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A februári álom

Wass Albert

Kint tél van még; hideg, könyörtelen,
az ablak alatt elsüvölt a szél.
Fedélcsatorna pléhe felzokog,
ott fent a kémény jajgat és beszél.

A képzelet varázsa messze száll,
s mint őszi pára itt-ott fennakad;
egy szürke dombon s néhány régi fán
meg-megpihen s halkán tovább
szalad...

Már lefolyt a bércek hó-palástja,
sötét-lilára vált a vén havas;
szalonka száll a csendes esti szélben,
s a napsugár már zöld rügyet fakaszt.

A kismadár is megcsendül az ágon,
tavaszi vágyak vidám dallama;
túl a ködbe burkolódzó fákon
mintha bíbor-eső hullana.

Jön az alkony. Az áldott nap leszáll.
Vonulnak már a szürke vadludak;
a légben kezdődik a szúnyog-bál,
s a völgyben tompán harsog a patak.

Azúr-egen a csillagok kigyúlnak;
arany szegek a tündér kárpiton.
A földre sápadt csillagocskák hullnak:
pásztor-tűzek, a vén hegyormokon.

Kint még zokog a vén fedélcsatorna,
ablakom a szürkületbe tárom.
Hideg havát a szél szemembe hordja:
elsuhant már a februári álom.

By February, everyone is tired of winter. While snow and wind rage outside, the author dreams of birdsong and the opening buds of spring.

The author, gróf szentgyeydi és czegei Wass Albert was a Hungarian nobleman, forest engineer, novelist and poet. He was born in 1908

at Válaszút (translates as "Crossroads"), Kingdom of Hungary (since the Trianon pact: Romania). In 1944, he fled from Romania to Hungary, then to Germany and ultimately to the United States in 1952, where he lived until his death in 1998. He had published several novels and poems, both in Europe and in America, and won numerous awards. During the Communist regime, his books were banned both in Hungary and in Romania. Thus Count Albert Wass gained most of his fame and popularity posthumously.



Carnival Dances

viola vonfi

Everyone has watched the Carneval (sic!) extravaganza, with magnificent floats and scantily dressed, professional samba dancers performing on the streets of Rio every year. Hungarian farsang (carnival) dancers performed – and in certain areas still perform – in much smaller and less widely telecast venues.

Celebration of carnival, or *farsang*, before the beginning of Lent, goes back to Roman times. Because of its excesses – too much drinking, unseemly masquerading – it was generally condemned by the clergy as immoral. But the celebratory mood of the people, following the Christmas and New Year's festivities and before the beginning of the

hard agricultural work of the year, could not be suppressed.

In addition to folk plays presenting the story of the rich man who feasted every day while ignoring the poor beggar Lazarus at his gate, and other morality plays, as well as masquerading with masks of animals and playing pranks on the observers, or symbolically "burning winter", dances formed an important part of *farsang*, especially at the tail end ("*farsang farka*"), from Saturday before Ash Wednesday until Mardi Gras, when dancing went on for three days.

These dances, most frequently held in the local tavern or in the village spinery, provided an opportunity for young people to meet and to be introduced to society. They served an important social function, leading to the choice of life partners. In rural areas, most weddings took place during *farsang*.

In olden times, dances were held by guilds, later by the various trades.

There were even dances just for women, or children only. Often, these were informal, BYO affairs (called *batyubálok* – from *batyu* meaning "bundle"), with participants bringing baked goods and

and poultry dishes.

The *Csángó* people of the Brassó area had a *farsang* men's dance called *borica*. They wore ribbons on their clothes, rattles below the knee and spurs with bells, and carried a pickaxe. Each of four masked participants called "*kuká*" wore a cow bell attached to his side, a wooden sword and a whip in his hand. The group would go from house to house, and dance in the yard. While the dancers were performing, the *kuka* would crack jokes, play pranks and "steal" something the host would have to ransom with money.



Charleston, by Molnár-C. Pál.

City dwellers and the aristocracy also had – and still have – their carnival dances and balls. Not being bound by local tradition, they are more prone to follow dance fads, such as the Shimmy or the Charleston in the twenties, or the Twist in the early sixties.



"Burning Winter"

Lent vs. Carnival: Cibere vajda és Konc király

viola vonfi

Carnival lasts from Epiphany until Mardi Gras, the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday – this year from January 6th until February 28th. The symbolic duel between Carnival – Konc király – and Lent – Cibere vajda – was first recorded in Hungary in the 16th century.

In the symbolic tug-of-war between Lent and Carnival, Konc király stands for meaty, fatty foods, while Cibere vajda represents Lenten foods, especially the sour soup made with fermented grain or bran (*cibere leves*).

They have their first comic/dramatic encounter on the day of Epiphany, when masquerading Konc király comes out victorious, symbolizing the feasting that takes over at carnival time. But his victory does not last: on Mardi Gras, it is Cibere vajda who gains the upper hand, indicating that lenten foods, especially meatless, sour soups are now on the menu.

Straw figures were often used to represent the two antagonists.

In Transylvania, the custom has endured, and the battle was – and in certain localities still is – fought in our days.

In case you are interested in a recipe for *cibere leves*, here is a simple one:

Ingredients

2 lbs wheat bran
2 slices of brown bread
8 Tbsp. sour cream
pinch of salt
2 oz flour

Sift the bran, then pour 2 quarts of boiling water over it. Adding the salt and brown bread, let the mixture stand in a warm place for 2-3 days, until it turns sour. Strain, and set it to boil. Mix flour into sour cream, and stir into mixture before it boils again. Finish cooking it.

Potatoes or dried fruit may be added according to taste.

viola vonfi (in masquerade) writes from Stamford, CT.



Cibere vajda wins over Konc király

Reviving the Hungarian-American Club of Danbury

EPF

After being dormant for some time, the Hungarian-American Club of Danbury, CT is being revived with the dedication of their new Club House on January 22nd.

Part of the Pannonia Village condo complex built by the Danbury Hungarian-American Club in 2000, the newly completed and furnished Club House celebrated its opening on January 22nd, with 60 people in attendance.

Originally established in 1973, the Club was founded by 14 (!!!) people for "the help, protection and social advancement of the Hungarians of Danbury and its neighboring communities." It was to provide a gathering place where every Magyar could feel at home, and where they would teach the language and heritage to their children." (taken from Magyar News Online, October 2008).

The following year, the Club was given legal status when the by-laws were approved by the authorities. Its mem-





bers observed the national holidays of March 15th and October 23rd, and participated in Danbury's Heritage Days in which their float won First Prize (1976). The following year, the Club again won First Prize at an International Ethnic Fair sponsored by the CT State Federation of Women's Clubs.

Very successful Hungarian Days were organized in 1977 and 1980. For the second one, Members paid traveling expenses for Tollas Tibor – poet of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and editor of the monthly NEMZETŐR publication – who came from Munich, Germany to attend. (This was the first time such a tiny Hungarian community had invited him at their own expense!) They held classes, in borrowed classrooms, for children to learn their ancestral language and also established a scholarship fund for deserving Hungarian-American students.

Club meetings were held in rented venues, such as the Portuguese Club, but it soon became obvious that they needed their own building. For a number of years, the members held five very well-attended balls annually, for fund-raising purposes. When they finally had sufficient capital to purchase land, the first two attempts did not work out. Finally, they bought the present property on Pembroke Road where, in addition to the Club House, they were able to build 13 condos in a total of seven buildings. While the condos had been bought and/or rented for years, various reasons prevented completion of the Club House until now.

As one steps into the Club, a large photo of the *Lánchíd* (Chain Bridge) at night greets the visitor, and a lovely Hungarian pattern of red love birds adorns the cornices above the windows.

After welcoming the guests on Sunday evening, January 22nd, Szabolcs Nánássy, President of the Club, called on Rev. Tibor Király of Calvin United Church of Christ in Fairfield to give the invocation.

Guests enjoyed a beautiful spread of appetizers, followed by stuffed chicken thighs and breaded pork chops prepared right there on the premises. A complementary bottle of wine was on every table.

Music for the festivities was provided by an ensemble from Jászberény, singer Didi L'Amour (who has his own TV show) with Pető Zsolt. They presented a number of old-time favorites as well as more modern pop songs and a few folk songs. This being America, they could not help but play "Az a szép..." which even fourth-generation Hungarians can belt out with gusto!

Like Sleeping Beauty, the Danbury Hungarian American Club is coming to life again. We wish it much success in its future activities!

For information about membership contact Zsuzsa Lengyel, budai_lany@yahoo.com .

Cottage cheese doughnuts

Karolina Tima Szabo

Doughnuts are the pastry of choice during carnival time. Here is a different kind of doughnut that is easy to make.

Ingredients:

- 1 lb. small curd cottage cheese
- 1 cup sugar
- 3 eggs
- 2 tsp baking soda
- 3 cups flour, more if needed
- Oil for frying

Mix cottage cheese, sugar, eggs and baking soda in a bowl.

Mix in 3 cups flour first, add more if needed. Dough should be hard. Heat oil, and make walnut size balls, drop them in hot oil, not too many at one time, so they have room to grow.

Doughnut should turn when bottom is fried. If not, loosen it from the bottom of the dish, they like to stick to the bottom and to each other.

Fry slowly; make sure doughnuts are fried through.

Remove with slotted spoon and drain on paper towels. Continue with the rest until all are done.

Sprinkle with powdered sugar, or serve with apricot or strawberry preserve on the side.

Serve them fresh; they are not as good on the next day.



BALATON ZOLTÁN: SAILING INTO THE BOOK OF RECORDS

Olga Vállay Szokolay

Balaton Zoltán, with his wife and two children sailed into the Book of Records as the first Hungarians to navigate successfully through the infamous Northwest Passage connecting the Northern Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

Fulfilling one's dreams always seemed an admirable feat to me, even when I had no idea yet what my dreams for my life would be. When, at age 12, my father gave me my first lesson in sailing on Lake Balaton, between Siófok and Tihany, I knew that sailing would be part of my dream.

The love of that mesmerizing experience capturing the forces of nature: water and wind, has been shared by innumerable adventurers, big and small, since time immemorial. From the Phoenicians and other explorers and conquerors throughout history, to modern-day sports enthusiasts of luxury yachts to small dinghies and sail-surfers, the attraction of taming the elements seemed the ultimate challenge and magic.

By his own admission, Balaton Zoltán has been fascinated by maps all his life.

He pored over atlases in school, regardless of the ongoing class, dreaming of faraway places. In his earlier years he started off as a mountain climber. He pursued that competitively until 1987, even obtaining a gold medal for conquering a peak of 8,013 meters (26,289 ft) in the Tatra Mountains.

Do you believe that "nomen est omen"? That your name may predes-

tine your life? Was it the realization that with the name *Balaton* you must be either a fisherman or a sailor, or was it a mid-life crisis, that toward the end of the 1980's, Zoltán switched his interest over to sailing? He also met *Illencz Orsolya*, a fellow-



Balaton Family

enthusiast. Together they learned all the ins and outs of long distance, deep sea sailing. They bought an eight-meter (26.2 ft) sailboat, which they used on the Adriatic and the Mediterranean.

As husband and wife, the Balatons had two children together, both born into the unconditional love of sailing. In 2012, Zoltán posted an ad on the Internet, looking for a larger craft. They ended up buying a 30-year-old, 11 meter (36 ft) sloop in a North Atlantic port and named it *Maia*. The location of the purchase and construction of the boat suggested sailing the Northern waters instead of the Mediterranean. Thus the Balaton family, with daughter Csenge and son Kristóf, took off that year to try sailing in the Arctic.

Considering that the polar waters are frozen massively most of the year, these endeavors had to be limited to the height of summer only, during the two-month long thaw. Zoltán being a biology teacher and the children enjoying summer vacations, this schedule seemed to work just fine for the family.

In 2012, their first "Arctic" year, the Balatons stayed close to Iceland's coasts. Just to get their feet wet, so to say... In subsequent years, they sailed toward Greenland. With more and more Nordic experience, in mid-July, 2015, they ventured on a dangerous journey from the west coast of Greenland to Canada. Their two-month long, 4,000 km (2,500 mile), voyage involved the infamous Northwest Passage, the cemetery of countless seamen over more than a century. By then, only 120 boats had successfully sailed through this connector between the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans. The Balaton Family, from a land-locked homeland, were the first Hungarians ever to succeed!

Csenge, then 19, was already an accomplished sailor. She had been on a sailboat before she could walk. She owned a sailing permit valid on all seas before she had a driver's license. Besides, she is an acrobat who had won several competitions. This background enabled her to navigate among blocks of ice, from the top of the 15 meter (more than 49 feet) mast for hours, yelling information to the helm and even taking pictures from the perch.

Kristóf celebrated his sixth birthday in the middle of the ice-covered sea. As a present from Mother Nature, he saw his first polar bear that day! He loves to fish and has an opinion on everything...

Their itinerary included many exotic-sounding ports, such as Sisimiut, Ilulissat, Upernavik, as well as Devon Island, Resolute and Cambridge Bay, and concluded in the tongue-twister Tuktoyaktuk, a Canadian hamlet. During the journey, their automatic steering broke and, for four days Zoltán, Orsi and Csenge had to take two-to-three-hour shifts at the helm. Their radio also stopped working for a while, losing their connection with weather reports. Their misfortunes peaked in getting enclosed in ice until an ice-breaker came to their rescue.



I like Sailing This Much; Kristof's 6th Birthday; Maia on Mooring; A Little Walk on an Ice Floe; View from the Top of the Mast; Polar Bears on an Ice Floe; Napping in the Cockpit; Mythical Ice Beasts

During the exhausting voyage they saw hardly any people. Their frequent sights were whales, seals and walrus. In a Greenland grocery store Zoltan had purchased a rifle, in case they should be attacked by a polar bear. It was never needed.

In spite of all the hardship endured, every member of the Family fondly recalled the trip, to the point that they began planning the follow-up. That had to start where the boat was left, in Tuktoyaktuk. The family had to fly to and fro the boat's winter storage. At a previous port, the marina where *Maia* was in storage, went bankrupt. It was a legal challenge to rescue her from being auctioned off along with the remainder of the property.

The 2016 journey proved to be even more eventful. Fewer people, more animals, more shoals, reefs, more bad weather, a 27-hour storm. Alaska, Bering Pass, the Aleutians... invisible challenges by strong tides and currents.

In Nome they learned the tricks of gold panning; encountered polar bears on an island that was a whale cemetery, and the list of adventures is endless.

The Balaton Family has already been entered into the Book of Records. Whatever they choose to do now is just gravy, for their own pleasure.

As for me: my name has not been entered into any book of records. My dream of sailing was restricted to Lake Balaton, Long Island Sound, some lakes in Canada and the Hudson River, in all kinds of weather, and I was never seasick. Although I did mostly day sailing on crafts ranging from fairly large sloops to my favorite Sailfish, when participating in sailing trips, after three days on a 40 ft (12 meter) boat with all modern conveniences, I could not wait to pace the pier. Do not count me in for long trips: I get claustrophobic.

And as for freezing in the summertime – I'll leave that to the polar bears...

Olga Vállay Szokolay is an architect and Professor Emerita of Norwalk Community College, CT after three decades of teaching. She is a member of the Editorial Board of Magyar News Online.

Happening Now: Coats for the Coatless

V. V.

As the winter temperatures plummeted in January, this spur-of-the-moment charitable movement popped up in Hungary with the help of social media. It warms not only those who are cold, but it's also heartwarming!

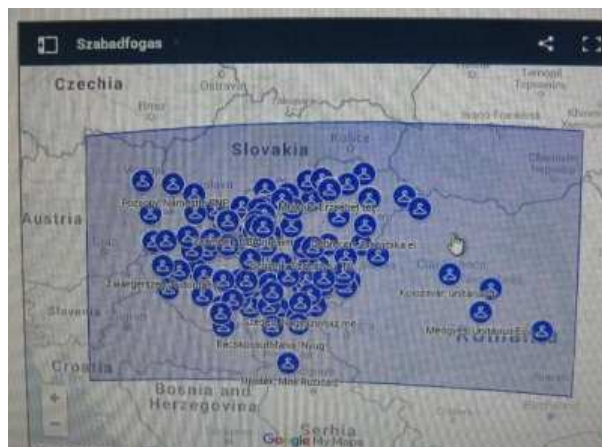
It started on Facebook, when early in the year temperatures in Hungary went a good way below freezing (to -7C to -20 C, or 18 to -8 F). Called the *Szabadfogas mozgalom* (Free Coat Rack Movement), it began when a young blogger, Kozma Julia translated an article and posted it with a photo, showing such an undertaking in England. The idea caught on rapidly. A rack was placed in front of a used clothing store in Balassagyarmat, with the inscription: "If you're cold, take one. If you want to help, bring one."

Thanks to social media, a Facebook page was set up for the movement, and that slogan has been adopted throughout the country. The movement spread like wildfire. According to updated figures published on January 10th, there were by that time several thousand supporters nationwide, with some 200 Coat Racks across the country. Support has transcended political and religious preferences. It is the simplest form of tapping into the innate helpfulness of people. In some cases, shoes, scarves and other warm clothing were also being

donated. Racks appeared on the sidewalks of the capital, in Vác, Pécs, and even in Kolozsvár. In addition to coats, even warm tea in water bottles was placed into newspaper-lined cartons in Békéscsaba.

One participant created a Google map, which he updated constantly, and to which people could add the location of new Free Coat Racks. Those involved realize that only through cooperation can all the clothing be protected from precipitation (and predators!)

With such blustery temperatures, the Free Coat Rack Movement was very welcome – and well used, bringing joy to both recipients and donors.



Map indicating locations where Free Coat Racks may be found.



Those involved would like to keep the momentum going, even after the cold temperatures ease up. They would like to make sure that such genuine cooperation to provide humanitarian assistance will again be available whenever an emergency situation arises.

Tatárjárás, from the Mongolian Perspective

Marjai László

In the April 2015 issue of Magyar News Online, Charlie Bálint Jr. had written about the Battle of Muhi. Here, we present the translation of a controversial article that may or may not be true, and that has received many comments critical of the contents. Apparently, the original piece called Genghis Khan the father of Batu Khan, whereas the version that reached us did call him (correctly) his grandfather. This piece might be considered a follow-up to Charlie's serious article.

The author's contention is the following: What we considered to have been total defeat by the Mongolians in 1241, Mongolians regard to have been THEIR defeat by the Magyars! Here is a look at our history from their perspective.

About a year ago, I was speaking with a middle-aged, well-situated gentleman who had spent long years in Central Asia, including Mongolia. He gave a one-sentence report on Mongolia, as follows: "In Mongolian schools, children are taught that the Golden Horde was beaten by the Hungarians."

This set me thinking. I felt that something was not right. For a whole year, this single sentence gave me no peace. I looked into it: Yes, the Mongolians teach it correctly!

But I was certain of one thing: On April 11th, 1241, we did not beat the Mongolian forces at Muhi, but neither did they deal us an annihilating blow, as we had learned.

Sometime in the seventies-eighties, we learned about the *tatárjárás* somehow like this: "Batu Khan, grandson of Genghis Khan, an-



Golden Horde

nihilated the Hungarian military forces at Muhi in 1241, then devastated and wiped out the Hungarian population. Following them, the immigrant Slav, German and Romanian settlers learned Latin, so that several centuries later they would speak Hungarian (???). Withdrawal of the Mongolians, as we learned, was because half a year later, Genghis Khan, grandfather of Batu Khan, died back home, so they withdrew at lightning speed."

The true reasons for their withdrawal are as follows:

- 1) Very many of their warriors died in their Hungarian campaigns.
- 2) They could not annihilate the Hungarian military forces, as proven by the fact that shortly after the Mongolian invasion, King Béla IV retook the western counties which had been extorted from him earlier.
- 3) The Mongolians were unable to capture almost 160 Hungarian fortresses (e.g. Fehérvár, Esztergom, Veszprém, Tihany, Győr, Pannónhalma, Moson, Sopron, Vasvár, Újhely, Zala, Léka, Pozsony, Nyitra, Komárom, Füle, etc.)
- 4) Feeding the Mongolian army was

also difficult under the war conditions then prevalent in Hungary. But here is crux of the matter: if we advance 44 years in history, then the Mongolian schools are really teaching it correctly, because in Hungary they forgot to teach this minor fact that in 1285, Nogay Khan started out with the Golden Horde, their strongest forces until then, against the Hungarians (second Mongolian invasion). The Hungarians, together with the Cumans (*kunok*) who had joined László IV, beat to a pulp the numerically vastly superior Mongolian force at Pest, then they chased them out through the passes of the Eastern Carpathians.

The Hungarians won also at Torockó with the help of the Székelys, and chased the last surviving Mongolian out of the country; at Vizsoly, it was Baksa György, and Borsa Lóránd who put them to flight.

The Mongolians call this "*Magyarjárás*".

They also have another saying: If you ask a Mongolian why they have such a huge country in relation to their population, the answer is the following: We expect the heroic Hungarians to return!

It's a Small World....

Olga Vállay Szokolay

Even in the art world, Hungarians seem to be ubiquitous, as evidenced by the following story.

Some time in 1957, when Hungarian refugees settled all over the world, and shortly after our arrival in the United States, I received a letter from Paris, from a friend of a friend. She wrote about their art collection that her husband had purchased at Montmartre flea markets, which included a certain painting by Modigliani. She wanted to send it to me to sell. Although I promptly wrote back, "Don't send any artwork!", within a few days I received a package from Paris, wrapped in brown paper over a copy of *Le Monde*, tied with twine. It was the ominous unsigned painting, the alleged Modigliani, representing an elongated woman. Our artist friends, including the famous woodcutter Domján József, called it a fake for various reasons. Thus, the painting was stashed away in my closet.

In late 1958, a very good friend of ours, Oláh Dezső arrived from Europe and stayed with us for a while. He used to dabble in art dealing in Budapest and, seeing the questionable painting, his curiosity awakened. In face of the bad preview and my own instinct, Dezső analyzed the brushwork and other features of the picture. He said we might have something seriously valuable on our hands and we owed it to ourselves and to the owner to explore.

He talked me into driving to New York City with the painting. From the phonebook we learned that virtually all art dealers were concentrated in a small area of the City. We came upon a listing advertised as "Specialist in Modern French Paintings and African Sculpture". That's our man!

We found the dealer, a certain Mr. Segy, in his third-floor atelier, which had a shop behind it, giving us the impression that the "African" sculpture

had been made there. To protect ourselves from suspicion of theft of a world treasure, we told Mr. Segy that Dezső, in possession of a current Austrian passport, had just rescued the painting which had long been in his Hungarian family's collection.

Whereas Mr. Segy uttered a welcoming "Oh, magyarok, magyarok?..." in the friendliest manner, he gave us one more not too promising expert opinion, but referred us to a certain top authority at the most noted auction house for the final verdict. That, too, was negative.

However, we asked Mr. Segy about himself. He told us he came to the U.S. in the 1920's. His original name was Szécsi but, encountering its pronunciation as "Sexy", he changed it to cater the American public.

We said our good-byes. He bade us farewell, asking to "Come again and bring something...Something more kosher..."



A Valentine Message

József Attila

Éva vigyázz, magadat nagyon el ne takard az eszeddel.
Játszd ami vagy, ne túlozz. Meglásd, megkeres Ádám.

Eva beware. Do not cover up yourself with smarts.

Act yourself, don't exaggerate. Soon your Adam will find you.

Translated by OVS

Did you know ...

... **that** according to a folk saying, if it freezes on the 6th of February, St. Dorothy's day, it will thaw on Julianna's day – the 16th? (Ha Dorotya szorítja, Julianna tágítja.)

... **that** construction on the tunnel under the Várhegy in Buda began on February 10th, 1853?

... **that** Malév, the former Hungarian airline, flew over the Equator for the first time on February 11th, 1966?

... **that** the first Dracula film starring Béla Lugosi premiered on February 14th, 1931?

... **that** the lowest temperature ever recorded in Hungary was documented on February 16th, 1940? It was minus 35° C, measured at Görömbölyta-polca, a part of Miskolc. (At -40, both Fahrenheit and Celsius are the same!)

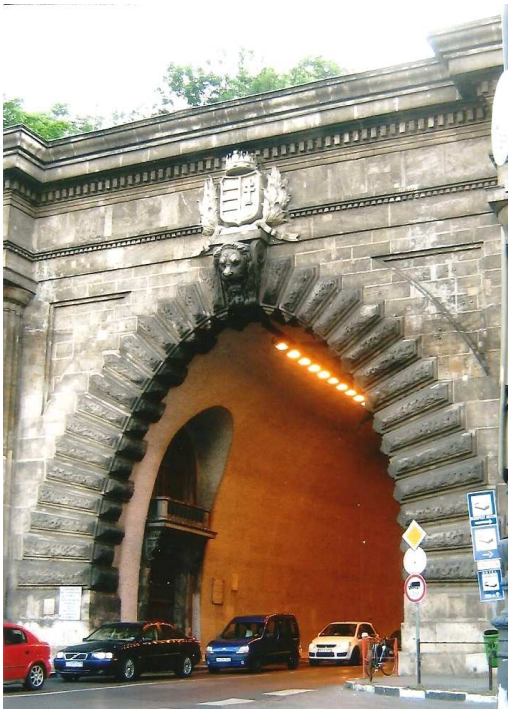
... **that** Sobri Jóska, a famous 19th century outlaw, killed himself on February 16, 1837? He was born Pap József, and took his name from the small settlement of Sobor, in the western part of the country, where his father had been born. Sobri Jóska was a kind of Robin Hood, robbing the rich to help the poor, who made travel through the countryside very risky. When the law finally caught up with him, and he saw that fighting was hopeless, he turned the gun on himself.

...**that** the Great Market Hall (Vásárcsarnok) opened 120 years ago, on February 16, 1897 on Fővámház körút, Budapest? It was declared the most beautiful market in Europe by CNN in 2013. The building's architecture is very significant. It still has the original metal roof which was covered with Zsolnay tiles.

One will find meat, sausage, fruit, vegetables on the main floor. On the second, souvenirs, crafts, embroidery can be purchased. On the lower level is located a grocery store, fishmarket and pharmacy.

The market is closed on Sunday, opens at 6 am on the other days, and closes at 5 pm Monday, 6 pm Tue-Fri and 3 pm Saturday.

Read more about the "Nagy Vásár-csarnok" and other market halls in Budapest in the April 2008 and November 2014 issues at www.magyarnews.org.



Entrance to the tunnel under the Várhegy in Buda

Áll a bál

Czeglédy Gabriella

Farsangi fánk,
pufóka,
teremben áll
a móka.

Kéményseprő,
Piroska,
a szakács meg
a kukta

ropják együtt
a táncot,
mind megeszik
a fánkot.

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Béla Lugosi in "Dracula", 1931

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