

The Ethnic Heritage Council's Press Release

"Each year, the Ethnic Heritage Council honors a naturalized citizen who has made outstanding contribution to his or her adopted country, the U.S.A., while maintaining his or her ethnic heritage. Congressman Jim McDermott presented the 2011 "Spirit of Liberty Award" to Helen M. Szablya, of the Hungarian-American community and Honorary Consul General of Hungary and is one of the most outstanding representatives of the Hungarian-American community."

Jim McDermott's speech, when giving Helen the Spirit of Liberty Award:

Spirit of Liberty Award – to be awarded to The Honorable Helen M. Szablya, Honorary Consul General of the Republic of Hungary

Today the 1956 Hungarian uprising against almost ten years of repressive Soviet domination is only a distant memory for those of us who had read about it in the news or our history books. But for Helen Szablya, born and raised in Budapest, the experience was all too real. Just ten days after the people's revolution was crushed by Soviet troops leaving more than 2,500 dead, Szablya was about to give birth to her third child in the midst of machine-gun bursts and cannon fire of the ongoing street fighting. Even though Helen's husband was a privileged young scientist under the Soviet system, they knew they had to leave their homeland for religious and political freedom.

In a harrowing journey, with constant threat of hard labor in Siberia, police arrest, dodging Russian tanks and soldiers, the young family struggled through the night to flee the conflict, with a four-year-old toddler and two babes in arms. In the early morning the Szablya family finally reached the Austrian border and freedom.

John and Helen Szablya found their way to Canada and then the United States, settling in Pullman, Washington, where they raised seven children. John Szablya became professor of electrical engineering at Washington State University. Helen now lives in Seattle and for 18 years has served as Honorary Consul General of the Republic of Hungary. She is an award-winning author, lecturer, and former publisher of Hungary International, a newsletter for Americans doing business in Hungary. As President of the Washington Press Association she received its highest award, "Communicator of Achievement." She was project director and co-author of Hungary Remembered, a drama/lecture series commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Hungarian Uprising of 1956.



Grandchildren of Helen M. Szablya with flowers

consider a great honor. I thank you also in the name of my husband, Dr. John Szablya, whom many of you know and without whom I could never have achieved what I have. So I believe we are getting this award together. I want to thank also my children and my friends, who always helped me tremendously.

When we escaped from Hungary and looked back with my husband for a last time, to our native land, little did we know that not only will we return there, but I will represent this country as consul general in my new country, America - The land of dreams, the land of freedom. I am putting the finishing touches on my new book to be published. Its title will be „Flame of a dream”. That flame, which we pursued with my husband is FREEDOM.

Our families brought us up as „world citizens”, meaning that we considered ourselves first of all human beings who believe in God, and then Hungarians. When we crossed the border and arrived in freedom, we decided that our home was where we were together. We learned that strangers are friends whom we have not yet met.

From the first minute on we were striving to free Hungary and to explain everyone how extreme right and extreme left are equally bad. We gave talks, we wrote articles. It was the great efforts of Hungarians within Hungary and outside of Hungary that contributed to the Fall of the Red Star, which is the title of another book I wrote.

Since Hungary became free my husband and I pushed for a Hungarian Consulate in Seattle because we wanted to put Seattle on Hungary's map and vice-versa, meaning we wanted to establish an intimate relationship between Seattle and Hungary.

When we arrived in freedom we had three children - six diapers - and NOTHING ELSE. God blessed us with four more children, 16 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren to date. We always considered ourselves the richest, the luckiest people in the world.

Our children all speak Hungarian and are proud to be Hungarian Americans. We too brought them up as world citizens to love and respect every human being without prejudice. Having lived through nazism and communism, we dedicate ourselves to testify that the best way for a human being to live is in freedom and democracy.



Congressman Jim McDermott presented the 2011 "Spirit of Liberty Award" to Helen M. Szablya

Helen became a naturalized citizen of the United States in 1979. Five days before John's death the couple received the Order of Merit from the President of the Republic of Hungary in October 2005 for their lifetime work. Helen represents the highest principles of the Ethnic Heritage Council, to both cherish your ethnic heritage and to promote the positive values of your adopted country, and for this Helen Szablya is a true inspiration for us all.

Helen's talk after receiving the Spirit of Liberty award:

Dear Friends,

Thank you very much for this award, which I

Thank you again for this great honor, and thank you, America, for freedom!

Hungary's Best Places: Hévíz



Located 6 Km from western-Balaton, its population is about 5000 inhabitants. It's unique because it has the largest thermal lake in Europe, covering 47,500 square metres and it's surrounded by a big protective forest.

This town is a little gem that has not yet been discovered by the average traveller, it's unspoilt, clean, safe and very tourist friendly.

As the average age of the guests was about 60, all the bars and restaurants close at 22:00; however food is good, they also make German food, but it's practically impossible to find an Italian, Chinese or French restaurants.

Because of the geographical situation the region has very few windy days. The average temperature is up to 11,2 °C, the sunshine is given for 1940 hours yearly and the climate is very Mediterranean-like. Summers are dry and warm; Autumns are cool, foggy and rainy. Winters are relatively short, moderately cold and usually dry, but sometimes brilliant sunny. The little snow the city gets usually disappears after a few days. placesonline.com

Hungarian - is it difficult?

The Hungarian grammar is very different from most European languages, but you can try to learn it, anyway. Hungarian is a very nice language, so it's worth learning it, even if it is very hard to do. Hungarian language is full of very expressive, idiomatic words, too. The word for brother/sister comes from "test" (body) + "vér" (blood), meaning brothers/sisters are from the same body and are from the same blood. Or "brothers in arms" are "bajtársak", that is, fellows in trouble. (Though the English expression is just as expressive here.)

We have lived in the Carpathian Basin for 1100 years, so we have some words coming from the Slavonic languages of our neighbours. Due to the years of Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and Austria as a neighbour, lots of German word were imported and melted into Hungarian but they are alien and considered undesirable to use. The same applies to the "American" language nowadays. (And if you hear a word you think you've recognized, just watch out! For example "(autó)szervíz" (coming from "service") means garage, while "garázs" (coming from "garage") means parking place.

Addressing someone

Before you begin learning some words, it is good to know that Hungarian—unlike English, but like German or Spanish—tends to have two different addressing forms, which basically means, that they can use two words for the same person, i.e. in case of you you can say "te" but you can also say "ön" or "maga," the latter two being more polite. Most of the time children address adults with the latter form (they used to do it with their parents too, but not anymore), and also two adults address each other with that form, if they don't know each other. So the other form ("te") is used when talking to people you know well, and usually siblings too, etc. It's called "tegezés," and the other form "magázás." "Magázás" can also express honour and adoration to someone. (There are other forms of polite address as well such as "ön" and "kend," the later used mostly by country folk and rapidly becoming obsolete.)

Also, if you get to know somebody, whoever is older can offer to use "tegeződés," and instead of addressing each other with "ön" or "maga." you can use "te." But make sure that it is acceptable to the other party before this happens as "letegezés" (addressing him with "te") could be taken as offensive.

Polite forms are very important in Hungarian and addressing someone with the inappropriate level of politeness can cause complications. This includes addressing someone who is a close friend with a polite form such as "maga" instead of the familiar form. Doing this usually signifies displeasure. wikibooks.org (to be continued)



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