Berta mama in Pécel. (rev. May 10, 2025)

In the history of my great grandfather Gusztáv Sacher-Smolinski I have explained how around 1885 he and wife Berta settled down in Pécel, the village in the valley of the Rákos stream 25 km straight east of Budapest and on the western edge of the Gödöllő hills. To get an idea of the size, the population of the village in 1880 was 2176. The Budapest-Hatvan-Salgótartján railway line passing through the Rákos Valley was built and started to run in 1867, followed by the Hatvan-Miskolc line in 1870, connecting the capital with various parts of the country and aiding the dynamic development of the settlement.

Their small farm was Judith's childhood introduction to life in the countryside, a stark difference from the boring upper-middle class elegance of her downtown home. This was the venue for her development and character building through her interactions with the village children, her numerous cousins and above all with her grandmother Berta mama. She was already 72 at the time Judith was born but remained in high spirits during the following 21 years leaving a profound impression on her grandchildren, from admiration by some as Judith to fear by others including my mother.

Pécel at the time of Judith's childhood was rapidly developing as can be seen in the growth of its all-year inhabitants:* (* from Zsemley Oszkár: Magyar városok és vármegyék monográfiája, Bp, 1938)

1890	2752
1900	3854
1910	5524

By 2024 the size of the town grew to approximately 17000 people.

Lajos Jamriska wrote in the March 1929 issue of the Pézcel paper: « *A rare coincidence brings together a distinguished society, such as we have seen gathered together in the summer for many years. The Bolváry, Cherven, Erdey, Ferdinándy, Francsek, Halász, Hirsch, Horváth, Kelemen, Korányi, Kovácsy, Kunz, Sacher, Szilágyi, Tankó, Toborffy and Zsigmondy families radiated nobility and elegance, and with the weight of their wealth they raised the community itself to a higher level. »*

The move of several personalities connected to our family are good examples of its new attraction as an upper-scale summer residence. We can start with Imre Francsek Sr. (1864–1920), the chief engineer of the Public Works Council who built in the early 1900s the Francsek mansion, a.k.a. "Bagolyvár", the "owl mansion", a huge holiday villa to spend with his large family the summers there. Per websites he had at least five children but according to my family there were eight of them. In the series of "It was like this - it turned out like this" we see it described: "This imposing and spacious villa with towers once had a beautiful little chapel. Its multi-level labyrinthine courtyard constantly echoed with the sound of children's battles."
(http://www.pecelinfo.hu/index.php/raday300/104-ilyen-volt-ilyen-lett-francsek-david-kuria)

Francsek was in the vanguard of the upper-middle class of Pest at the time who made Pécel the fashionable holiday destination. The villas and mansions they built were very strange buildings in the eyes of the locals who nicknamed that area the quarter of India. The holidaymakers knew each other well, they also met regularly in Pest.

Imre Francsek got connected because after he was widowed in 1909 he married Eleonóra “Lóri” Sacher, the sister of his holiday neighbor and good friend István Bárczy, the Lord Mayor, and Judith’s aunt. But already ten years later Imre Francsek Sr. died and Lóri got all the many stepchildren even though several were already adults. Lóri never had any children of her own.

Lóri and Imre Francsek around 1910, one year before their marriage.

As the Pécel Info website informs: “ *The Bárczys navigated the stepchildren to graduation and marriage, including the younger Imre, the future architect of the Széchenyi spa. The wealthy vacationers did a lot for the development of the village: few people remember it, but Imre Francsek also built a public swimming pool in Pécel. There is no trace of this today. The grown-up children sold the Francsek villa to the Dávid family in the 1920s, and it was probably simply confiscated from them during nationalization. It is now very dilapidated, its right wing has been mutilated.* ”

I remember my mother telling me of one of the Francsek boys somehow became a language teacher for the children of somebody important at the Shah’s court in Persia, the present Iran. But one day French guests arrived and the parents summoned the children to speak with them but they were not understood, instead of French they had been taught Hungarian! Of course it was a scandal and our relative was fired.

Surely to a more modest house moved the poet Dezső Halász (1835 – 1910) who was also an official of the Hungarian Land Credit Institute (MF). His son Sándor (1871-1910) was born there, worked as a clerk at the same MF bank, met Magdolna Sacher who after protracted courtship eventually accepted to marry him. He had a difficult life, when his sister Gabriella got the house, they left Pécel and moved to the house of his brother-in-law István Bárczy on Stefánia Avenue 53 in Pest. István also helped him to improve his job and rise to department head at MF and to get him two other positions, one being the secretary of a children hospital, to bolster his income and provide better for his numerous family. Unfortunately several years he felt ill and

complained of abdominal pain; too late it was discovered to be cancer, of which he died at only 38 years. His father followed him a few months later.

István Bárczy's met his future wife Irén (1870-1957) also in Pécel where her Reformist father Gyula Kovácsy (1837-1890) had a villa. He belonged to a landowning family descending from German immigrants to Vác named Schmidt. * (* They "magyarized" their name, which means smith in German, to the Hungarian equivalent word)

Gyula was married to Irma (1847-1920) from a branch of the noble Bánffy family. He was a member of Parliament, the supervisor of a Hungarian-French insurance company and a board member of a credit cooperative.

With his mother also living there, naturally István couldn't think of a better place than Pécel for his summer residence. He built his villa in the new quarter and during holidays all his children were in Pécel and at Berta mama's sprawling property met their cousins who were staying there.

Dr. Bárczy István manor.

Baron Frigyes Korányi manor.

Another neighbor in Pécel was Prof. Dr. Frigyes Korányi (1828-1913), a pioneer in Hungarian medicine with focus on the diagnosis and treatment of respiratory diseases, including tuberculosis. In 1900 he founded the National Korányi Pulmonary Institute where I myself was treated. His son Sándor (1866-1944) was also a physician who specialized in internal medicine. He was a good friend of both Bárczy brothers and in later years protagonist of a lengthy examination of Judith with misunderstandings she humorously recalled in her remembrances as I report in one of the Ujszállás era chapters. His daughter Erzsébet was the best friend of István's daughter Berti.

A further friendship resulted with the physicist Prof. Dr. Jenő Klupathy (1861-1931), who introduced the X-ray technology to Hungary, and established his summer residence in the Klupathy villa in Pécel around the turn of the century.

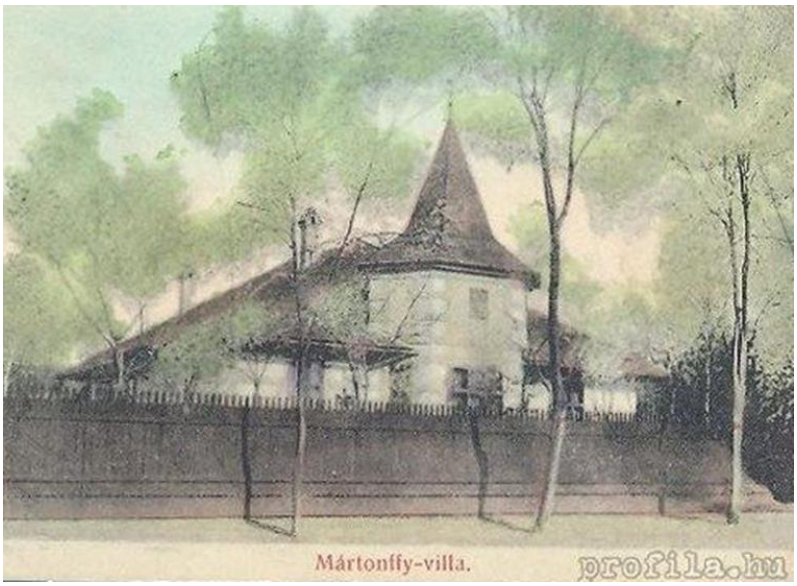
As the same source informs: " *It is very likely that the pleasant summers in Pécel contributed to the deepening of his friendship with István Bárczy. In the field of sports, they appeared together several times in the early 1900s. On the initiative of Jenő Klupathy, for example, the Budapest University Athletic Club (Budapesti Egyetemi Atlétikai Club) is established, where Bárczy also is active; and in the Hungarian Athletics Association (Magyar Atlétikai Szövetség), Bárczy is the president and Klupathy is the vice president. In these positions they work together for a decade and a half.*

*However, there is another common thread. Klupathy's sister, Mária, marries into the Mártonffy family, who are also vacationing in Pécel, and their son Máriusz Mártonffy marries the widowed Magdolna Sacher Halász, István Bárczy's sister. So, after Pécel and sports, István and Jenő become related to each other. ” ** (* From https://peceliszilankok.hu/az-elso-magyar-rontgenfelvetel/)

The same historical series also cover the Mártonffy: ” *Máriusz’s also gains because after his marriage he is nominated to get the director's seat of the capital's power company owned by the city, the Elektromos Művek. The bad tongues of the critics ascribe the concession of this plum job to his new connection with István Bárczy.*

His father Márton Mártonffy de Krasznarécse (1848-1917) married Mária Klupathy in Kassa in 1872. Presumably he ”discovered” Pécel through his Klupathy brother-in-law and built himself a villa around 1912 in today's Ady Endre Street. The street bears the name of Mártfonffy for a short time, then in the 1910s it is named Bárczy István Street, and finally after 1945 becomes again Ady Endre Street.

Márton was born in Transylvania, he had Armenian ancestry and at first studied theology in Kolozsvár, then resigned from the priestly career and chose instead to become a teacher. At the age of 24 years he taught at the public high school in Kassa and one year later was already the director of the local civil school for boys and girls. He strove to create the "bourgeois middle class" of the future but it was his progressive ideas that attracted attention in the early 1870s. In Kassa he started the newspaper Haladás which boldly broadcasts atheistic and socialist ideas. Furthermore, he was sharply criticized by Catholic teaching circles for his views on education.



However, he became a member of Parliament and in the autumn of 1910 a scandal there was broadly reported: « The representative Károly Huszár, later Hungarian Prime Minister, warned the Parliament that with their secret signs the Freemasons gain influence in places where they could not get into otherwise, whereupon the representative Márton Mártonffy slapped himself on the forehead and buried his face in his hands. Another representative jokingly commented: Mártonffy has already signaled! »

Of course, there was a lot of excitement in the Parliament but Mártonffy really took it a long way, he was the grand master of the largest freemason group in Hungary, the Hungarian Symbolic Lodge. He had a holiday home in Pécel, and at one time there was even Mártonffy Street in Pécel.

Márton Mártonffy died of catarrhal pneumonia in May 1917 at the age of 69. His wife survives her husband by only one month. ” * (* https://peceliszilankok.hu/a-szabadkomuves-nagymester/)

István Bárczy and Márton Mártonffy shared a very strong bond through their membership in the secret freemason society.

And a final reflection on Pécel's deep impact on the fate of all the Bárczy – Sacher children. Pécel was where they met all their future spouses who in turn were at least part-time residents in their villas. Thus István found Irén Kovácsy, Magdolna tied up first with Sándor Halász and later with Máriusz Mártonffy, and Irén got Imre Francsek Sr. The only exception was the encounter of my grandfather Gusztáv with Elza Zlamál which was in the capital.

We can now let Judith spin her yarn.

“ My grandmothers were two different poles, each conditioned by their region. Berta mama was from upper Hungary, spoke perfect Slovak, good Hungarian, very badly a splatter of German, no French, no English. But Latin she spoke perfectly because when her brothers were taught, for boys in Upper Hungary a must, she had to sit through the Latin lessons too. And she'd even cuss in Latin too, but she'd cuss in Slovak more.

Upper Hungary was more provincial but absolutely not backwards, it was very much gentry. I mean its nobility was opposed to the Habsburg monarchy, not like Western Hungary which was very much attached to the Court in Vienna. I had very little contact with families in western Hungary, with families that went to Court and so on. I was more attracted to the matriarchal way of Berta mama from upper Hungary. The gentry boys went to university, most were jurist students, learned good Latin, had their social balls, went to the regiments that were suitable to their standing. But they went back to their part of the country, they had no aspirations to go to the court or the capital city. They hunted, raced horses, had big discussions and I have the feeling they were more prolific than those in other parts of the country. So Berta mama grew up in this world and she was the thirteenth of fourteen children.

My other grandmother, Otti mama, was from Transylvanian noble background on one side, and Austrian on the other. The Transylvanians were always more cultured, more sophisticated than the ones in upper Hungary. As I said, Hungary was like a little “United States”, the people had different backgrounds. I'd say the western part was the most cultured and civilized but Transylvania was practically just as high though not attached to Vienna and the Court. And they didn't have Esterházys with Haydn there to make music, they didn‘t have houses with private theaters. But in one way Transylvania had more individualists, more explorers, more multicultural challenges and more Dracula kind stories, such a thing couldn't have emerged in western Hungary. There they had some well brought-up ghosts in the big places and castles behaving according to rules that ghost should observe. But no Dracula, for that you had to be in Transylvania.

So they were not at all raised in a patriarchal way. It was very ‘colégial’ (* collegial), there were very formal balls, there was a pack of hounds in the “dzuk”(kennel?) and a lot of big estates with farmland and forests. In Kolozsvár there was the French boarding school De Gerando so the girls were raised in a different atmosphere, they had more graces, more charm, they were wittier in conversation, in dancing, in riding horseback. It was a more sophisticated way of life.

Then as a young teenager she had traveled a lot with her father. At that time to travel to Italy, to France was quite a thing. She spoke perfect French, Hungarian, German and didn't speak Latin or Slovak and was well read in that time. In short, she had a more cultured, open mind than Berta mama.

And since Uncle Esteban had a place in Pécel too, my cousins and I always met at my grandmother's and got up to all sorts of mischief .

There were no servants except the two old retired manservants Gyuri bácsi and Pista bácsi, and Dusho* (* or Dushel, phonetic) that I knew at hundred three, and Dusho's great granddaughter or something, Rézike. "

Mária Berczik added, from the notes of her grandmother Berta Bárczy Berczik, " *The daily maid Rézike was living in front on Pesti út with the Horváth family and coming every morning and leaving after lunch and washing up the dishes. The Horváth wife was coming regularly to wash the laundry and Pali bácsi was cutting wood. Another apparition was Levandoski bácsi the beggar, he came periodically, rang the pull bell, and the dogs barked to announce his arrival. "* * (* Mária Berczik email of 1/27/2021)

Judith resumes, " When Berta mama gave a chicken to Rézike to kill, if the girl Piri was there, she would do it because she killed everything with the greatest skill. If there wasn't a knife around to cut the neck of a chicken, she'd wring the neck. Chicken would not struggle or hop or jerk. That's why we nicknamed Piri as kakás * (* rooster)

Levandoski bácsi was supposed to be a Polish count or nobleman. He was often drunk but he wasn't despised or denigrated. Then they picked him up and took him to some place he must have had to stay.

Berta mama's yard is hard to define, it wasn't a park or a garden, it was land that sloped down to a creek, the Rákos patak, where there was a bathing house. (* Measured on a map, the distance from the Pesti road to the creek is about 180m) Near that same creek was Gazsika's grave next to hazelnut trees. (* The grave's description wasn't understood) Although it was practically in the middle of the village, her yard was rather overgrown and primitive. I think the soil must have been good, because all the alleys going down to the creek were bordered with oodles of currants and these currant bushes were so tall because Berta mama was against trimming things, that's why they grew so big. She had a well with a chain and a bucket to pull water. In her vegetable garden were always all sorts of vegetables but nothing was in a row. Next to the well were the huge big rhubarbs but I hated rhubarbs; there wasn't a place that you went in that garden where you didn't find something to eat like apple trees, huge, big, but nothing trimmed.

There were two gates onto the Pesti road, the big gate was always closed except only on such occasions as a carriage or car coming. But there was the rondeau before the main house, I'd make a sketch, then to the left of it there was the vegetable garden and all the alleys going down to the creek. If you went straight ahead from the house, after the vegetable garden there was a forest of polygon. It must have been once a few nice bushes but it grew so big. Behind it was the poultry yard, there were two sheds, one of it was a funny house but it suited Berta mama. Speaking of apple trees, in this vegetable garden was a big gap in the middle, facing the house further, and before we got to the polygon, was a huge big apple tree. And when they were ringing the angelus and Berta mama was around, you were ordered under this tree and we had to say with her the angelus. That was I think six o'clock when the church bell rang, and towards the village road – Pesti út – there was a tree stump that was cut for a table with a millstone on it, surrounded by more stumps on which we could sit. And I remember one occasion when we were just sitting around doing nothing and, you know, it was

forbidden to “be sour”. And we didn’t notice Berta mama approaching from the chicken yard bringing I don’t know what. We were sitting there, maybe like seven of us cousins and we couldn’t hear her because everything was so grown and she came and looked at us, saying very strictly:

« Get up. Give me your hands. »

We all had to get up, standing in a circle, and she ordered us to hop, and all at once she started singing a very nasty song and sort of hopping with us. The song, if I can translate it, it was very jaunty, the melody like:

« *Come on, bugs*

Bite their asses!

So that they should have

A reason to jump! »

And she hopping in her very strict black dress. And all at once, just like with Fáy’s four-in-hand, she exclaimed:

« *Change places, urchins!* »

Whereas Otti mama was in a way very smooth, meaning you expected her to have a sense of humor, to be witty and to overlook something like us “being sour”. Not with Berta mama, if she did show any humor she always astonished you, it was so unexpected.

I was very receptive to what they instilled in us children, the horrors of this and that, that you can never cry and all else. Sometimes I reflect if I would have been raised there in Rozsnyó I could have gone with blinkers just as Berta mama but I never want to be misunderstood, because she’s the grandmother that I admired, as a woman of 86 years still with her blinkers and absolute certain ways. I’ve never seen her shed a tear. **Oh yes, I did**, I’m sorry I did!

She had the very old two dachshund, Lici and Panni and we children were there when the female Panni died. She was readied to be buried, she was laid in a big wooden Havana cigar box and it was lined with some white silk. Panni was laid up very neatly in it with a little cushion under her head. She was on the hall table, it was like a buffet and there was Panni with some white flowers although she was not a virgin because she had several litters. The two old manservants Gyuri bácsi and Pista bácsi, who allegedly were already around on the property the Bárczys had in Berta mama’s maiden days, dug the little grave.

They were grave diggers in Pécel and when they managed to get a few nice substantial graves and got paid, they got terribly drunk. When once one of my cousins mentioned this, Berta mama just looked at us and said,

« *I forbid you to say something about one of those very respectable, honest and* ***distinguished*** *men of mine,*

understood? It’s forbidden! »

« Yes, Berta mama. »

« And they’re not drunk, they’re drinking because it’s good for their ***old bones and health***. »

She was having a sort of a wake when Panni was on the buffet table, sitting there quietly looking at Panni very sadly and all at once, CLUCK! CLUCK! She killed two flies that alighted on the nose of Panni. She sighed with

sadness, I don't know if the flies brought back sweet memories and then I saw her smear a tear quickly away. That was the wake of Panni.

We were supposed to bury Panni by Gazsika's grave, it was quite a long march on one of those walkways bordered with currant bushes sloping down to the creek. All of us children were absolutely enthralled and it was natural that we should go after Panni. We started, in front went Honorka, she carried some white flowers, afterwards came Gyuri bácsi carrying the cigar box followed by Berta mama and Aunt Erzsóka, and then us, all the grandchildren. And all at once, Gyuri bácsi's stride got rather unsteady, we suspected from drinking but it could have been from the emotion but then he restarted, loudly singing « Heeeere you left us! You white young beauty! Heeeere yooooooou left us! You whiiiiiiiiiite young beauty! » I saw Berta mama's shoulder giving, I don't know if it was a sob or a giggle. So then the tragedy was duly ended and Panni was buried in state. Lici still lived for quite a while, he was buried in state too.

from left to right: Lici, Berta mama, Aunt Erzsóka, Lussen, ca.1910.

I told already how in spring and winter the seamstress came to the Vigadó and garments were altered, letting down the hems and fitting them as hand-me-downs. Then when everything got to the point that there was nobody left to hand it down to, it was given to the village children in Pécel and Lord knows why but it was that the buttons were always cut off; there were jars in the sewing room full of different buttons. It must have come from the time when buttons were a rarity but I don't know. And you knew when the hand-me-downs reached Pécel because you saw the children going with open pants and unbuttoned shirts. That was the final use but why buttonless, nobody knew. ”

Uncle Esteban and Berti in the living room of his villa.

Uncle Esteban at Berta mama's main door next to the rondeau.

For the following episode I have to introduce a young friend of Berta mama, György "Gyula" Fáy de Fáj (1879-1940). The Fáy and the Counts Ráday were historically the largest landowners is Pécel. As explained in Appendix 4, the Fáy were a very old family from Abaúj county that already in 1612, in the Turkish times, after much litigation, received in pledge and so owned the entire village of Péczel - as then spelled - and several neighboring villages and land from the Hubay family. So, they were the oldest landlord of the Pécel village.

György's father Béla Fáy (1848-1921) was a well-respected landowner and owner of a nationally known stud farm. He was married to Mária Blaskovich, the sister of Ernő Blaskovich, the owner of Kincsem. The famous horse was obviously an everyday topic at family gatherings, and Béla often boasted in his old age that he already knew Kincsem's potential when he was a foal. By the way, I think that Mária Blaskovich was through the Ferdinándy a distant relative of Berta mama which could explain their connection. Another possibility could be from the Fáy originating from the same area in Upper Hungary.

I have already mentioned in the separate paper on my great grandfather Gusztáv Sacher-Smolinski that many years before they were playing bowling on the lawn, also called lawn bowls, in a Pécel park next to their plot. In those old times, for reasons that haven't yet been researched, Pécel was the site of this event of certain prominence because several aristocrats joined the games. Most likely Béla Fáy or other family members also participated or might even have sponsored them.

Let's hear what Judith had to say: " At that time lawn bowling was a gentlemanly sport, it wasn't designed for the simple people, so all these very wealthy men came down from their castles to the bowling thing that they had in the park, Count Géza Andrássy and Count Forgách, surely one or more of the sons of Ct. Kálmán Forgách, everybody was then there, and they needed volunteers to pick up and carry the balls and do that kind of help so Papa and other children were there helping with the balls. We can now tell about the tragedy that later transpired in Nagyszalánc and that I have used in „Mark of Clover", because there were three Forgách sons and the daughter Margit, but we can't mix it up with the gossip of a scandal. Because Margit had a little girl Pálma born March 1880 and she was close to Papa's age (*Sept. 1874), somewhat younger, so there was a connection. Because in later years, the children of Pálma, the siblings Princes Niki and Margit Odescalchi were our intimate friends and we spent much time visiting them and their family in the estates of Tuzsér and

Mándlik and they of course came to us, Niki flying in his airplane, and from there is this superstition of the love of Pálma and Papa. It's hard to say whether this gossip came from the Forgách or the Bárczy side, not even gossip, mere servant's talk. ”

By the time of György's birth, Béla Fáy had already sold a significant part of his properties in Pécel taking advantage of the wave of holidaymakers from Budapest buying land to build extravagant summer mansions in the India quarter of Pécel. György Fáy already in his early twenties was a quite progressive landlord building apartments and a school for his employees on the farms around Pécel. Around 1910 he built his eclectic-style castle in neo-baroque style. The gable is decorated with the coat of arms of the Fáy family. The building was converted into an agricultural school after the Second World War.

On the national scene György's younger brother László (1890-1937) was better known as an equestrian sportsman, a motorcar racer, a beautiful man mentioned in social magazines and the future military staff officer of Regent Horthy. In November 1919 he entered Budapest riding in the second row after the commander-in-chief on his white horse at the head of the procession. Moreover, in 1922 he married the Regent's daughter Paulette. However, the marriage failed and he fell in disgrace, lost his positions and lived in Pécel a reportedly dissolute life until his death in 1937 of cancer at 47 years.

I mention him because Judith was an acquaintance, either from her youth in Pécel or through horse shows, but she didn't make an effort to leave Ujszállás when through his niece Potyika he asked her to visit him in the hospital. This was presumably the reason why many years later Potyika, by then very wealthy and living in Switzerland, refused financial assistance when Judith was in great need in Virginia.

During the war Potyika stayed at the castle in Pécel for a while. As the Italian embassy in town was damaged by bombs, it was moved for a very short time to the Fáy's castle in Pécel. This way she met an Italian man and they moved to Rome. In Rome Erzsébet got an excellent job as secretary of Sir Oliver Duncan, a very rich Englishman. After Mr. Duncan died, Erzsébet inherited all the wealth. She got famous because she gave a large part of this money to the Hungarian Catholic community in Rome. One can read in Wikipedia more about her gift to the Casa di Santo Stefano.* (* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casa_di_Santo_Stefano)

Judith remembered quite well her impressions from being a guest of the Fáy, probably in later years as an adult.

“ The landscapes around Pécel were rather dreary but in town there were a few nice, but not big, Baroque manor houses or castles. The one of the Fáy was very end-of-Baroque, it was Josefinish, not yet Biedermeier. Also the manors in the India quarter were in a very good taste, not the traditional Hungarian manor house like I had practically copied in Ujszállás with the spreading flat house branching out into one or two so-called wing houses with very nice portals and harmonious dimensions. Here in Pécel the walls of the manors were covered with some brocade, not wainscotting, and a lot of them just white washed, very nice lines, very nice ceilings, I would say they were **gracious** but with no trees around them, they had formal gardens but very few had really a nice park left with the original big trees.

There was that driving incident when Gyula Fáy came to give Berta mama a ride with a four-in-hand, when the carriage couldn’t make the turn because there was the so-called rondeau. You drove in by the big gate, which was always shut because Berta mama didn’t have any horses, she was a pony-type family, the two old lads couldn’t have handled horses anymore, Gyuri bácsi and Pista bácsi.* (Judith called Gyuri in this instance Józsi but I assume it was a mix-up) Allegedly Pista bácsi was a four-in-hand coachman. Well, anyway, he could tell us anything that he wanted.

But you know, it was a round patch with roses, and sided by boxwood. It was English boxwood but it already grew so high that the poor roses, they were tree roses, only had sort of their heads up. But you had to come in by the gate and stop by the house and then drive around it. But it was pretty narrow. And not far from it was the poultry yard with all sort of animals in it. There was a whole wood polygon before it, but you could hear the cackling.

It was an old-fashioned chicken yard, with all kinds of chickens, all colors, and some geese in between. There was also for one year a stork that had fallen out of the nest and that broke its wings. That reminds me something he did. A hen had some little chicks and had them brought out. And the stork was going by – I haven’t seen it, my cousin Berti told me – the stork took a little chick and swallowed it. Berta mama was there and was momentarily startled and the stork took **another** little chick and Berta mama **yelled** at the stork and the stork knew her and - PLOONK – spat out the two little chicks. And nothing wrong with them! That stork only flew away the next year, already grown a good size, at the mating time.

But coming back to the carriage, it looked very nice with a coachman and a footman, and Gyula sitting there as the driver. The footman jumps out, and Berta mama always said that a lady can mount into a driving carriage – and they were high – without showing her ankle. So she mounted to the front seat and Gyula started to drive. The two front horses for some reason didn’t lead and the carriage, like a truck, jackknifes. Well, the footman jumps down, straightened the team out again, they took one step, and again, jackknife.

Négyes fogat, the four-in-hand.

So Berta mama said to Gyula* (* who was 50 years younger) *« Gyuli öcsém*, let's trade places.* » (*little "brother") They changed places, she took the whip from him, he had it rolled up, she opened it, HIT the leaders, ZOOM they started off. She drove out onto the road, gave it back to him, said, « *You are old enough to have learned to drive*, » and that was that.

And my grandmother was at that time almost eighty (* around 1908) and to me she looked terribly old. But if she said something to somebody, Lord, it was unquestionably obeyed. But she was so unexpected too, very, very strict but there wasn't a question of table manners because usually we children ate separately on the veranda and we weren't admitted to the dining table. In the afternoon we got a jug of milk and a big slice of bread with prune jam on it.

Years later there was another little episode with this same Gyula Fáy gentleman who came by driving his two-horse carriage and saw my cousin Irén who came second after Honorka the flustered, she was about 17 or something like it. (* so probably it was 1915 or earlier)

He sort of yelled into the garden from the road, he didn't drive in, « *Well Irén, don't you want to come for a little drive? »*

Well, naturally she said fine and crawled up beside him and went for a very nice ride, not at all romantic on discreet shady lanes, it was between fields and open land on sandy roads and just pleasant driving around with a pair of good horses.

So when she came back she met Berta mama and sometimes it was hard to read the old ladies because they could make sort of a wooden face, I don't mean unpleasant but with no expression. So she told her, « *I'm shocked at you. To begin with you should have asked permission, namely going unchaperoned with a man in the village. It's terrible how brazen the young girls are getting nowadays. Look, in my younger days there was a couple of young women, Julia Orosz was one, and they had two young men escorting them and they rode in a calash.* (* also called calèche, where you sit inside, below and behind the coachman)

A calash.

In those times, since they didn't have their husbands or somebody with them, when they drove through the village they hid their escorts under their crinoline. »

So Berta mama, after saying this, departed. I and Irén looked at each other, we didn't know if it was a joke or a fact. But we didn't have time enough to wonder about it. "

What is remarkable is the familiarity of Berta mama with this Gyuli who despite his youth, by position and wealth must have been already one of the most prominent citizens of Pécel. I suspect this was her way, no reverence for any person not part of the religious hierarchy rather than from cognizance of their distant kinship.

“ The fact is that when you were young you learned. I remember going with Berta mama and children were weeding beets. Child labor was absolutely permitted. In winter there were classes until age 12 or 13 and at eighteen they were drafted. During vacation they would help in the farm. Thinning beets is something a small child does without bending down. When I saw them weeding I said to Berta mama, *« Can’t I weed with them? I would like to.* »

She thought I wouldn’t like it and said, « *No, but do you really want to? Then next morning you go when they come out and go into the row with them, and you finish when they do.* »

So next morning I was out in the beet field weeding with the farm children. There we had lunch; some pieces of bread with turó on it (* cottage cheese) or some lekvár (* prune jam) and a jug of milk; it was wonderful, sitting in the grass, munching and finishing.

Before evening Berta mama came and asked, « *Now, how do you feel about it? Didn’t you have enough?* »

I said « *No Berta mama, I’d prefer to go on with the children*. »

Because Lord, was it pleasanter than to have private lessons of French or piano, have to eat properly, be neat and things one didn’t especially like. It was heaven in comparison.

It’s difficult to describe how that kind of work occupied our minds. Like learning to graft roses, really ramblers, they had to be cut, the eye has to be outside and so on. It was such an elating feeling when talking to the gardener and he asks, *« Little miss, how are you doing?* » and I could say very good.

In my family children didn’t die and I didn’t know that in Dollár’s family they did. By us they were either infants, but healthy infants, strong infants, or they died before they were born. Like my aunt, Uncle Esteban’s wife* (* Irén Kovácsi), she had a miscarriage, the fetus was buried in grandmother’s garden by the hazelnut trees. Gáspár “Gazsika” would have been his name, but nobody was tragic about it. I think Mama too had a miscarriage of a boy.* (* Granny told me this too, Oh, 75 years ago, and I think his name was to be Mátyas, i.e. Matthias. These two stillborn boys were the only ones who could have carried on our Bárczy branch so instead the male line died out)

But those Easter and summer times were when I got together with all my cousins at Berta mama’s place. They were a pretty indestructible breed. There was only one boy by an aunt of mine, Aunt Manci who married Sándor Halász and produced three girls and Pista, who was the only boy between us cousins. But Uncle Sándor then got sickly for a long time and died early at age 39. He had something wrong with his stomach. * (* cancer) So the frequent comments of him complaining of stomach pain made us children, in a way, look down on his children. “

Pécel, three sisters and one cousin: Berti, Moncsi, Igyi, Honorka.
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Pécel, 1908. Back row: Eleonóra “Lóri”, Honorka, Pista, Irén “Igyi”, Sándor Halász,“Moncsi”; Middle row: Erzsóka, Berti, Berta mama, Piroska, “Manci”; Front row: Ilona “Lussen”, Kati.

I need to clarify that Judith stressed this was the opinion of their cousins who as children were neither well informed nor of a compassionate kind but of course their parents knew better and sympathized with Sándor who had held up to three jobs obtained through Uncle Esteban to provide well for his family he loved intensely.

“ We were all girls, three each by Papa and Aunt Manci, four by Uncle Esteban, so we were ten against Pista, he had a hell of a life.”

Timewise it was not as implied by Judith. In her first years of play there were actually seven cousins: Honorka and Moncsi born in 1895, Pista and Irén “Igyi” born in 1898, Judith and Berti born in 1901 and Kati in 1902. In later years also participated Ilona “Lussen” from 1905 and Piroska born 1907. Judith’s sisters Toto born 1912 and Hanna from 1917 were too young and never played with Judith. So Pista was actually competing against a still overwhelming number, six girls against one boy.

Judith: “ But Pista was cocky, he stood up quite well when we girls got fed up and ganged up on him not far from Gazsicka’s grave where there was the Rákos ditch and above it was a pear tree. I think it must have been a very good type of pear, it was a winter pear, we called it “boomsli tree” because when you shook it, pears fell on your head with such a boom. This tree never had a chance to get ripe pears because we always ate them still somewhat green, they were awful, worse than a beet, even harder.

Ágnes Berczik remembered Judith’s cousin Berti recounting how she truly loved those childhood years there. One of her stories was when the cousins went to the Rákos creek looking for river crabs, and if the "hunt" was successful, they ate them.

And there under the boomsli tree was a little bridge over the creek. The ditch had a little narrow run in it, and the boomsli tree was next above it and it was underneath it where we had terrible fights when we got mad at a cousin. But it was forbidden to pull hair and scratch, break, bite; otherwise you could hit how and where you wanted. So if Pista did something against our rules or we anyway got mad at him, we fought.

He was quite strong, I would say when I was 10 he was 13, he was one of the older ones, so it was something to subdue him. Honorka was very good as the oldest cousin because she was like a ram, she'd go and put her head down, run and ram you. So there was Honorka and Moncsi, then came Pista and Igyi, then Berti and I. So when we really got mad at him, we fought and usually the end was that we rolled him into the creek and then stuffed him under the bridge. But he'd come out and get us too, he wasn't a sissy.

Igyi and Honorka.

In my younger years when we met at Berta mama's house my cousins had their governesses, I had my Fräulein Gasparich and Pista had at that time a tutor. So these four were having tea and coffee with cake and we were off murdering each other. But you know, it was never ill tempered, it's hard to explain, we fought the disputes physically out but that was about all. Our clashes made us need an extra bath but nobody got shocked that we had our fights. In a way, faced with whoever fought you, it was cheerful for us when we felt embittered by private lessons of French and German forcing us to write letters correctly in a difficult language. I found if you can write very amusing letters, you can permit yourself a few orthographic mistakes. But there were certain mistakes that you couldn't make. So, maybe because that unwelcome study was sort of a black background, your joys came out more sharply, and when you were left to get steam off, we really enjoyed and remembered them.

And also things happened, like in one of our fights with Pista, I don't know if it was intentional or not, but I stuck a piece of wood, like a peg, in his leg. I don't know if I wasn't to be blamed for it but naturally we didn't report it. We didn't report such things, because the only remedy that was known to us was iodine and if you had a bleeding wound, it stung, and so he kept it quiet. It got infected too but later it got alright. Then in the first World War he was wounded in Italy on the same leg and they had to amputate. But as I told, he had an unhealthy father, so they were always a little bit despised by us children because their father was unhealthy and died young. You know with children it was funny, we had seldom compassion for grown-ups but a pretty strong feeling of clan, a little bit of snobbishness, actually quite a bit of snobbishness. So poor Pista, it turned out that he had some sickness with his veins and he was a sort of a gay bloke and he went on one leg after the first Word War, he had many surgeries but then they amputated his other leg. He married, obviously nobody of society but he married a very nice girl, Ilus* (* Ilona Wismann) an office girl, not middle class but honest from a good family. I think he produced a daughter and he became sort of a preacher and lived in a village. I went to visit him, he had a big bed, and he was hopping cheerfully around or pulling himself with his

wheelchair and young men came from this village to him, he was sort of counselor, it seemed like they held him, I'd say, for a prophet, killed by communists. "

Judith's description is not very accurate. But thanks to Pista's daughter Zsuzsa I got the real facts. Zsuzsa reports:

" My father was captured by Isonzo and while a POW his feet froze, he learned Italian and, having acting talent, played and acted on stages there. An illness of chronic gangrene started but he was operated only after his return from captivity to Budapest; fingers and part of one leg had to be amputated. He got married but poor Mimi Sisa, a lovely, delicate creature died very early of tuberculosis. His second wife Ilona Wismann, my mother, resembled her but was a sporty woman of strong character with a golden heart. She worked in the office of a private business and rose to become its manager. She admired my father's strength of mind and his love of sport that even made him play football with a prosthesis. He was greatly helped by his stepfather Máriusz Mártonffy who was the managing director of the city's power company Elektromos Müvek which owned its own sport campus which still exists on the bank of the Danube, on the Pest side near Árpád bridge at Latorca utca 2. There Pista got a job compatible with his handicap and most importantly an apartment in the warden's building for his small family.

Sadly his gangrene illness kept advancing and at that time the only treatment were amputations. He was operated again and again, 14 times in all, and gradually lost both legs. Unfortunately he couldn't give up smoking and almost lost his hands too. Nevertheless he was enthusiastic about football and never missed a home match of the Elektromos Müvek team. This is how he connected with equally enthused young fans of this team who were often around him eagerly listening to his explanations and advice. Pista called them his "pupils" although they were rather his followers. It was a very creative period in his life. Beside playing guitar, composing little songs, writing poems, he kept – as a hobby – domestic animals giving them funny names. He experimented with several types of grass for the play field and found a more durable variety.

In the thirties his very good friend, the Calvinist bishop Albert Bereczky, helped him not only by joint praying for his hand but also because he found out there was a Swiss medicament, an eye-ointment, Irgamid, which could cure his diseased fingers.

Even before WW II it was very difficult to get this medicine, therefore he probably asked Judith mama to procure it to him and that was why she came. In those times the surroundings were mainly empty land, some crop fields, pasturing farm animals watched by maids, simple small houses, and a group of dirty children from the neighbourhood playing. Only later was this quarter entirely built up and all rural vestiges disappeared. No wonder she remembered that my parents lived in a poor village. And Pista giving advice and explanations to his young football-loving followers could surely be seen as a role similar to a priest or a prophet.

In late 1944 my mother assisted her boss, a Jew, to hide his valuables possessions like Persian carpets and him to flee from his home. She enlisted the keeper of the boathouse to help her hide the carpets but then he coveted them for himself and denounced her, so we had to flee from the arrow-cross goons. Thus we too lost all of our belongings. In bitter irony, her boss wasn't a grateful type; after the war he accused us of stealing his Persian carpets. My parents had to declare repeatedly in court that we all three were in danger because the boot-keeper had set his eyes on these carpets. After that we went up and down, it would be too long to tell. At last we had to be content with a modest situation, a room-kitchen flat together with my mother's mother in

Újpest. In the last period of my father's life the gangrene spread to his stomach but the attending physicians misdiagnosed and treated him for a bile problem and he died in January 1955. "

I suppose Judith said Pista was " killed by communists " meaning the medical malpractice that killed him in the communist time.

Now we return to Judith: " I must say that practically all my cousins had some guts, there's no other expression for them, they stood their ground, they were not in political things, they were not in women's clubs or anything as disgusting as that, they stood by their husbands, sometimes in an odd way, like me with Dollár, they argued and quarreled with them but everybody living their own life in courtesy and when it was necessary to come to – I won't use the stupid word «rescue» – not the rescue but to stand by somebody, they would do it, their differences wouldn't matter in your marriage.

We even had an idea of what we wanted to do in life. One said I want to marry a rich man; another that she wanted to travel a lot. And I said I wanted to be an adventuress and everybody was shocked because they thought such women must be bad. Honorka, who was the oldest of the cousins and an idiot said, « *Me, I'm going to be a toilet cleaner. »*

« Well, why? »

« Why? Because they go at night and rest during the day. »

The following historic picture was taken a few years later around 1915-16 at the garden table under the big apple tree mentioned by Judith.

Front row, left to right: Piroska and Erzsébet Bárczy. Rear row: Imre Francsek Jr., Pista Halász, Irén Kovácsy wife of István B., Lulu Francsek, Aunt Lóri, Igyi, Judith, Chaplain Gyula Szabados, Elza Zlamál with husband Gusztáv Bárczy, Ilona Francsek?, Aunt Erzsóka, Irén Francsek?, the Halász: Monci, Aunt Manci and Kati.

It depicts Berta mama sitting with her loom surrounded by children and grandchildren including some Francsek step-grandchildren. Honoráta and Berti were absent. Also missing is the youngest of all, Hanna

Bárczy would be born only the following year. Judith in school uniform is shown in the center of the front row, above her sister Erzsébet “Toto”, my mother, who is held by her mother Elza and father Gusztáv further to the left behind her.

I liked the Easter celebration much better in Pécel than in town. Because here, after mass, there even was the ‘rézesbanda’, the brass band. This was never by Gypsy musicians but a true brass band that was supposed to blow appropriate liturgical songs. I don’t know what happened but one time they got a lighter band which started, instead of a nice religious uplifting song, with Schneider Fáni that was one of the popular Schlagers at the time. I remember best the verse that translates as:

I went to the fair with Fani Schneider
With Fani Schneider, with Fani Schneider
I bought her a red skirt with three frills,
*With three frills, with three frills. **

(* To translate, Judith first hummed the verses with great gusto in Hungarian)

So, there was no way of stopping them so everybody got into rhyme and started singing this Schlager. Well, in a way it expressed more the joy of the resurrection of Jesus Christ than if they would have gone on with their more solemn songs. “ Here is a transcript and its rough translation.* (* Maria Berczik email of June 7, 2020)

Az életem mostan azért szomorú,
Azért szomorú, csak nem azért szomorú,
Mert Fánival tört ki a nagy háború,
A nagy háború, a nagy égi háború.

Mert néki kell a gigerli és nékem kell a nő,
És a szerelmem nőttön nő, ez itt a bökkenő.
És bármit is megpróbálok, az semmit se használ,
Mert néki juszt is csak csupán gigerli imponál.

Elmentem én a vásárba Schneider Fánival
Schneider Fánival, Schneider Fánival

My life is now sad because
It's sad, it's just not sad
Because the big war broke out with Fanni,
The great war, the great celestial war.

Because she needs the gigerli and I need the woman,
And my love is growing, that's the catch.
And no matter what I try, it's no use
Because she's just impressed by gigerli.*

I went to the fair with Fani Schneider
With Fani Schneider, with Fani Schneider

Vettem néki piros szoknyát három fodorral,
Három fodorral, három fodorral

Mire a Schneider Fáni csak azt mondta:
Nem kell néki piros szoknya,
Inkább kell néki gigerli,
Az őt jobban ingerli!

Mert a Schneider Fáni csak azt mondta:
Nem kell néki piros szoknya,
Inkább kell néki gigerli,
Az őt jobban ingerli!

I bought her a red skirt with three frills,
With three frills, with three frills!

Whereupon Fani Schneider just said:
She doesn't need a red skirt,
She needs a gigerli better,
This turns me on more!

Because Fani Schneider just said:
She doesn't need a red skirt,

She needs a gigerli better,
This turns me on more!

(* Gigerli: a guy in a strange/flashy dress)

Everybody still knows the original text which is sung at celebrations in pubs and with friends.

“ At that time, we had that feeling of expectancy, that something very exciting and joyous going to happen. Not like the poor children nowadays whose expectations are mainly about shopping, that’s not that bright-eyed sensation we felt. Take the Easter egg hunt when eggs were appreciated for eating, we planned pushing each other and thus dropping an egg with the intent that it cracks so we can eat it. Our minds were busy with such little things. Either half past seven or eight o’clock in the evening we children had our meal, a very simple thing to eat and then at the regular hour, at half past nine we were shoved to bed. Nobody could go to sleep because everybody was terribly excited about the next day and so you were thinking in the dark, you were speculating how you were going to search well, which way you were going when the hunt begins. So finally we went to sleep and then, Easter Sunday, kalács, the ham, the food was put in big baskets like those they had for washing linen, baskets woven like this wicker chair but larger. It was taken to church at dawn, to be blessed. You know everybody was walking to church three times as much as otherwise.

After we children were dressed, in the big dining room the table was set for the so-called Easter breakfast. In the middle we had the butter lamb, then usually there were two hams, one on each end, in a smaller house had they had one but by us there’s always a big table. Then there were the different types of beiglis, and two big baskets of dyed eggs, hard boiled eggs and nothing more. No drinks except water, for Easter breakfast there were no drinks out, I don’t remember any. Well obviously, no coffee or tea or anything with it. And then the big dining room was closed. For Easter it was really open house but in the beginning it wasn’t, because first we just had children and all had to eat breakfast as normally sitting in the nursery or wherever. And everywhere the children, nobody had appetite because everybody was already so eager to go out and be able to hunt eggs as soon as it starts. Well it started let’s say at 10 o’clock, it depended on the weather and so on. But by that time all the eggs were hidden and then the children lined up and then the smaller ones had a little head start but very little, because you could not have kept back the other ones. When the “Go” was given, the second bunch went and you could see 30 or 40 children pushing each other, fighting over who gets the egg, they all had a big basket and so they had a hell of a good time, shoving each other. I have it vividly described in Hungarian in the poem I can’t find.

You know, shouts offered different treats that came to you, like “Janika! Janika fell on his ass! Don’t push him!” This and that!) and if I find my Hungarian poem I’ll get more back of that atmosphere. Then there was a very nice game, you would stand next to the other, you each had an egg and knocked the eggs, one egg against the other, and the one that broke had to give her egg to the other one, that was the “egg game”. This again was done with a great glee. You see, in such a thing, no governess or any grownup admonished you that, now, behave or something will happen, we were let loose to have our own fun and then we were exhausted by the time the so-called Easter breakfast started and then you got beigli, because you didn’t feel like eating any eggs anymore, you were already feeling half sick, and everybody very excited still, and you gobbled the beigli and so on. Sometimes we had Olympic games, that was what we called them, the boys were lined up to run, and who won got an extra big prize, a large chocolate egg or something because we had also some chocolate eggs but it was something for genuine fun and entertainment.

It all ended at 11 or half past 11 and then those that went to the church for Mass left. Usually the grownups but not many children, because we went very often on Good Friday, you sat down in the church with all the statues veiled in purple, which was horrid; the Christ wasn’t illuminated, it was quiet, and you thought of Jesus Christ and it didn’t make one damn difference if he was a man, or God, but what he went through, what he

suffered, for this lousy mankind, is something that people should sometimes think about. Because such thinking lessens if not abolishes the fear of death. ”

When Judith was narrating this subject, she was swept away by the intensity of her feelings and shared her very personal views she normally would keep to herself.

“ But going to church, I found that here in America they can’t give an hour or two in a quiet church, but on the other hand when three years ago I wanted to go here to the church, it was closed, it was locked. It opens only when the priest is there jabbering at you, and that kind of reflection on the meaning of Easter is not something that anybody can jabber at you. It has to be understood in **yourself**, I mean, it’s something incredible, it’s a miracle, and as I say if he was not God’s son, he was a man and if a man can do such sacrifice for this lousy mankind and what bloodshed and what horrors have been done in his name. So, when I was young it very often came in my mind that he really wasted his time on our mankind. Anyway, religion is something that I don’t want to talk about but then I fall into talking about it. “

And with these thoughts Judith completed her memories of these childhood vacations in Pécel with Berta mama. They ended in 1911 because the following years till the end of WW I her family stayed during summers and other holidays in the manor of Count Andrássy in the mountains above Rozsnyó as she vividly recalls in the following chapter.

But in her teenage years she would occasionally visit her favorite grandmother in Pécel, most memorably during the Commune when she received notice that Berta mama could be dying. She ruined a good horse, which she never forgave herself, riding from Pest to Pécel, discovering it was a false alarm and venturing an adventurous ride back at night, intercepted by men in the darkness as reported in the part on Berta mama’s last years.

4. Last years of Berta mama until her death in 1922.

Berta mama was such an outstanding personage in Pécel that I felt the need to begin this chapter with the circumstances leading to the move of her family to Pécel. The following is a transcript of excerpts from my separate paper on her husband Gusztáv Sacher-Smolinski.

« *The address book of Budapest for 1880-81 shows on page 229* « Sacher Gusztáv, teacher and Professor, VIII. Ősz-u. 41. » *As an anecdote, later, after enlargement in 1926, this four-storied edifice was used by the Sacré Coeur Gymnasium for girls, the Sophianum.*

Living with five children in an apartment of a multifamily building in a noisy central neighborhood clearly could not have been very enjoyable. The hot summers there must have been quite oppressive.

*In hindsight, we see Gusztáv and Berta wished a more rural life with their own vegetable patch, fruit orchard and chicken as Berta was used to from her youth in Abaúj county. She had an aunt, Teréz Bárczy, whose grandson was Bertalan Ferdinándy de Hidasnemét (1821-1894) who in the early 1880's settled down on the Pesti út in Pécel near to the corner of the Völgy utca intersection. The old post office and the most famous old Jardek pub-restaurant were also near there. Pécel was still a rather small village, it had 2176 inhabitants in 1880 and 2752 by 1890** (* Zsemley Oszkár: Magyar városok és vármegyék monográfiája, Bp, 1938)

Bertalan's family was close to the Bárczy already in earlier times. Like his great-uncle Gáspár Bárczy, he entered the legal profession and by 1846 was the deputy magistrate of Abaúj county, by 1860 the chief magistrate of the Kassa district, and in 1861 the first 'alispán' of Abaúj county, like a lieutenant governor. He was a member of the 1848/49 parliament, a supporter of Lajos Kossuth. He was imprisoned after the suppression of the War of Independence and sentenced to death in 1850, but was pardoned after the fall of Haynau. He had five sons and two daughters. The sons in Pécel were often playmates and sport companions of the Sacher boys and all achieved important career successes later in their lives

The reason for introducing these Ferdinándy relatives is my conviction that it was Bertalan who convinced Berta and Gusztáv of the attraction of living in Pécel. Gusztáv probably got additional confidence from a colleague as explained by Magdolna Vargha: « In 1867 the railway was built between Pest and Hatvan, and its famous station, Pécel. Trains depart from Losonczy (later Józsefvárosi) railway station, which is not too far from Gusztáv's school, not even on foot, let alone by bike. Gusztáv has a nice colleague, János Tankó, who lived in Pécel, and he encourages him to come out and see what beautiful vacant lots are on the bank of the Rákos stream, you can quickly get a train in from there. »

János Tankó was the geography teacher whose daily cheerful commute must have made an impression on Gusztáv too because they decided to move and bought the plot on Pesti út 49, the main road of the village. It was not small; from memory when I visited it, it was about 30m wide and it ran all the way, about 170m on the map, till the creek, the Rákos patak, the crab creek. It took some time for Berta to save enough money from Gusztáv's salary, their sole income, to build a little two-room house around the mid-eighties. In later years, István Bárczy, by then mayor of Budapest, built for his widowed mother two additions to the house and a pretty porch. As we'll see, Judith described aspects of the house and the large garden. I was fortunate to have seen the place in the late nineties because thereafter the house disappeared, presently several blocks are covered with new buildings and a larger main Pesti road was laid, leaving the old road as a side street for access to the large new buildings.

Naturally Berta and Gusztáv had social life in Pécel. There were not only János Tankó and Bertalan Ferdinándy, other Pécel residents were their friend Professor baron Korány, also Dezső Halász, the poet and official of the Hungarian Land Credit Institute, originally from Nagyvárad from where Gustav knew him. His son would later marry Gustav's daughter Manci. Then there was the architect Imre Francsek who, many years later, as a widower, would marry Lóri Sacher. »

I was fortunate to get glimpses of Berta mama's life when Gusztáv was still alive and the children at home from a eulogy composed upon her death by a younger lady from her church group who knew her well. I have translated it in Appendix 4 and repeat here the relevant details.

« *How was our aunt Berta? She came from an old noble family, then she married a lowly paid high school teacher sixty years ago. She never kept a servant, even though she had many children, she cooked herself, washed herself, shopped herself, sewed herself, and despite all these worries, she managed to become the center of "the noble gentry society that had moved from Zemplén to Pest."*

And in addition to this incessant activity that grinds others down, she remained with such a cheerful soul until the age of eighty, so enthusiastic about all things beautiful, that she justified the famous saying:

" Die Jahre zählen nicht! " (The years don't matter!)

Just as she insisted on observing Sunday's rest, just as strictly she kept weekdays as working days. On Sunday afternoon, half the young and old of Zemplén gathered around her. But the apartment was small, the modest teacher's salary did not cover more than two rooms. One is the dining room, living room and guest room all in one, the other is a small bedroom.

There were about thirty of us. Our lady was not embarrassed. She ordered the young men out into the kitchen. Only she could do this!

A maid was not in the house, so the kitchen was the kind of residential kitchen that was recently discovered with great fanfare by the German interior designers: Wohnküche. Our mother Berta preceded them by forty years!

The sewing machine was by the window, because it was cooking for eight people, while the soup was cooking and the pasta was baking, many things could be sewn on the side. The chicken cage stood further away, carefully covered with a homemade fabric. Because you don't throw away kitchen waste when a couple of chicks are slowly munching on it. An old leather sofa stretched out in the corner, in front of it the round dining table and there in the corner our brother Gusztáv's pocketbook library and his "pipearium" were tucked away! Because why burn two lamps, when one can keep the whole family in peace!

What unforgettable afternoons we spent in this pure Dutch milieu. The big boy, István Bárczy's brilliant piano playing rang out from the large room; the magnificent coffee was brewing on the stove, the most crumbly cake and the most beautiful jam came on the table. Our Aunt Berta's phenomenal housekeeping was amazingly sufficient for everything. After the snack, we young girls sat around her as she gave us the lessons according to each one's interest.

At that time, it was fashionable to complain about children's care. It was fashionable for a young woman to think of herself as a victim when she had already given birth to three children. She was the only one who went against this shameful trend, saying: « If God creates a rabbit, he creates a bush for it! »

She taught us to take tender care of our husbands, to be thrifty, to be unpretentious, and above all, to be religious! I don't know if there was a noble woman in the village who lived in more modest financial conditions than her during her widowhood, when she retired to her modest village house, but I do know that we have a beautiful new church, we have a parish, that the church is well-kept, thanks to her zeal because she cleaned it, she washed and repaired the church equipment, so she was the real church mother!

As long as she had the strength to walk, she would never have missed her Sunday Mass, although she was expecting ten guests from the capital for lunch. Who cooked the lunch? The blessed hands of our mother Berta cooked half of it before mass, half after mass, and one that was the best of our Hungarian dishes.

She had her favorite tricks. Like when she told our astonished women that she divides an egg into three! One part is used to make the soup noodles, one-third is enough for pancakes, and one-third holds the minced meat together! If a ham from a slaughtered pig was brought to her, it hung in her pantry's place of honor, and from it she seasoned all the vegetables for half a winter. »

We return now to Judith's memories of her occasional visits to her grandmother beginning with one from her childhood period.

Judith: " In my life anyway I had to do with a lot of intelligent priests and a lot of good simple priests, like the "Plébános" of Pécel. * (* Plébános means priest in Hungarian; however, Judith talks here of the time before WW I when Pécel had no priest. Instead, the pastor of Rákoscsaba came over to hold the Holy Mass and give the sermon on Sundays)

Once I talked about the Russians having a good psychology, they could understand and could get at things in a simple way. If similarly, a priest could make people understand without pathos and doctrine, then I would always take the '*plébános of Pécel*' who really connected with the people. Berta mama helped in that sense because people respected her a lot and if she said something, I would say that the villagers would listen, take notice of her opinion. Of the priest, I only can tell funny stories about him. Well, he was red-faced, a little bit paunchy, but not the tired clerical type, a stout paunch. A sort of a good hearty man.

Usually, we children didn't stay for the sermon, because it was not made in the middle of the mass by the Evangelium* (* meaning the Gospel) like they do here in America – in Pécel you had the Mass, and then afterwards you had the sermon and often many worshippers didn't want to stay. But his sermons usually were full because he talked about the village questions and things that would interest them and that were involved with their lives. And Pécel had a pub but with a big garden, it was called Jardek-kert, Jardek's Garden, and it was sort of attached to the village's park. There were tables and there was a little gypsy band at times, not one of the elegant big ones I related before but one of these country gypsy bands. So, lots of his sermons were about this Jardek-kert, I haven't heard them but was told, because we as children never stayed for the sermon. So, I heard that he said, « *Well my children, all the goings-on in Jardek's kert and all this cursing using our Lord's name in the dirtiest way. Now I ask, hear me children, apart that it's blasphemous, isn't it darned stupid? Because you know the ten Commandments, if somebody murders, he commits the sin but he might avenge, have the feeling of triumph or vengeance – there's a good expression for it in Hungarian, I don't know it in English. If he steals, he might get a profit out of it. If he covets his neighbor's wife, it might produce pleasure, well, the Lord favors those for what might happen (making babies). For all three things you'll go to hell but you know why. If you curse, you have no profit, no joy, nothing – then, just go to hell for nothing?! Stupid asses!* »

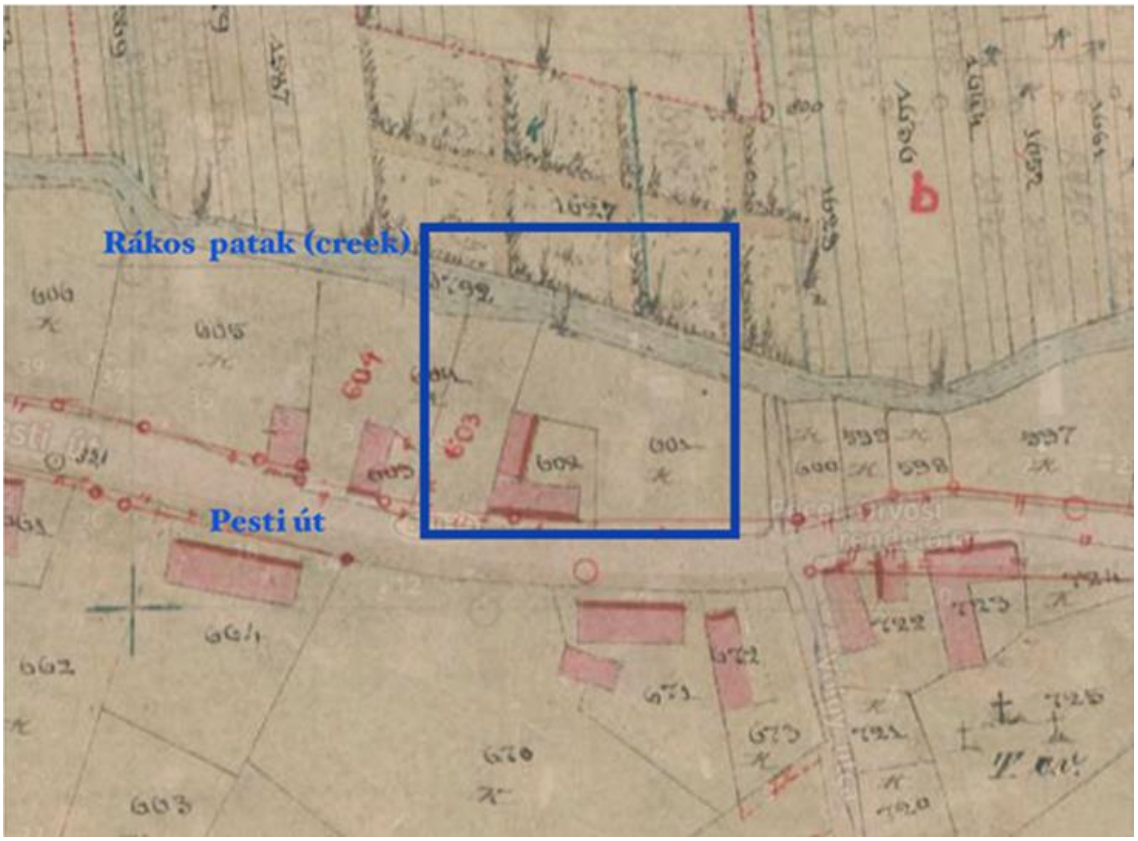
Usually, we often heard of his sermons by the people who were there and came to tell Berta mama. But once,

for some reason, we children were kept in church for the sermon. Again, the Jardek kert came up, for the pastor it was like the pool of sins. The Jardek kert. And he said, « *Well, I hear about goings-on and about all the dancing, romping, the girls with their skirts flying high. All that sinful stuff! Because listen my children, Jesus Christ, he danced too at the wedding of Canaan but how?* » One has to know that he was at the pulpit with his white robes and he demonstrated it with graceful small steps and turns, exclaiming, « *Lindy, lindy, lindy dances very discreetly, not like you oxen in the Jardek kert!* » Vroom. Broom, broom! Ha, we thought the pulpit will fall off.

And the villagers understood! He was never indirect or ambiguous, it was understandable. He was not the type who saw wickedness when an unmarried girl's apron started getting short in front. He had understanding and heart. "

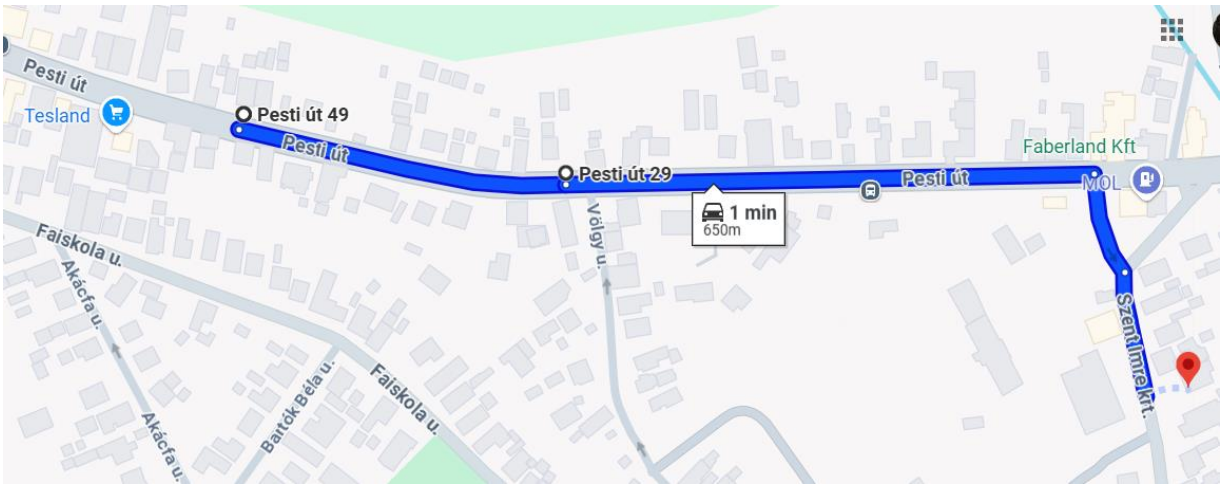
This outspoken country pastor from Rákoscsaba stopped coming when WW I started and Pécel's Catholic church, the Péceli Magyarok Nagyasszonya got its own kaplan, who soon became a frequent guest of Berta mama. Gyula Szabados was in office from 1915 to 1919. * (* see Klaus Meyer email of Dec. 22, 2019)

Unfortunately the Jardek-kert did not survive. There are new houses at that place now. I have copied an old map with the most probable place of the restaurant and park, somewhere near today's Pesti út. 29, in front of the Völgy street (in the blue box).



To realize the distances, the pub was between the Sacher home on Pesti út 49 further out, i.e. to the left, and the Catholic church which from the pub was about 650m towards the village center, to the right, a little beyond parcel 597 in the map.

I also copy a a current map where these three places are marked.



It is very annoying that there are no pictures at all of this pub. We only have a description by Lajos Jamriska from his article in the March 1929 issue of the Pézcel (sic) paper: « *At that time, Pécel was quite poor in terms of entertainment venues. The only place that could be considered was the 'Jardek-kert', where the all-encompassing desire for joy and the desire for entertainment of the youth could be satisfied.*

The area around this entertainment venue was filled with a patriarchal silence on weekdays, but not once did the girls' lives filter into the silence of the summer twilight like a silvery song. The fast of the week was replaced by the joys of Sundays and holidays, when music sounded in the 'Jardek-kert', to the sound of which southern lads in spurs and boots and party girls with happy, sunny thoughts strove - almost flew there.

The memory, which flies me back on its wings to the memories of the more gloomy past, draws smiling images before me, and among them the pleasant, flower-strewn pleasure garden, on some parts of which the lush foliage of green trees cast its shadow.

The 'Jardek-kert' stretches in a regular quadrangle in the middle of Pesti-út, with a gentle slope towards the clover-flowered meadows. The Rákos stream divides its plot in two at the waist. The bed is not deep, not wide, but the play of its foam ripples is all the more pleasant. The pub building is located in the upper part of the plot, -the entertainment venues themselves are found below, on the right side of the Rákos, which is spanned by a slender wooden bridge.

The innermost stirrings of life began here when the trees had already turned green and the warmth and light had also opened up the leaves. Near the flower-strewn lawn, a smooth, rammed area offers its 'parquet' under the feet of the dancers; further down, a small lake with sparkling water invites lovers to go boating; further on, the bowling alley attracts its devotees to a 'papponbíró' competition, while on the right, above, a 'theater' made of planks awaits the noble outburst of passions that take them to heights.

And the one who waits hardest for the awakening of nature and the 'seasonal': the old innkeeper, Uncle Jardek, is the one. »

Judith wrote in a letter of 1971 to Max Ammann, the FEI's World Cup Director at the time, who is presented in an article as a Swiss journalist, historian, art collector and creator of the FEI World Cup™ Jumping series. *

(* "Taking it to the Max: Max Ammann and his Role for Equestrian Sport and the FEI" by Louise Parkes writing in the 09/01/2021 issue of Eurodressage for the FEI's Centenary at https://www.eurodressage.com/2021/09/01/taking-it-max-max-ammann-and-his-role-equestrian-sport-and-fei)

“ When I was around 14 years, I was allowed to practice jumps in the cavalry garrison but I kept falling off till Berta mama put an end to this. She took me under her own coaching and put me on her two good carriage horses. First lesson was to use snaffle bits, learning to walk and trot over poles. « *Give the horse his head – he comes to you as he takes off – just remain with him.* » So, actually I got my first idea of the forward seat from an 86-year-old lady who never had jumped and never had heard of Caprilli. “

Around this time, i.e. 1915, Judith (14) at far left, Berta mama (86) sitting at right.

Judith refers to Captain Federico Caprilli (1868 - 1907). He was an Italian cavalry officer and equestrian who revolutionized the jumping seat. His position, now called the ‘forward seat’, initially fiercely ridiculed by the elite equestrians of the time, formed the modern-day technique used by all jumping riders today.

“ The result was astonishing, my horses jumped and were quiet, sensible animals. This was attributed to my talent and light hands which was obviously nonsense. I was no better than anyone else, I only followed my grandmother’s sensible approach to cross-country riding and jumping. ”

So far Judith’s comments to Max Ammann.

“ Berta mama always stayed on her country place in Pécel which was small but enough for her. I know of only one occasion that she went away, it was for one relation by marriage of her granddaughter Irén Bárczy. She had married a Fráter, a very old Hungarian family, nobility, very much accepted, not only by the gentry but also by the aristocracy. Loránd, one of ist members, could play violin fantastically, and also composed songs and was giving concerts, for benefits and worthy causes. I have to tell two stories about him. He came to Berta mama and said, *« Aunt Berta, why don’t you come to my concert – I’d be honored to see you there. »*

Loránd had to send a carriage, about 18 or more kms from Budapest. I and my cousins were there too and I remember, when Loránd bent to kiss her hand, Berta mama very stiff in a black concert dress, we girls naugthily mused he appeared to be contemplating to spit in the decolletage of her wilted bosom. “

All this needs an explanation. It all was started by the marriage of Judith‘s cousin Irén with Dr. Iván Fráter von Ippi, Érkeserű et Rogoz (1895-1957) who was first a distinguished cavalry officer and after WW I a lawyer and secretary of the Ministry of the Interior. Judith doesn’t explain how through this marriage a distant relation, Loránd Fráter, became an admirer of Berta mama.

Wikipedia informs, *« Loránd Fráter von Ipp, Érkeserű, Bélmeze and Rogoz (1872-1930) was a Hungarian songwriter, landowner, Hussar captain and member of parliament. He is one of the significant songwriters of the early 20th century.*

A scion of the noble Fráter family of Ippi, Érkeserű and Bélmeze. His father was Béla Fráter (1830–1919) of Ippi, Érkeserű and Bélmeze, a landowner, and his mother was Júlia Rhédey of Kisréde. The family of the “song

captain" can boast of many distinguished ancestors and relatives. One of them was György Martinuzzi Fráter, the organizer of Erdély, who was Cardinal of Esztergom, Archbishop, and Voivode of Transylvania. Imre Madách's turbulent wife, Erzsébet Fráter, also belonged to the family. Through the Rhédey the Fráter family became related to the British royal family and the Queen of England.

Iván Fráter.

Loránd Fráter.

Fráter attended the Ludovika Military Academy in Budapest. First he was a lieutenant in Arad. Even before his transfer to the 10th Hussar Regiment in Marosvásárhely, he was interested in music and later took singing lessons from Imre Bellovics.

In 1906 he left the army and from then on gave concerts in many cities across the country, where he performed his own songs, often accompanied by a violin. Fráter Loránd's world fame spread across the ocean; in 1928, his violin could also be heard in New York.

From 1910 to 1918 he was a member of the Just Party of Independence and '48 and a member of the Reichstag for the Székelyhíd constituency in Bihar County. »

3,000 CHEER SINGER.

Capt. Frater of Hungarian Hussars Makes Bow at Mecca Temple.

Lorand Frater, a titled officer of Hungarian Hussars and collector of his country's melodies, made his bow from the stage of Mecca Temple last evening at 10 o'clock, in the course of a concert enlisting a dozen compatriots and attended by some 3,000. Captain Frater sang as he played the violin, supported by Bela Berkes's gypsy orchestra in what seemed often free improvisations of heroic, patriotic or humorous themes.

Captain Frater's music, as printed in folders and sold in the hall, included the songs "Tele Van a Varos" and "Oszi Rozsa," which an audience keen to hear its mother tongue was soon cheering to the echo. The artist made a speech in which he told his deep feeling for these melodies.

Terez Koszegi, soprano of the Budapest Opera, earlier sang the jewel song from "Faust" in Hungarian. There were encores for Miss Koszegi and her accompanist, Rudnyanszky, as well as for an artistic cimballan player, Janos Szcheny, and Josef Ritter, 'cello. Miss Pogany, an actress known to the English stage here, introduced the newcomers in turn.

The New York Times
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Judith: " Another Loránd anecdote was from the Casino. If a gentleman around 3 o'clock or so went off without saying bye, his companions looked at him in a certain questioning way, « *Well, where are you going?* » Because if somebody was having an affair with a lady, that was the only time she could sneak off sometimes, to the dressmaker or somewhere. So once when Loránd was in the Casino, they teased him. « *Well, we see you went off already twice this week around this time, well now, who is it?* »

Loránd, « *No, no, I can't tell you.* »

But when they insisted, « *Oh, well, you know, it is Countess Forgách, but now that I told you – don't spread it too much.* »

I thought this was quite typical of his open, outgoing and indiscreet ways. "

Since all these personages are long gone, I dug a bit and found the deviant lady must have been Etelka Thassy de Miske et Monostor, born 1864 in Felsöbü, the second wife of Count Béla Forgách (1851-1940).

Another Loránd-like person we knew was Béla Hunkár (1883-1967) who was one those people that had a lot of success around women. He was wealthy, a good-looking, amusing bachelor* we called the Wonder of Nyeszkenye, which was a little village. " (* He may well have lived like a bachelor but in 1908 he had married Erzsébet Melczer, 1890-1965. I ignore whether they divorced or separated)

The Hunkár de Hajdencz family were nobles of Somogy and Veszprém counties. One ancestor, Antal, was the chief governor of Veszprém County, a reform politician, magistrate and landowner. The castle was built around 1754 on a hill above the Keréktelk stagecoach station. Béla was the last owner who lived in the building until the war forced him away. The pctures above show it as of now and the last as it was in the good times.

After the war it had several owners, the last used it for industrial production but now it is dilapidated and closed. It received a new roof in 1996, but since then only conservation work has been carried out.

Judith: " One day, already some time before the beginning of the 2nd World War, Toto was worried. To distract her, I said, let's go over to Nyeszkenyepuszta (35km south of Újszállás) and visit the Wonder of Nyeszkenye. We had a car, I think Toto's little Topolino, and there was enough gasoline. So we went over and thought it was nice to contact him, he was always very worldly and everything was charming, it was a nice big country house, in the back was only one little window. So we went and peeked in. It was the pantry with a table, the buxom old housekeeper was sitting on one side, the Wonder of Nyeszkenye on the other side, and they were having coffee and cake together. We didn't want to put him to shame, we turned around and went back home. Coffee and cake with the housekeeper. He was known as a bon vivant and you could even see that there was a pink enamel pot with the milk, and when they boiled the milk there was the skin on it, which was very good but it was very old-fashioned to like that skin, and next to it was the coffee pot. So just this memory came to me.

I saw myself how very much Berta mama was respected in the village. And then, during the start of the

Commune (in March 1919) the commissary came in to declare that he is going to get some people moved in to share Berta mama's house. Well, she never hit even her dachshund. But she had a cannikin* (* small wooden bucket) with a whip. She picked it up and said, in Hungarian of course, *« You son of a bitch! Get out of my house before I hit you like I should treat a bitch! »*

He went out, they **never** put somebody in her house. They wanted to close the church and put a guard there. She went frequently to worship but the guard said he has orders to keep the church closed. She went over to the building where the higher officials were.* (* This building was the Ráday Castle which was occupied and declared a People's House by the Council of Workers, Soldiers and Peasants of Pécel in 1919. – From https://pecel.hu/varosunk/pecel-tortenete-napjainkig)

A gróf Ráday-féle kastély.

She said, « *Well, you open that church because if you don't I'm going to have a riot in the village. »*

They opend the church. She was incredible in such situations even at her old age and skirting death. I don't think ever anybody would have dared to be disrespectful to her. To my Berzenczey grandmother, I could imagine. Slapping the maid, but with Berta mama, it wouldn't have happened in the first place.

She always walked to church, it was not too far, never went with carriage. She never was like the people who liked to have somebody carry their Bible, no – she carried her Bible and her rosary. I never saw her say something unctuous, she was fantastic. But Toto was terrified of her. The photo of her practically tells the story for itself. I never saw her stooping, I never saw her sit down like an old person, she'd always kept herself straight, I never saw her stagger, or walk like poor Toni (Lipthay). But I think that generation was brought up to always carry themselves with dignity, by doing everything in the same collected manner. You always saw that your shoulders were straight. Lord, if you didn't, they always threatened you to attach a corset brace, it was an instrument that kept your shoulders straight. Now, when I look at myself stooping and already with a hunched back, I realize it's plain sloppiness! Because you can just as well hold yourself straight, well certainly I pushed the wheelbarrow for a long time and it is hard to pitch manure with an elegant posture. But still, you can do a lot.

When as children we went to ride in Rozsnyó, there was an old head groom, Mr. Bubik, and when we were late and started to explain, he would say, in a dialect, « *There is an excuse for everything. »* You can – but Berta mama didn't have to excuse anything.

Berta mama was ill and knew she would die soon. It seems that must have been very hard, because her legs

were swelling, and she was very active, not just like me, more than I am here on the farm – she was 90 and absolutely refusing to live as an invalid. « *I'll just go on doing my chores and when I have to die, I die. »*

The outstanding Bárczy pair, mother and son.

In the spring of 1919, during the Commune, we heard Berta mama was near death, and she had asked for the last sacrament. So the priest came, it was a new young priest, a ministrant boy went with a bell in front, and then the priest wearing the white stole over the cassock, holding the cup, wine and communion wafer, because the last sacrament is the **Communion**. I don't know if they did it in Pécel for other people too, but I think so because Berta mama wasn't the type of asking extra favors. "

For the uninitiated, this means the priest gives the dying or ill person the eucharist, the body and blood of Christ. This symbolizes food for the journey into one's next life in Heaven. The last step in this sacrament is the final Communion prayer. Gyula Szabados must have died because since 1919 the young János Fieszl was the kaplan.

“ So through the village they came to Berta mama and she took her last sacrament. But then she got a little better and two days later again I did something very stupid.

When I heard about all this I was already married to Pál Sacelláry and living in Pest. In the morning the idea came into my mind that I wanted to see her a last time. However, it turned out, this still being during the Commune, there was trouble with the transport to Pécel. We had a map, we saw one way must have been, say at least like 35 km by taking a shortcut over the maneuver fields. I decided I’m going to ride with my good horse Obijan to see her. But I had a party in the evening and naturally Pál and everybody said you’re crazy, and if you want to do it, well then why not by car. They ordered a car from somewhere and anyway the car belonged to Gyuri papa and so I said I’m going to ride that stretch. They said, well then stay there overnight. I said there’s no stable at grandmother’s place, no proper stable and why, I want to be back for that party, it was sort of a nightclub party, it started about half past 11 or 12 o’clock, because before that time people went to the theater or had supper and only thereafter went nightclubbing.

So I rode Obijan through a landscape that was not nice, no worthy sights. You rode first through these maneuver grounds, the Rákos was a whole, big, charmless natural field, I don’t think it even had a tree on it. Then you rode into Pécel, it was all mediocrity, that was because it was built up in sort of half villas, a sort of half townships with places for town people to go for the summer but there could have been some hidden beauties.

And so I saw Berta mama, she said, « *Why did you come?* »

I said, « *Well, Berta mama, you are dying. »*

« Oh yes, I know, it’s time that I should die, I’ve made my peace. » and so on.

She, « *You know, I made my arrangements for the lunch that has to be, because Erzsóka, she’s so terribly headless in such things, I’m certain she’ll be upset and you’d better see that she wrote up everything properly! »*

She told me about her reading, actually it was read to her by Aunt Erzsóka who also prepared our lunch.

She said, « *It’s not necessary for you to come to my funeral but if you come, look that everything is done properly around the house to help Aunt Erzsóka.* »

So, she was very cheerful, and she said, *« Well what are you going to do now? »*

I said, *« Berta mama, I’m going to ride home. »*

She*, « You’re going to ruin the horse. »*

I , *« Well, you know, I made a bet, what I call a Bravur, because they said it’s impossible, I can’t make it, and I said that on the same day I’m going to be back. »*

On the ride back I even had a little upsetting incident, it was already night, and when I was riding through the Rákos maneuver field outside Budapest I passed a sort of nasty housing that you had to go through but it was pitch dark, I couldn’t see anything, I only heard some motion and suddenly my horse cried a little bit. I never rode with a long whip but out there I had a very heavy short whip with me in my right hand and when somebody grabbed at the horse’s reins and another person pulled at my skirt – I don’t know what they intended – but I hit on both sides and one man hollered, « *Watch out, she’s got a weapon*! » and I kicked the

poor tired horse and we went on. So that was the only event, probably they were some drunks. So I did change into evening clothes, dog-tired, but that was alright, I did the bravur and won the bet.

The trouble was with Obijan. Next day his legs were healed but a few days after there came an inflammation into his eyes. They said, « *You've run the eyes out of that horse.* » The inflammation was from overtiring and he got treatment but sadly Obijan ended up going blind, although it could have been Moon Blindness * but I never felt very proud of that Bravur.
(* Equine Recurrent Uveitis - ERU)

They called it Moon Blindness, here they call it Periodic Blindness* (* Ophthalmia), they say it's a kind of inflammation connected with the coming and going of the moon. So it's possible that not only overexertion caused the first inflammation. But I don't know, I didn't feel well about the whole stunt anyway, I didn't feel proud of it. It was a mean, a stupid thing to do. I hadn't realized how far it was to Pécel and I ruined the horse. That was inexcusable. Because I just as well could have stayed there but then, I was 18 and a flashy fool. "

Against all expectations Berta mama lived three more years and according to Judith there were several instances when she looked to die imminently and each time the kaplan was called to come with his minstrel, bells and all to give the last sacrament.

" When she was old and started to get ill she had her bed transferred in what was once the envy of Pécel, the parlor where she had received her guests. It had a very nice Swedish stove, one of those faience stoves, a cheerful room with large windows.

She continued not taking the prescribed medicines and not resting as instructed; she still went out gardening and there, nothing was ever straight and orderly. She went out and fed her chickens and did some cooking and I don't know if she went on like this till the end but she could surprise. In the winter she went to bed always early, around 8 o'clock.

At that time when you were terminal, for care you either had a poor relation or you had a spinster that didn't get married and stayed in the house. And Aunt Erzsóka was the spinster who stayed, her oldest daughter. And she was a suffering saint, because Berta mama could curse like a trooper.

There was one thing that now doesn't exist anymore and people forgot. In the older years, to get old you had to be rich or poor. Because if you were rich or even well to do like we were, you had your personal maid, you had your staff of servants, you had your physician, the house doctor who came to visit you, you didn't think of going to the hospital unless for surgery or something like it and you were well taken care of. You usually got very nice service and very often also nursing; for deafness or blindness there was a proper staffing, lady companions or poor relations. You could travel and be the blot on the landscape. If you were interested in horses or the sports, whatever, you could still attend. Or pursue interesting literary things. But you were nobody's burden **because everybody was expecting something out of you.** On the other hand, if you were from the peasant class, there usually were a lot of children, grandchildren, there was a spinster daughter or somebody, and the old people were surrounded actually with more consideration and love than the upper class was. Because the 'családfő', the family head, was there and the wife or the able-bodied women cooked and took care of the daily chores, it didn't make much difference to take care of the old person there too. The food was cooked, the stove was burning. Nobody thought of pushing out the old people and moreover these could tell stories, they had an art of telling stories. And the so-called country doctor with his carriage, shabby or even a little bit shabbier, would come and concoct some sort of medicine and say a few cheering words and

unless surgery or something of this kind was necessary, everybody avoided going to the hospital. Hospitals, although I don't know why but they had a very bad reputation. Hospital practically meant an undignified death. People liked to die in their own beds and be properly buried from there. I don't know much about the city-dwelling lower middle class but I still believe that maybe, in a less personalized way, there was still a poor relation, a spinster aunt, to help.

Berta mama at 92 still feeding the chicken.

Aunt Erzsóka around 1930 in the Pécel garden.

And one time when Berta mama was going to die, she was delirious and went into a coma but then came out of it. And while delirious she had a good talk out of it and had Aunt Erzsóka tell her what she talked.

I remember Aunt Erzsóka telling me, *« It was terrible, because when I related her delirious talk, Mother laughed so terribly, it's not good for her to laugh so. »*

I said, « *But why shouldn't she? »*

« *Because I told her that in her delirium, she said she had such a trouble because she was feeding in the poultry yard and there were two cocks, one of them had the head of your father Gusztáv, the other one was of your Uncle Esteban. They were fighting and she didn't know how to separate them*! »

One thing that I must say, that the question of what one would inherit was so open, it was not shattering to the person from whom we inherited that we talked about it or that we asked her or him, « *How much are you going to leave me?* » He or she'd say, « *Hell, I'm not going to leave you anything. »*

" Oh, but you have to .... »

Or, when you arrived by an older relative, the relative would say, « Oh, what are you coming for, Erbschleichen? » * (* From German meaning inheritance sneaking)

I think I was already down in Parád at the time that she was again getting really sick and went to visit and stay with her.

I don't think I've ever seen her with a book in her hand but in the evening there was aunt Erzsóka, the one Berta mama always overshadowed, and this daughter, a pure thing of kindness, with her cracked voice would read Prohászka who was a prominent Catholic priest. Every evening she would read aloud one of his speeches – one Prohászka speech – and Berta mama goes to sleep during the Prohaska speech. "

Wikipedia gives a good presentation of him:

« (*Ottokár Prohászka (Nitra, 1858 - Budapest, 1927) Hungarian Roman Catholic priest, ecclesiastical writer, doctor of philosophy and theology, politician, university professor, full member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences , member of parliament Representative, the fifteenth county bishop of Székesfehérvár from 1905 until his death. He is the most significant representative of Christian socialism, one of the most influential people in Hungary in the 1920s, one of the best-known figures in Hungarian church history, and one of the most controversial figures in 20th century Hungarian history.*

In 1905 he received the episcopal seat of Székesfehérvár. Already at the inauguration of the High Priest, he was one of the most respected figures in Hungarian public life, preaching the philosophy of liberalism and the intertwining of the church and its importance. He is a great supporter of the development of Székesfehérvár, a direct, active, patron and donating bishop of the diocese. On the other hand, he is an open anti-Semite , the leading figure in the introduction of numerus clausus laws in Hungary. His sudden death in 1927 shook Hungarian public life. A cult developed rapidly in the episcopal capital: a statue and a monument stand in the town, a park and a street keep its name, its grave church, the Ottokár Memorial Church in Prohászka Hungary one of the largest church buildings. At his death, Sándor Sík put it this way: " We all became orphans. The greatest Hungarian man, the apostle of Hungary, the prophetic bishop of Székesfehérvár, the father of all of us, has died. " »

From https://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proh%C3%A1szka_Ottok%C3%A1r

After she had received the last sacrament from the young priest, she said, « *Well my son, I've made my peace with God, so don't come rattling through the village. »*

Thereon, he kneeled down and said, « *Well, then you bless me. »*

And grandmother blessed him.

That was that and after two days she died. “

That was on March 22, 1922 and the young kaplan was Imre Tóth, who on October 3, 1920 had replaced János Fieszl.

“ Old people are usually helpless, they wet their beds and so on. But nothing of this affected Berta mama, she died just absolutely in peace. But she had a very strong belief, it gave her great strength.

Sometimes I wondered what Berta mama was thinking because the people around her were much more intellectually active or of a higher, more serious level but I don’t know if she ever talked to them about anything, I just know she fed them. She was hard to know, really, she was an imposing but inscrutable figure! Whereas my other grandmother, Otti mama was an open book, you mostly knew what she was thinking. “

The eulogy in Appendix 4 preserves some beautiful memories of Berta mama and her last year of life.

« *A woman died here last night, would say an indifferent stranger. And we, who knew her closely, say: If a thousand such women were resurrected in Hungary, then it would be the Wonderland!*

Don't believe my siblings, that our mother Berta only excelled in the kitchen! The precious ore shines, no matter where you look at it. She was able to handle her adult children and sons-in-law so well that they never uttered

a dissonant voice in front of the old lady. She gave the voice in everything, but all the same, men and women of the most different minds had to agree with her. In addition, what a movingly poetic way of thinking had this fiery Hungarian woman walking the earth. Last Christmas she was already very weak; her whole family worried about her.

In her small widow's house, she spent the holy evening with her daughter who lived with her, watching the clock intently, and when it struck six o'clock, just the time to switch on the Christmas lights, she went to the phone, called her children's number and sang with them in a trembling voice: The angels in Heaven ....

Then Easter came! First time she could not participate in the resurrection procession. She was very upset about this. Her children were anxious how to make her forget this loss.

Just go without worries, Mommy will be alright with me! says the son who is Minister. The mother's eyes light up. After all, all her happiness and glory is this brilliant son, who, as unapproachably cold on the outside, surrounds his old mother with such tender reverence. With a deeply moved smile, the man goes to the mother's bedside table, takes out the Holy Scriptures and reads aloud, with a fervent heart and a gripped soul, the world tragedy, the passion!

«I have never been part of a more beautiful Resurrection » thanked the happy mother.

When I think about how much value resided in this Hungarian noblewoman, when I list before me her virtues as a wife, mother, homemaker and patriot, her beautiful sense, enthusiastic temperament, incredible diligence and hard work, when I look at her indestructible spirit, which I have never seen discouraged, nor to become listless or sour, then I bow in awe before the Hungarian soul, which can produce such perfection, and I am no longer afraid of anything big or small, only of God. »

After death Aunt Erzsóka continued to live in the same house joined by a sweet spinster niece, Ilona “Lussen” Halász (1904-1989) until they had to flee when the front line reached Pécel in the fall of 1944 and the shooting started. After the war the property was plundered, then occupied and later nationalized. Nobody of the family returned.

When I started to get interested in our family history, I always tried to learn where were the last resting places of our ancestors. When it came to Berta mama, my family in the diaspora only remembered she had been buried with her husband in the Catholic cemetery in Pécel but not what happened with them during and after the war. When after the fall of the Iron Curtain I began my annual trips to Hungary, I asked all my relatives about these graves and was always told that they no longer exist, they have been left without markers or even recycled. However, when with niece Mária we asked the little, primitive cemetery administration, we were told no record of recycling exists. Therefore I felt there was a tiny chance the graves still existed. This cemetery was poor, underfunded and grossly neglected. Many graves looked decrepit and abandoned, A countless number was overgrown by a jungle of vines, weeds and moss. So we three, I, Mária and her daughter Sára went in the afternoon of July 17, 2011 to search, systematically working on the overgrown tombs to try to identify them. After almost two hours of work I came to a couple stones which one could merely guess below a mound of very dense and tough vine. I needed all my strength to rip and pry them off the gray stones. When I had a little clearance to examine the barely legible fragments of the faded lettering, my heart started to pump with great excitement as familiar syllables appeared. Yes, on this memorable day, to my greatest joy and surprise, I found the two old graves of Gusztáv Sacher-Smolinski and his wife Bárcziházi Bárczy Berta.

Pointing to just-found Berta mama, on the right great-grandpa Gusztáv.

My great grandfather's monument that I had restored.

One can see we had restored Gusztáv's plaque highlighting his most noteworthy service for the national cause, a young Polish idealist officer volunteering with the Polish Legion who came to assist Hungary in the freedom war of 1848-49. At that time he was using the Smolinski name and so we chose to prioritize it on his memorial tomb.

Now the family can meet their ancestors again.