was short. Though he was very small, Bogyó helped a lot on weekdays. He went shopping to the store, he brought lunch from the nearby restaurant, he looked after the baby, and he was happy.

After daddy finished the Military Academy, he got a new job in Gyömrő. A move again. Our life turned upside down, due to father's job we repeatedly had to face changes like that. We moved to a smaller apartment, we had to adapt to a new environment, had to find new friends, a new school for Bogyó. It was not easy either for Bogyó or my parents.

Strong family feelings helped to overcome the difficulties, and we were happy to be together again. And Gyömrő had its advantages, as well. Gyömrő is close to Budapest, and Bogyó started swimming. Baba went to the nursery school at the age of two, because mom was offered a job.

My father always felt sorry for he was far from the family when mother was expecting Baba, and that he could only cuddle the baby at the weekends. He wished he had a third child, and this is how I was born.

The apartment they had, became really small for a family of five, so my father accepted the post he was offered many times. A move once more..... The problems of moving to a new place came up again, but the apartment was a compensation for a great many things. The family got a brand new apartment with three bedrooms, and my parents felt they could enjoy a real town life. In this apartment we had two nurseries, one for my brother and his little animals, one for us, the two girls.

My mother stayed at home till I was a year and a half. Then she thought I would be all right at the day-care, and she could go back to work. The apartment was big with high overheads; her salary was needed, anyway.

We often took excursions, and started to explore the surroundings. We played a lot with daddy and mommy, but we, kids could also understand each other very well, in spite of the great difference of age. So Baba and me learned how to swim together. Later she became a competitor.

My mother followed her mother's pattern. We had lunch at home; we did not go to the day care center after school. Father also helped in the housework, he is an excellent cook. Perhaps this is the reason; my brother became a trained cook.

We were not supposed to work, the only thing we had to do was studying, and we were able to keep up with it. Now that I remember, I think our life went quite smooth without any help from the outside world. We were never ill. We grew up in harmony, we could play together very well and we understood one other very well, too. We had a lot of favorite toys and memorable books.....and we also had slides, we would often watch them together with our parents in the evenings.

In our family each holiday was important. Celebrations meant and still mean a lot to me, be it Christmas, Easter, name and birthdays, the wedding anniversary of my parents or a celebration of a good school report.

In spite of the fact that we had a very good time in Székesfehérvár, my parents felt nostalgia for a detached, family house. So we started to build a house in a neighboring village, in Sárbogárd. The result is a big house with five bedrooms, two bathrooms and a nice garden. In the meantime my mom finished the college for health workers, but her job remained the same.

We moved to a new place, but this time our life did not change so radically as before. Nevertheless my sister and me went to a new school, to the local primary school. My brother left for an upper school, so he did not participate in our games any more and I spent all my time with my sister, who is my best friend now.....I think both our parents and we, kids enjoy staying with our family. We can rely on one another and we can share the joys and the sorrows of life. ....

## **PART III**

### **ESCAPE AND NOSTALGY-THE HIDDEN STORY OF GRANDFATHERS**

#### *My Family History - narrated by Kabuo Watabe*

When I think of the word “family”, I do not picture myself in gathering with crowded members. Instead I visualize only three faces: my mother, my father, and my sister. This is because it is only my family that lives in America, and we are isolated from the rest of the distant families that live in Japan. Because of the great distance, I have spent most of my holidays, such as New Years and Christmas only with my nuclear family. I have only seen my grandparent’s face three times (I remember only one occasion), and there are number of cousins that I have never met. With our lack of ties with our distant families, my family could be viewed as the most outcast of families. However we are also the unique members, because over the years my parents made a drastic shift in environment from the countryside area of the North East region of Japan to Tokyo, the biggest city in Japan, and finally to the East Coast of the United States. My parents rooted and started their own family here in the States, and they have been living here for the last 26 years. At times they admit they feel lonely because they can’t see there own family’s face as often as they want to, but I am very proud of their endeavor here to America.

My mother, Fujiko Iwazaki was born on 27<sup>th</sup> of May in 1947, at Iwate in Japan, which is located in the northeastern area of Japan. She was the fourth and the youngest child in her family, so her mother was pretty used to the delivery process, and major preparation did not take place for her. Delivery took place at her home, with a midwife and a doctor. All her family members waited in a separate room, and her father was at work when she was born. This may sound cold and harsh by American standards, but at that time many husbands worked during their child’s delivery. If they were absent from their work for their wife’s child bearing, the husbands were viewed as weak and even cowardly. In traditional Japanese values, the ideal husbands were calm and rigid, and they were expected to take care of their family with stoic, almost cold manner. So skipping work for my mother’s birth was no option for my grandfather, since it would have meant risk in his reputation at workplace.

My mother grew up with her parents, her grandmother, two older sisters and one older brother. They lived in a single-family house, which was bought by my mother’s father.

Two years prior to my mother’s birth, the country had lost the war against the United States, and the whole nation was forced to rebuild the country from scratch. Consequently the majority of the population was in poverty, but my mother’s family was able to lead a middle class life due to the father’s stable profession. He worked at the financing department in the Prefecture Office, and his father (my great grandfather) also had the same job. The job in the Prefecture Office was, and still is regarded as a very respectable one with fair, stable pay.

Growing up my mother spent most of her time with her mother, since she was a housewife and stayed home for most of the time. For all her married life my mother’s mother never worked outside the house, and this relationship between husband and wife was also a part of the traditional values. If a wife worked outside the house in a middle class family, it could be considered as a “shameful act”, since the husband would be viewed as incompetent in not

being able to provide the family sufficiently. So with my grandfather's respectable job, my grandmother's duty was to take care of the house, and she stayed most of the time with the children.

In her childhood, my mother played with the local children around her neighborhood. They mostly played simple games, such as hide-and-seek, chase and mommy - and - daddy. Her parents bought her some dolls, but she had to make dresses and dollhouses by herself. As I've mentioned, the whole country was at the beginning of a recovery process from the war, so leisure activities for children were simple and minimum.

My mother's father was on the strict side, but back then most parents expected more discipline from their children than today's parents do. My mother's father was especially strict to his son, although physical punishment did not take place, sometimes his children had to sit in a formal style and listen to him speaking for hours. This kind of punishment took place mainly in case of disciplinary misconduct or when the children came home with bad school grades. Also, my mother's father expected all the family members to be present at the dinner table, and when the kids came home late and miss the dinner, he would be very disappointed.

My mother's saddest event in her life took place when she was in middle school. When she was just 14, her mother died of cancer. Her mother's death was a great shock for her. My mother's mother had a jagged relationship with her mother-in-law, who lived in the same house. She was trying hard to get along with her, but she fell ill and died at a fairly young age. The death of her mother would cause a long-term effect on my mother's life. After her mother's death, the oldest sister took care of the house and the family. She did majority of the cleaning and cooking, and my mother and the other sister helped to carry out the rest of the housework.

When my mother entered high school, she joined the volleyball team, and she did not go home from school until late in the evening. Most students back then were expected to join these extracurricular school clubs which ranged from foreign language clubs to sports activities, and students who didn't, could be viewed as lazy or apathetic. On her weekdays my mother came home from school around six in the evening, and after that she ate dinner with her family, and then worked on her school works. She wasn't allowed to go out after dinner, and this continues until she graduated from high school. This kind of policy could be considered as strict and harsh, but some parents in Japan, especially the ones in middle class families are very conservative and protective about their children, particularly about their daughters.

When she graduated from high school, she decided to leave and live by herself in the city of Tokyo. She moved from the suburban area to the highly urban city of Tokyo. She lived in an apartment and worked in an office of a small company. She graduated from high school in the late 1960's, and like in America, the majority of women in Japan didn't go to college and worked instead. My mother was one of these people, and the city of Tokyo provided many jobs for these women. However, her mother's death was also a reason why she left home. Looking at her mother falling ill, and looking at her older sister taking the mother's role, she felt, she didn't want to end up like her sister. If my mother stayed home after finishing high school, she felt that she would be forced to stay there forever, taking care of the family. She felt she would be limited in her life if she stayed home, so she fled to Tokyo to start her own life. Her father wasn't really against the idea, although he was strict and protective while she was growing up. Once she turned 18, he viewed her as a mature adult who could make her own decision.....

My mother states that her single life in Tokyo is her sweetest memory. She grew up in a suburb, and she was greatly attracted by the busy excitement of the city life. Unlike at her home, she felt that she could move by her own clock without the family duties strangling her free time, and the fact that she could live by her own schedule fascinated her very much. There was much anxiety in living alone, but at the same time she was very excited and optimistic. It was also in Tokyo where she met my father. A mutual friend that went to the same college as my father introduced him to my mother and that is how they started to go out.

My father Hisao Watabe was born on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February in 1947, in the prefecture next to the one where my mother was born. Like my mother, he was the youngest amongst his brothers. The delivery took place at home with a midwife, and like in my mother's family, the husband was absent from home during the delivery. My father was the sixth child, so her mother was also used to the process. My father's older brothers (the third and the fifth son) died before he was born, so he was the youngest of four brothers.

He grew up with his parents, brothers and a housemaid in a single-family house bought by his grandfather. Unlike my mother's family, my father's family was a typical, postwar lower class family. Before World War II, they started the wholesale of rice, and soon they extended the business to a retailer. The business was doing fairly well until the end of the war, when Japan became the loser of the war and had to rebuild the country from zero. My father was one or two years old, when his oldest brother died at the age of 18, and this almost drove my father's father crazy. The first son did extremely well in school (he never went below 5<sup>th</sup> in school ranking), and he had high expectations from his parents, he was supposed to go to college in Tokyo. His death caused my father's father a great psychological damage, and effected the family business greatly.

When my father was born, his father was already over 40 and due to this massive generation gap, there wasn't much contact between my father and his father. Also, after his first son's death, my father's father was reluctant to work, and was absent from the house very often. Consequently my grandmother had to run the family business, and since she was busy, it was the housemaid who took care of my father during his early childhood. My father played with the local kids from the neighborhood, playing simple games like sword fights and baseball. The area had a great amount of snow during the winter, so him and his friends would go to ski and also have snow fights. In fact his skis were the only toys, my father remembers his parents bought for him. Him and his friend couldn't rely on their parents for recreation, so they had to come with their own games or make toys for entertainment.

My father's parents were strict on discipline, and when he talked back, he would be locked up in a closet for several hours. When his parents got really angry, they would lock my father up in the warehouse where the rice was stored. The warehouse didn't have any lights, and he would be locked up for 3 to 4 hours. Great discipline towards the parents was expected, and when my father violated the "code of conduct", he would be punished. However, his parents were not strict about his school performance, and as long as he didn't fail a class, he wouldn't be punished.

Due to his friends' influence, my father started to neglect his schoolwork in the middle school. His parents worried, and got my father a private tutor that would come to his house several times a week. With this studious environment, my father ..... was able to graduate middle school and move on to high school. In high school he did extremely well, even without the tutor. He was put into a class where only top 15 % of the class could get in, but he also showed a very comical, human side. During his junior and senior year, he had to secretly pass around his exam answer sheet to a couple of his friends during the test. He had to do it

without being caught by the teachers. His friends thanked him very much, and my father doesn't seem to regret this act of "cheating". He said it is all a part of his good memories.

In high school my father, like my mother joined the school club. He joined the archery team and the trombone section of the brass band. In his spare time he would have to help the family business, and with his bicycle, he had to deliver the rice to customers. My father helped then business, but his brother Fumio was the one, who participated in the family business the most actively. Ever since Fumio was in the middle school, he was interested in the family business and helped out actively. After graduating high school, Fumio was accepted to a prestigious art school (he also liked painting), but he decided to stay home and help out the business. He soon officially inherited it, and currently he is a central figure in his town. He worked hard to build his trust in his community, and slowly but surely he extended the business. Recently, Japan's National Ministry of Agriculture awarded his rice retailer as one of the best in the country.

After graduating high school my father really wanted to go to college, but at that time his family was still on the poorer side, and they weren't expecting him to go to college. However, he was accepted to the Meiji University in Tokyo, which was considered as an Ivy League University in Japan. It is a highly prestigious private school in Tokyo, and it is very hard to get in. My father didn't want to lose the chance, so he decided to move to Tokyo, to work during the day to pay his tuition and to attend night courses. He worked during the day and took night classes. Working and going to school at the same time was very hectic, but my father states that he had the greatest time in these years. He rarely skipped class, and though he was tired from work, he was very eager to get to class and attend lectures.

My father met my mother during his senior year in college. Like I've mentioned, they met each other through a mutual friend that went to Meiji University. They went out for about a year, but after graduating from college my father had a radical plan. He planned a long-term visit overseas, first to Europe, the to America. My mother decided to stay in Japan, so my father went alone. He stayed in Europe, mainly in London, for 6 months, and then he stayed in New York for another 6 months. He states that he learned many things from these travels, but he immediately fell in love with America. Compared to minorities in Europe, he felt that minorities in America walked with their head up high, and my father immediately fell in love with this land of the free, that gave equal chances to everyone.

After his 6 months visit to New York, my father returned to Japan, married my mother, and right after the wedding he decided to move to New York. With his degree from Meiji University, he could have worked for major companies without any trouble, but he decided to take the risk and venture into America. In 1975, my father and my mother came to New York. My father's first job in the US was in a Japanese restaurant in Manhattan; he worked as a waiter. He didn't have much money, and he didn't have the proper visa status in the US, nevertheless my mother decided to trust him and come along with him. My father was very grateful to her for her decision. My father eventually quit his first restaurant, and worked in a different Japanese restaurant in New Jersey, where he got his green card. It was around this time that my sister and I were born.

My sister was born in 1976, and I was born in 1980. Our delivery took place in a hospital in New Jersey, and unlike our parents' parents, my father was present at my mother's delivery. This was very American of him. My sister and I spend our early childhood on a small apartment in New Jersey, but when we entered elementary school, our family moved to a single-family house. Unlike our parent's parents, our parents bought us many toys. My sister got dolls and stuffed animals; I got action figures and video games. Looking at what my

father did for us, I think he wanted to raise a family that was American. My father really loves the flexible ideas that Americans have.

During our early childhood my father moved from the restaurant, where he obtained his green card to a restaurant in the Upper West Side area in Manhattan. He became the manager, and he said the work experience there was filled with good memories. A studio of the NBC channel was located right in front of the restaurant, and my father met a bunch of celebrities working there. Among some famous faces, my father met Robert Deniro, Al Pacino, Madonna, Christopher Walken, Cindy Lauper, Sean Lennon (John Lennon's son) and numerous sports athletes. The most memorable customer for my father was Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones, and he came with his family, so my father met his family, too.

When my sister was 10 and I was 7 years old, we visited Japan for the first time in our lives. We stayed there for two months, and we visited both my mother's and my father's family, but I remember only portion of our visit. However, the encounter with my uncle Fumio, who runs the family rice business was something very memorable. He was a plump man with big glasses and a big smile, and he seemed to love his job very much. His business was doing well at the time, and soon after our visit he expanded the retail store.

Around the time when my sister and I enrolled into middle school, my father bought a duplex house in Bergen County of New Jersey and that is where my family lives today. My mother was especially happy when we bought this house, and she was extremely proud of my father who came here as an immigrant and started from zero. My parents had no support from the distant families in Japan and it even seems that they weren't expecting any. Coming to America was my father's own choice, and he was ready to take full responsibility of his decision so he didn't ask his family in Japan for any help, even when we had nothing.

I do not consider my parents strict, and they gave us plenty of individual space and freedom when we were growing up. However, my father expected us to do well in school, and if we came home with a bad grade, he would be very upset. When I was in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, I got my first C in class, and my father was furious. He got so upset, and hid most of my toys. Since this incident, I was afraid of showing report cards to my parents. Because my father did well in school, perhaps he thought that his children could do the same without any problem. But honestly, school works weren't always easy for me.

My sister always did better at school than me, I was always told to be like her. In high school I had to join the marching band just because my sister was in it, and I felt I was compared to my sister constantly. I also felt, that my sister was looking down on me, and this created a distance between us. We started to talk to each other less and less, and we would rarely be together in our house. In my senior year of high school, I scored 30 points higher than my sister did on the SAT, and I was jubilated by this. Finally I felt I had something to be proud of. Looking back at it now, I feel that all my feelings of rivalry toward my sister were useless, and I should have redirected my energies toward something else. My sister and I are two different individuals with different traits, and I should have realized this simple fact years ago.

During my junior year in high school, I momentarily lost my interest in school, and my grades started to fall. This apathy continued on into my senior year, and although I did well on my SAT, I was rejected by most of the colleges, I applied, and ended up in a community college the following year. I wasn't upset, because this result was solely based on my own action, but my father was very disappointed. From around this period a distance started to form between my father and I.

However, in summer, 1999, a positive event took place. Our parents planned a second trip for all of us to visit Japan. It was 12 years after our first trip, and this second visit was a brief one, with only two weeks of stay. Nevertheless it was something positive for all of us. We visited both families, and we met many people from our distant family. There were many cousins, uncles and aunts, who I met for the first time, so I didn't feel like we were related in any way, but the air of Japan felt very fresh for me. My first visit took place when I was just a child, but this trip took place, when I was 19, so I was able to see and experience my parents' country with a grown, mature view.

Since this visit I feel that I have regained my close relation with my family. Currently I live in the school dormitory, so I can only see my parents on weekends and during breaks. Despite our distance and lack of time together, I feel I am very close to them. The distance actually taught me the warmth and value of family, and I try to cherish every moment that I spend with them.

After working for more than ten years, my father eventually quit the restaurant in Manhattan, and now he works as a manager in a Japanese restaurant in up state New York. After I graduated high school, my mother started to work part time in a warehouse of a Japanese trading company. She hasn't worked outside the house since she was in her twenties, but she said she gets good amount of satisfaction from this job. Because I do not see my distant families often, I feel that my nuclear family is the only family that I have, but I am very happy with what I have with me.

## *My Family History - narrated by Mariann Szekeres*

My great grandfather on my mother's side was a butcher just like his father, and he immigrated to America in 1904. He was looking for a better life there. He married a Hungarian girl; they got married in New York, so my grandfather and his sister were born in New York City. My great grandfather thought that he would find it easier to make a living in America, but he was disappointed. He came back to Hungary and said that whoever was diligent and industrious enough he/she could find his/her America here. He settled down in Kővágóörs, where his parents lived. They all lived together, and my great grandfather worked very hard.

Later, when his children grew bigger, they moved to Vászoly, a village in the hills. Great grandfather continued his trade, and extended his business with an inn and a soda water factory. At that time he already had 5 children. After the birth of the sixth child he suddenly died. The life of the family changed, the elder children had to take care of the smaller ones and they had to help with the business. They were young but they had to work a lot. In the meantime my great grandmother got remarried, the children had a stepfather, then they also had a little brother. When my grandfather grew up, he became a butcher himself. At that time boys followed their father's trade. Nevertheless before he became a butcher, he finished the „polgári” (a four year secondary school).

In 1931 my grandfather got married. He got acquainted with my granny at a village ball on New Year's Eve. My grandmother came from a farmer's family. After they got married they moved to Bakonybél, where they had 3 children. All children were born at home with the help of a midwife. ....My granny used to say that it was not a good parent who spoils the kids and had no expectations. Good parents talk to their children in a language that fits their age but with adult responsibility and seriousness and they set requirements for them. On the other hand, when children were little, she was singing songs, she was telling nursery rhymes to them and she was telling a lot of true stories; however, children had no fairy tale or story books at that time.

After some years my step great grandfather died from pneumonia. As grandfather was the eldest son and he was the most skillful to take the prospering business, he moved back to Vászoly in 1938. He was so successful in running the business that beside the butcher's shop, the pub and the soda factory he could even open a grocery store.

My grandfather was a modern man. He had a telephone, at that time only a very few people had phones. The family grew bigger; it now included two more persons, because my grandfather's sisters still lived at home. (In the meantime his mother died.) One of his sisters worked as an assistant in the store or in the pub.

Grandfather was strict with his children; they had to help with the business from the age of 7. My mother and her sister were so small that they could hardly reach the counter, when they had to serve customers in the grocery store or in the pub, then they had to milk the cow. Their brother had to transport goods on a horse and cart. Once he was really punished by his father because the cart turned over and everything fell on the ground. If children did not obey their parents they were slapped in the face, or they had to kneel on corn. My mother's brother was also punished once, for he cut a piece of his boots and made a slingshot out of the rubber.

Grandfather taught his children to work hard; my mother, who always mentions this, feels grateful. Despite parental rigor, parents and children had a good relationship. They expected

hard work from their children but when children became 15-16 years old, they let them go out. Children could also have fun at home; the inn contained a ballroom, where balls were held quite often, at harvest, at fair or on New Years Eve.

My mother and her siblings had a religious education; they could not miss going to church on Sundays. The broader family, uncles, aunts, godparents, cousins etc. always came together, when someone in the family was baptized, had his/her first communion or confirmation. Christmas and Easter were celebrated in a similar way; families paid visits and gave small gifts to each other.

At Easter boys came to sprinkle the girls with water and the girls gave them colored eggs. On Easter Monday grandfather used to water his wife and his daughters with soda water; the womenfolk were screaming loudly. In the afternoon they went to roll eggs in the fields. In May a maypole was set in front of the pub, and dances were held. Name days and birthdays were also celebrated with a huge cake.

My grandfather created the opportunity for his children to go to high school. My mother and her sister went to study at Székesfehérvár. First they stayed in a boarding school maintained and run by nuns, they got a very strict education there. My mother left home very young, she was 10 years old, when she went to the 8-grade high school, so she became independent quite early. In 1944 the town was bombed. The school was closed, and the desperate parents took their children home. Because of the war village children did not return to Székesfehérvár, they completed the first two grades as private students. Then in third grade they were at school, again. But they could not stay in the boarding school any more; it was closed, so they stayed in a rented a room. My mother graduated from high school in 1952.

After the war radical changes took place in the country; all private property was nationalized, farmers were forced to join co-operatives. My grandfather also became a victim of these changes, the stores, the inn, the slaughter house, the soda factory, his entire business that flourished as a result of hard work were confiscated in a minute. Moreover his house was also nationalized, he had to rent his own house for decades, and later he had to buy it again. He was also considered to be a “kulák”, his children were not allowed to go to college. As an “enemy of the people”, he was convicted on trumped-up charges and sent to jail for some months. As he had some acres of land, he had to join the co-operative; he retired from it at the age of 65. But he could not enjoy his pension for long, injustice and suffering wore him down, he got ill at the age of 66 and died of cancer half a year later. He was at home, grandmother stayed with him night and day, and she tried to comfort him.

Although granny was a housewife she always worked a lot. She cooked for the family and for the employees, she even baked bread at home. It means that she made six loaves of bread a week, she baked them in her own furnace. Grandmother was always brisk and she was never tired. After grandfather's death she lived for 24 years. Even in her last years she made strudels, chocolate cakes, doughnuts for us. Unfortunately, we lost her this spring, she was almost 90. During the last 10 years of her life, she lived with my godmother, who is my mother's sister.

The life of my father's family was absolutely different. My grandfather on my father's side also grew up in a big family, he had 4 siblings. His father was a railway man, but he was a locksmith by trade. They lived in Pozsony (it is called Bratislava now, and it is in Slovakia). Similarly to his brothers, he started to play football when he was very young. My grandfather was a forward player, one of his brothers was a center, and the other one was the goalkeeper. He was very talented so he played in the Czech national team, and in the “Bohemians”. In 1933 UTE bought him from the Bohemians, and he got to Budapest. At that time he was already married. He got acquainted with grandmother at a ball in Pozsony. Granny was

Slovakian; she did not even speak Hungarian, when they started to date. In Budapest she had a very hard time to adjust to the new situation. They already had their first child, my father, and she visited her family in Pozsony whenever she could. She always took my father with her. My father also spent all summer vacations with his grandparents in Pozsony, so he learnt how to speak Slovakian very well. One of his best memories goes back to family meetings. When the whole family was together, he was the one who could light his grandfather's pipe, which was so long that it reached to the ground.

Until 1941 grandfather worked at Tungsram in Újpest and he played football in UTE. He played in the national team twice. At the age of 31 he was already considered to be an old player, so he joined a country club and started to work as a locksmith in a glass factory. Grandmother has very dear memories of those times, they traveled a lot and they participated in receptions. She loved that lifestyle; they often played cards and had fun. But then he was conscripted in the army, and, as a soldier, he was taken prisoner of war in Russia and he was there from 1945 to 1948. He was 80 kilometers away from Moscow.

While his father was away, it was my father who had to be the breadwinner, so at the age of 15 he already worked in the glass factory. In the meantime he studied at a commercial school in Tata. Since he was a very good worker, the factory management sent him to a course for working class boys and girls in Győr, where he took the maturity exam. After that he was admitted to the Technical University in Veszprém. He got his diploma there. .... He works for the university, he has a doctoral degree and right now he is an associate professor.

My father first saw my mother on the beach at Lake Balaton. Since that time he was searching for the opportunity to get acquainted with her. My mother was an accountant in Veszprém at that time. They got married in 1963. They started their life in a rented apartment that consisted of a room and a kitchen. Their first child, Miklós was born in 1964, the second one, me in 1966. Then they already lived in a two-room condo with a little garden. As they both had a job, the children went to day care, to the nursery school and then to kindergarten. As children were growing they needed a bigger house, and as they had the financial background, they built a family house. The house is a 4 bedroom one, we all live there now.

My life in the city was completely different from my grandparents' country life and from my parent's childhood. Neither my grandparents nor my parents went to kindergarten, even their toys and games were different from ours. My parents had more toys than my grandparents did, and my brother and me received all sort of toys that fitted our age. My brother's favorite toys were the following: building blocks, Legos, puzzle, battery operated racecars, trains, remote controlled cars, matchboxes and soldiers. I liked dolls best. I had a doll's house, small dishes, a pram and a doctor's set; I liked to treat the dolls with the medical tools I kept in a bag. I also liked puppets and cuddle animals. I had little musical instruments, as well: a xylophone, a small piano, a saxophone and a mouth organ.

At Christmas and at Easter the family always met at granny's house in Vászoly. We often played board games with my cousins, in winter we played snow fight, we made snowmen, sometimes we went skating on Lake Balaton. At Easter we rolled eggs in the fields. At home we played football or badminton with friends. We spent the summer holidays at granny's and at Lake Balaton. While grandfather was alive, we had the chance to get an insight into country life. We could feed the animals, I remember we would go to the fields on a horsedrawn wagon to fetch hay for the cows. Grandfather allowed me to hold the reins under his control. At another time we would lie on top of the haystack and go home by the wagon that way. We could watch how pig, cows, lambs, hens were killed. In the evening we always helped grandmother collect eggs.

We have kept the tradition of making sausages at home up to now. At fall the whole family, my mother's siblings and their family come together, and on the basis of grandfather's recipe we make sausages for the whole family for the whole year. While granny was alive we visited her every week. ....

My parents have had a car since 1972. We traveled a lot in our free time, we traveled everywhere in the country and we went abroad many times. We have been to Germany, Austria, Italy, Spain, France, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Poland. For three months I worked as a baby sitter in England.

I graduated from high school in 1984. Unfortunately, though I tried to get to a college many times, I was not admitted. So I worked at the University Library in Veszprém. ....Then I finished a course for tour guides but I could not get a job. I always liked languages, and I wanted to improve my English, so I came to this teacher training college. .... I like gardening, listening to music or riding my bike. I usually read, make excursions or travel abroad if I can.

My brother graduated from a technical secondary school. As soon as he finished technical school, he was admitted to the Technical University in Budapest. He is a mechanical engineer; he has a university diploma. He worked for company, but he lost his job, so he had to find another one. He found a job in Békés County, now he works as a constructor there. He is not married yet, so every weekend he comes home to Veszprém. He likes football, he likes surfing, swimming. In winter he plays hockey with his friends or goes skating, he goes out a lot anyway.

The three-generation family only lives on in my memory; a family, where grandparents, parents and children used to live together, the father was the head of the small community, his wife, his parents and his children were all subordinated to him. I do think, we would need this kind of family even today.....

## **PART IV**

### **EMANCIPATION, FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE - AN UNPARALLELED STORY**

#### *My Family History - narrated by Ayesha Nazeel*

I am a first generation American in my family along with my sister Nada.

We grew up in Elisabeth and East Brunswick, New Jersey. Elisabeth was one of the great experiences we got to encounter when we were young. My mother was a single parent who knew about the dangers of social influences, but when she was advised by many of her friends and associates to move to a town where her daughters could get a more challenging education, she moved from Elisabeth to East Brunswick. There was a noticeable difference in the economic status of my peers and the minority influence was different, too. This was my first sensation of social mobility. This move was also at a time when many things were changing in my life. One thing that I took for granted when I moved was the fact that my mother was accustomed to many forms of social status that I was never aware of. My mother has experienced many things that have shaped her life and her children's lives, too..... Anyway, I still feel that my mother is the direct creator of who I am, since I have never been exposed to family or any other authority than my mother. She is a strong, independent woman. Personality traits that were not accepted in Chile at the time she grew up.

My mother, Greta Kampinski and her two sisters were brought up in a small town in Chile during a time when many great social movements were going on in the United States. Greta was born in 1948 and she was the oldest which is obvious from her „natural nature” to lead.

The Kampinsky family was full of traditions. My grandfather was the only person in his family who did not have more than five children, though. He was also the first man to only have daughters. This automatically meant that his daughters would never be able to inherit any of the family money. And there was a lot of money in the Kampinsky family. It was of strict Catholic faith and the people all over the small town knew of them and respected them highly. My mother's father owned a store that was well known in the town and my grandfather's brothers also owned many other small businesses. So the family name was all over the town. My mother never liked being under constant observation and control, nor did she like the fact that she was never able to fend for herself. So Greta, knowing she would never have a financial independence from the Kampinskys, got married at the age of 18 so that she could move out of her sheltered house. The family disapproved of her actions but that was what she expected. The marriage lasted less than a year, but those were her intentions. She just wanted the opportunity to see if she really could handle the outside world and she did.

My mother quickly left Chile for Peru. She always wanted to travel and she saw it as a perfect opportunity to fulfill her desires. When she had the chance to move to the United States, my mother jumped to the occasion. So, she was quickly off to the US at the age of twenty. She had very little money, but she knew she had the will, the intelligence and the basic knowledge to survive. Since she went to one of the top boarding schools in the country, she was able to speak and write English well enough to get to the USA by just find. Thus with the help of some friends (she always had many friends), she got into the country and got a job with little hassle.

As time went on, her English got better and better. The good thing was that when my mother was in Peru, she attended a secretarial school of business. She learned a lot of useful things there. At that time she was always thinking about her future..... Even when she was younger she dreamed of going to the United States where she could obtain the American culture while participating in the culture of which she existed in. Greta was always liberal with open-minded views. Well, let's just say she was well on her way at the age of 25, when she met my father Nasir Najeeb.

Greta was waitressing in Washington D.C. when she once waited on my father and some of his friends. It was summer time and they were on vacation from El Paso, Texas. They were all students at the State University. My mother and father got along right away and she decided to go with him to Texas after the summer was over. She knew that she could get a translating job there and she also was on the look out for something new anyway. They finally got married when my mother was 28. Things seemed to be going great and just according to plan. My mother got her green card and felt that things were going to work out fine.

In the meantime my mother's mother died in Chile, so she had to go to the funeral. She had no desire to stay any time longer than she had to, because she was eager to return to her loving husband.

Upon her arrival, my father was going through finals. Greta was looking forward to him finishing school so she could try the same. When he finally graduated he talked to her about going to his home in Kuwait. My mother didn't want to go so he didn't press the issue. My father was a liberal Muslim and she was aware of the problems that might occur if they continued their free life in the presence of the family. So they avoided the issue of moving. But when my sister... was born, my father felt that she had to be brought up with the Muslim traditions. My mother went along with my father's wishes and went to Kuwait when ... was around one. She felt that she did not have the choice at that point.

This was to be one of my mother's most trying times in her life. When they arrived in Kuwait, my father's religious views became stricter. He no longer wanted my mother to drink, smoke or partake in any leisure activity. And independence he used to promote in my mother was no longer permitted. But at this point my mother was trapped, because they took her green card away for legal reasons and my father had custody of my sister because they were in his country. The situation just got worse and worse and my mother began to look for a way out.

When I was conceived my mother's desire to leave intensified, for she knew what would happen if I was born a woman in Kuwait. She reasoned with my father explaining to him the dangers of what would happen if I was born a boy. If I were to be born a man, I would be without a country, because my father's entire family line was from Palestine. This was a worry at that time. He agreed to let her have me in Chile, but she could not take.... Along, knowing what she might want to do if she finally left the country. So one thing led to the next and my mother was able to get illegal forms allowing Nada to travel with her. They left Kuwait when she was 8 months pregnant with me. My mother always tells me how safe the airplane passengers made her feel. Everyone seemed to know of her situation and sympathized. She feels as if it was one of her most inspiring times in her life, she felt strong and free. This was the initial feeling she had when she first left her home, that was full of safety and security to live a life of hardship, triumph and freedom.

My mother's family and sisters welcomed her with open arms, just as she knew they would. But at this time her father had been sick and died. The family money was lost in a matter of months, when my mother's younger sister lost it gambling. Both my mother and her youngest sister forgave her, for they knew that there was more to gain from life than money. My mother was just glad to know that my sister and I would be safe.

I was born on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August 1981. The entire family helped my mother with her daughters while she worked on her secretarial work. She was ready to be a single mother, who would have sole control over what influenced her daughters. She had great ambitions to teach us the great advantages of being a strong and independent woman of the times. This was always a wish she had, when she was a young girl. She wanted us everything she had and more.

My mother was glad that her family was there to help her at a time in her life when she needed a lot of help. But this would not be the last of her struggles. She still had the task of raising my sister and me. My mother divorced my father from Chile and didn't let him come to see me until I was seven.

My mother worked at a national bank in Santiago. There she befriended with a man who is still her friend now. His name is Fernando. My mother was a temp with him and when one of his friends at a New York bank needed a secretary, he recommended her. She could read and write English and could speak French. Let's just say her new boss, John Roseman, took care of all the paper work and brought my mother, Nada and me to the United States. He also helped my mother find an affordable place in Elizabeth, New Jersey. It was so close to the city that made it also convenient. My mother was well on her way to her dream again. I was two and a half when I came to the States, and Nada was six. She could speak Spanish, Arabic and was learning English. Unfortunately she was unable to hold on Arabic because my father and his family no longer had influence over my sister. Still, we were exposed to a good education and knowing two languages helped.

Although my mother struggled financially, we never noticed it. We had plenty of toys and books. We had nice clothes and I was never hungry. I just never had anything to compare our life to. My peers seemed to be at the same status level as we were. But for my mother it was a strange feeling to be poor, because we were poor. She grew up with a lot of money. She did not even have to bathe herself; they had servants to do it for her. She also worked in New York, where she was able to see what the higher classes dressed and looked like. Her ambitions grew and grew. She wanted us to be exposed more and as we got older, she noticed that those schools in Elizabeth were not as good as other suburban schools. But this was an idea and a goal that she would have to wait to accomplish for she ran into another life changing experience.

Just when my mother started to look for a new place to live, she had some health problems. I was eight at the time and Nada was eleven with her birthday one month away. It was the 26 of March, three days away from my mother's birthday when Nada and I received a call from my mother's boss, Nada's Godfather, John. He told us that he was on the way from New York to pick us up, that we should pack a few things. He told us that we were going to stay with him and Aunt Millie for a week or two. Nada just told me to pack and didn't tell me anything else until Uncle John arrived at our house. We got into the limousine and he told us what happened. My mother was in the hospital, she had a seizure and they were trying to find out what was wrong. We got into the bank and my mother was there. Uncle John yelled at her for signing herself out of the hospital. My mother complained that the hospital was disgusting and that she demanded the right to be brought to a private hospital. (My mother was demanding and knew how to be treated.) But her complaints would have to be met sooner than we expected. She had another seizure moment after her complaint and taken away in just one minute. Later that day we visited her in the hospital only to see her lawyer making her sign some forms. (I know now that they were the forms to her will.) She explained that they found an aneurysm in her head, the same thing that my grandmother died from. She told us that she is lucky the doctors got a chance to find it before it exploded and she should be fine because they were going to take it out. The only reason why my grandmother died was

because she did not know it was there and it exploded before she could do anything. My mother made it seem as if it was OK and I believed her. I knew she would be fine because she always is. The operation was a success and my mother had a safe recovery. I later found out from my sister that there was a ninety-eight percent chance that she was going to come out either blind or paralyzed. My mother never told me, because I was so young but she felt that Nada had to be there for me if anything happened and she would never leave her in a naive state. So she told Nada the truth of the actual risk. Like I said, my mother was fine and our life continued to progress.

About one year later we were able to move to East Brunswick where Nada and I both graduated. We both got into Rutgers University. Even though my mother could not afford to pay for the college, it did not stop us from going. We have learned the value of struggle and triumph. We both know my mother deserves a break and she deserves to enjoy everything she has worked for. I know how satisfying it is for her to see us grow and become independent women who have good education and self-worth. She taught us to be honest and to truly find ourselves. It was difficult for my mother to express herself in a society where women were to ..... conform to certain ideas. My mother wanted us to have opportunity to find ourselves, a thing she struggled with her entire life. I am proud to say that my mother belonged to a transitional generation in a time when it was most difficult. She took many risks and went against the many expectations people had around her. She had hard times but she also had many great connections with many special people. All these things reflect where I am today; I would not change them for the world.

Although I do not have a lot of family stories, I still have very strong ties to my immediate family. It is because my mother chose to get away from her family that I was born. It is because my mother rebelled that I am here to tell the story of a revolutionary woman. The things that she has taught Nada and I are reflected in our personality, in our views and our relationship with people. My mother always told us to love ourselves and to trust ourselves. This has given my sister and me the guts to do what we want with our lives. I think about how different things would be, had my mother never left Chile. I know that our lives are built around the struggles my mother had. There is no doubt in my mind that it is a part of my family history that will pass on to the new generations to come. These are the stories of a woman who broke all the rules and proved to the world that those rules only make us weaker. For it is those rules that restrain us from discovering who we really are. These are the ending words of my mother's interview. And with these words, I let her go, because I understood everything.....