

# **Hungarian Heritage Maintenance in the USA: New Brunswick, N. J., as a Magyar Ethnic Island**

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**One reason why** the East Coast United States is so attractive to visitors from abroad is the diversity of traditions and customs that immigrants from faraway lands have brought with them to the new homeland. In this part of the country, ethnic communities and people's ties to their mother country are particularly strong even today, more than a century after the formation of the major ethnic settlements along the East Coast. Among the numerous ethnic groups that have retained their original culture are the Hungarian Americans, who have not only maintained their national identity, but have also preserved the language, customs, and traditions of their ancestors to a surprising level. At the same time, they have also become successful American citizens. Today, they form an integral part of the country's economic, cultural and social life.

It is interesting to ask the question what it is that makes a person living in the USA an Irish, an Italian, a German, or a Hungarian American? Depending on the birth-place or the ethnicity of the person who is asked, one might get different answers to this query. Some consider themselves Irish Americans, or German Americans, because they or their ancestors came from Ireland or Germany, although by now most of them do not speak the language or dialects of their elders. Likewise, Italian Americans may not speak Italian any more; nevertheless, they may have kept other aspects of their culture such as Italian cuisine or the Roman Catholic religion. The term Hungarian American might also have various meanings. For some, anyone whose ancestors came from Hungary and feels some loyalty to the mother country is considered a Hungarian American, independently of the person's knowledge of Hungarian. Simultaneously, others, who are members of the still active Hungarian communities, claim that in order for one to be called a Hungarian, the person

should be closely acquainted with Hungarian culture and speak the language with a high degree of fluency.<sup>1</sup>

Among those who feel this way are the Hungarian Americans of New Jersey who had established strong ethnic communities in the cities of Garfield, Passaic, and New Brunswick. Although the Hungarian ethnic institutions in these cities were originally founded by the “old” immigrants from Hungary around 1900, the people who are still active within these communities at present times are mainly the children and the grandchildren of the post-World War II immigrants and of the 1956 refugees. By today, most Hungarian Americans have left the traditional Hungarian neighbourhoods and moved to the more affluent suburbs; nevertheless, Hungarian Americans continue to gather in their historic centres on a regular basis. In these centres and in some other cities of the East Coast United States, as in Washington D.C., and New York City, — as well as elsewhere such as in Cleveland, Ohio, and in Toronto and Montreal in Canada — Hungarian culture has been kept alive with the help of various immigrant institutions: the ethnic churches, and lay organizations such as the Hungarian schools, Hungarian scouts, and cultural as well as the sports clubs. With the help of these establishments, second and third generation Hungarian Americans (and in Canada, Hungarian Canadians) have been given the chance of acquiring the values, customs, traditions, culture, and language of their ancestral homeland. Besides passing on Hungarian heritage, the parents and educators of these communities also pass on an incredible amount of love and appreciation to young children for the culture they have inherited. Since most of these parents are educated and successful members of American society, who have reached a high level of fluency in English, their children look proudly at their parents, rather than shunning them as it sometimes happens to many second generation children who are eager to discard their parents’ culture. This positive attitude of preserving national identity is also helped by the diversity of the region.

As the daughter of a mathematician who was a visiting professor of Rutgers University in the academic years of 86/87 and 99/00 and a visitor at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton in the year 90/91, I had the opportunity to get a closer insight into the life of the Hungarian American community of New Brunswick. From the age of five, I attended the services of the Hungarian Catholic church with my family, besides the weekly meetings of the Hungarian scouts during our successive stays in the United States. After my graduation from high school in 1999, I returned to New Jersey to accompany my family and was able to take an active part in the life of the Hungarian community by attending its scout meetings, the Saturday classes of the Hungarian community school, Hungarian folk dance lessons, the poetry events

organized in the Hungarian Heritage Center, along with the feasts and celebrations of the New Brunswick community. In August-September 2008, I spent six weeks in the New Brunswick area with the purpose of conducting a sociological and sociolinguistic research among the active members of the Hungarian communities of New Brunswick, and to a lesser extent, Passaic-Garfield, New Jersey. Therefore, in the following, I would like to give an outline of my own experience, as well as a detailed account of Hungarian community life based on interviews, a questionnaire, a research log, personal communications, and published materials.

### **Changes within the Past Decade**

Despite the fact that the forces of assimilation are almost as strong among the Hungarian communities of the East Coast as they are in most ethnic communities in the United States, there is a minority of Hungarian immigrants who have been very successful in the areas of language and cultural maintenance. Nevertheless, according to my observations based on my visits to New Brunswick in the years 1999/2000 and in September 2008, within the last ten years there has been a significant decrease in the level of Hungarian spoken by students in general at the Hungarian Saturday School in New Brunswick. The children who attend the Hungarian Saturday School and the scouting activities are often children born to ethnically mixed families. A considerable number of these children are not the descendants of the 1956-ers and the post-World War II “displaced persons” or DPs, as it used to be ten years ago.

The level of Hungarian language skills is the highest among the children who attend the Hungarian Montessori Preschool (Aprókfalva Mindennapos Magyar Óvoda). However, a considerable number of the students who attend the Hungarian Saturday School do not speak Hungarian at a native level, unlike the children of the Hungarian Montessori Preschool, which is an every-day preschool. It is also worth mentioning that the students of the Hungarian Saturday School show a great variation among themselves, regarding *their level of spoken Hungarian*.

As most immigrants of any other nationality, many grown-up Hungarians who emigrated after the fall of the Communist regime in the hope of making a better living have had difficulties with the English language. Some of these people seem to fear that their children will also experience the same difficulties. Since their broken English often presents itself as a handicap to them, they are eager to avoid their children having to go through the same experience. Consequently, even though their English may be fragile, they still

tend to use English with their children rather than Hungarian. The situation was different in the case of the earlier arrivals. Most parents who came to New Jersey during the early Cold War and after the 1956 Revolution usually had a strong sense of ethnic identity and were very eager to maintain the use of Hungarian within the family home. Until their children reached the age of going to school, they tried to speak only in Hungarian to them, but often later as well.

Those who are still active within the Hungarian community and who are keen on actively preserving their heritage, form only a minority among the people of Hungarian descent. There are; however, a few families that are closely knit together and who live in each others' vicinities in the suburbs of New Brunswick, in Somerset, NJ. These families have a tendency to speak Hungarian as much as they can among themselves and to their children. Many of them watch DVDs, television shows and the news in Hungarian through cable TV or the internet. It is also an important factor for them to find a Hungarian spouse. Nevertheless, they cannot and they do not want to exclude themselves from the American cultural sphere. In fact, they say that today it is necessary for their children to know English before they start school, in order for them to be able to enrol into the good elementary schools and to receive higher grades. It is interesting to mention that the knowledge of English was not a basic criterion in most elementary schools about twenty years ago, and that the parents of the children who started Kindergarten in those times usually only spoke Hungarian to their children until they reached the age of five.

Several people have mentioned that they had gone through many difficulties when their parents made them speak Hungarian strictly, on a regular basis. One of the interviewees said she and her sister waited for their parents to leave the place where they were together, and later they would discuss in English what they wanted to say to each other. Another person said she and her siblings would get a slap on their ears if they spoke English, and another three people asserted that they were often reminded to speak Hungarian by their parents with the words "*Magyaruuul!*" [in Hungariaaan!]. Nevertheless, being grown-up people today, they all value this kind of parental education, for they would also like to pass on their mother tongue to their children. László Varga says this is similar to receiving piano lessons, with which small children or teenagers tend to struggle, but once they grow up, they are grateful for having had the chance to learn to play the piano.

Within the course of the interviews, several young people of approximately 35 years of age stated that as teenagers and during their twenties they often mixed Hungarian with English, and that they owe their ability to speak Hungarian today to their parents' constant nagging and high expectations. It is

interesting to note that some young couples, start speaking Hungarian with their spouse and/or their friends many months before having their first child, in order to improve their fluency and be able to pass on their mother tongue to their future children.

## **Relating to America and to Hungary**

Many Hungarians who were born in America seek to find the roots of their folk culture in Hungary. They often hold an idealized image of Hungary, which has been passed on to them by their parents and grandparents, many of whom had left their homeland by force and who could not return to the mother country for several decades. As in the case of someone who tends to look back on the past events of his or her life by remembering only its nice happenings, some immigrants also tend to forget the dark aspects of life in Hungary. Therefore, it was often a shock for many children to see the reality with their own eyes when they realized; for instance, the dark side of life in Hungary in the presence of bad behaviour or in the fact that there are homeless people living there.

Today the ties of the Hungarian Americans with their homeland are rather close, perhaps closer than ever been before. After the fall of communism, Hungarian Americans were again free to travel, and many of them took advantage of this. Most of the Hungarian Americans who are active in the community try to spend a part of their summer in Hungary at least every second year. This is partly to preserve family ties, but also because parents want their children to have a direct Hungarian experience. Katalin Balla, who lived in New Brunswick for eleven years, said she knew several families who send their children home to practice Hungarian every summer. A considerable number of these families have relatives there, either grandparents or cousins with whom they keep in touch through emails and telephone calls. Other children, who do not have relatives in Hungary, travel there for summer camps and bicycle tours with the scouts, or visit the traditional Hungarian regions of Transylvania. Hungary and the historic Hungarian regions that lie outside the borders of present-day Hungary are among the favourite meeting points of Hungarian scouts who come from various countries of the world.<sup>2</sup>

Many of the Hungarian Americans of New Jersey have also made long visits to Hungary. They often complain that they cannot come to common terms with Hungarian-born people, mostly because they feel that these Hungarians do not value their heritage as much as Hungarian Americans do. For example, most of them are not as interested in folk culture and do not

cherish the events of the 1956 Revolution as much as the active members of the Hungarian American communities on the East Coast do. Besides their own relatives, the circle of friends of the younger generation of Hungarian Americans who are living in Budapest usually consists of other Hungarian Americans as well as other newcomers to Hungary. For them the situation is similar to that of the United States, for they say they can relate easier to other American-born Hungarians or to the Hungarians who come from the Hungarian minorities of the Carpathian Basin.

The circle of friends of New Brunswick's Hungarian-American children who attend school, ranging from elementary school to high school, are usually made up of Americans and Hungarian Americans. After graduation from high-school many of these children choose to study at Rutgers University in order to stay close to their families. This practice makes it somewhat difficult for them to find American friends at the university. Among the members of the generation of Hungarian Americans who are approximately 35 years old, several people have only Hungarians as very close acquaintances. However, others have stated that their closest friends are American and that they are also in a close relationship with the other young Hungarian Americans with whom they had grown up together. Given that they are in an American atmosphere at their workplace, their friendships with Americans are mostly formed there. A few retired Hungarians, whose spouses are also Hungarian and who speak English at a native or near-native level, have noted that ever since they have retired, they have fewer opportunities to speak English than they previously had.

The Hungarian-American image of America and of Americans — that is, what America means to Hungarian Americans and how they view Americans — is also worth discussing. A large number of people responded to a questionnaire saying that for them America is the country that welcomed Hungarians and where they found political freedom. However, during private interviews many of them said that they see the average American as a person who has no real hobbies and who sits in front of the TV-set, eating hamburgers all day. Some interviewees have stated that Americans who come from ethnically mixed suburban towns tend to be more tolerant towards people of other ethnic or racial backgrounds. Still other Hungarian Americans have said that for them it is easier to relate to those Americans who also come from an immigrant background and who are eager to maintain their immigrant heritage. A few people have mentioned that they are also more open towards those who have a special interest or hobby; for example, music, drama, or sports.

The number of intermarriages among Hungarians and Americans has increased in the last two decades. This phenomenon is rather characteristic of the people who arrived after the 1990s. The children of the DPs and of the 1956 immigrants seem to have been more likely to marry Hungarians, mostly Hungarian Americans. According to the interviewees, one's difficulties increase significantly when marrying a non-Hungarian speaker, if the person wishes to pass on the Hungarian language.

### **The Role of Education in Language Maintenance Among Children and Young Adults**

Most Hungarian Americans consider education essential for their children. Most of the children and grandchildren of the 1956 and post World War II immigrants are college- or university-educated professionals. The location of Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey which has its campuses in New Brunswick and in the neighbouring suburbs, is especially beneficial to the local Hungarian community. Young Hungarians attending Rutgers are geographically close enough to participate in the activities of the city's Hungarian community — from organizing scouts meetings for small children to attending the folk dance rehearsals in the Hungarian American Athletic Club. They can also attend Sunday services in their local Hungarian churches.

Besides having one of the most active Hungarian-American communities, New Brunswick is also known for the high level of Hungarian that is spoken there. The main reason for this is the fact that the members of the community form a closely-knit unit based on friendships and family ties. They organize cultural events several times a week, ranging from scouting to Hungarian language education and dance classes. The members of the community are usually active in several Hungarian organizations simultaneously, which means that the above mentioned activities are often attended by the same people.

In earlier times many children who had grown up in New Brunswick's Hungarian community learned English only after they had started school, at the age of five. Many first, second, and sometimes even third generation Hungarian Americans did not consider it a disadvantage to send their children to elementary school without any knowledge of English, because their experience had shown that children could acquire a new language quickly and without any difficulties.

Today the situation is somewhat different. In most schools, especially the better ones, American-born children are required to know English before

they are admitted. In view of this situation some parents take their children out of the all-day Hungarian preschool a few months before they would start regular school, in order to place them into an English speaking environment, in an American preschool.

It is interesting to reflect on the bilingual character of the people who are approximately 15-38 years old and who were either born in America or left Hungary at an early age. Although their level of fluency in Hungarian may vary from person to person, depending on the generation they belong to or whether both of their parents are of Hungarian origin, most of them feel confident with the Hungarian language. The language they prefer to speak among each other is a mixture of English and Hungarian, but almost never exclusively English. Even those who are not confident enough to speak only Hungarian use certain words always in Hungarian. Examples for this are the words pertaining to scouting activities or to the Hungarian school as *cserkészet*, *őrs*, *őrsvezető*, *csajka*, *sátor* or *magyar iskola*. The younger generations also like to switch from Hungarian to English and back and forth without any given order: they might start a sentence in English and finish it with a Hungarian syntax. According to Anna Borbély, this linguistic behaviour called code-switching is characteristic of bilingual communities, and is only in use among people who belong to the community.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Hungarian Montessori Pre-school**

As mentioned before, the level of Hungarian spoken among children is the highest among those who attend the Hungarian Montessori pre-school in Piscataway. In fact, a native speaker could barely notice that these children did not grow up in Hungary. The parents of the preschoolers have either recently arrived from Hungary or are mostly of Hungarian descent from both sides. The institution has permission to accommodate only eight children even though there would be demand for more spaces. Among the preschoolers of the year 2008/2009, only one child came from an ethnically mixed background, although her level of Hungarian is almost as outstanding as that of the other children, because her mother, who is an American, had lived in Hungary and knows some Hungarian.

According to Enikő Gorondi, the pre-school's head-mistress, the great turning-point in the life of Hungarian-American children arrives when they start school. Since they are under the influence of the English language during the entire day — when they do their homework or engage in sports — and since most of their experience comes from an English-speaking environment,



when they recount the happenings of their day in Hungarian they start to translate from English or use English words. Enikő Gorondi stated that it is natural for small children to be able to speak better Hungarian than it is for older children or teenagers. She also mentioned that it is a common tendency among the Hungarians who actively preserve their heritage to speak a more correct and pure form of Hungarian when speaking to small children, as opposed to when communicating with adults.

### **The Széchenyi Hungarian Saturday School and Kindergarten**

Ethnic weekend schools or Saturday schools, founded by immigrants, have a long tradition in the United States. As in the case of other ethnic groups, Hungarian immigrants were also eager to teach their children not only the basics of their spoken language, but also reading and writing, besides religious subjects. These earliest Saturday schools were in fact mostly run by religious institutions and had the objective of passing a basic knowledge of religion to the immigrant children of the ethnic communities. The tradition of Hungarian Saturday schools was established by protestant congregations. Originally, they also served the purpose of securing a place for children to stay at on the weekends or in the summers in the form of summer schools, while their parents were working.<sup>4</sup>

Besides weekend schools and summer school, weekday afternoon schools and all-day schools also have a long tradition in North America. Linguist Joshua Fishman, coauthor and editor of the book *Language Loyalty in the United States*, studied the language maintenance efforts of various ethnic groups and found that the weekend schools were generally the most successful ones in maintaining cultural heritage. Chapter 5 of this book, written by Fishman and Vladimir Nahimy, compares the various kinds of ethnic schools and concludes that unlike the weekend school, the "All Day School is far less embedded in ethnicity, and, therefore, far less concerned with language maintenance than any other type of ethnically affiliated school."<sup>5</sup> The authors also mention that all-day schools are usually run by Catholic parishes of both Western and Eastern Rites, and that their educators and students are the most Americanized. Interestingly, there used to be a Hungarian Catholic everyday school in New Brunswick until the 1990s, the Saint Ladislaus School, which also offered Hungarian classes in its curriculum. Although the Hungarian classes were reintroduced only in 1971, my Hungarian acquaintances who came into touch with the school have stated that

it was considerably less efficient in passing on Hungarian language and culture than the Hungarian weekend or Saturday schools of the city.

I recall that in 2000 when I started to attend the school together with my sister Agnes, upon the invitation of Katalin and Zsolt Balla who hoped that our presence would improve other students' motivation, the school was very useful in having children and young students gain interest in topics related to Hungarian culture. Students usually had a good relation with the teachers of the school and often knew them personally, which enhanced the efficiency of the classes. As a student who had already graduated from high school in Hungary the year before, I especially enjoyed the history classes of Zoltán Koller, who spoke to us about the events of Hungarian history, as the Tartar invasion, for instance, in such a detailed and accurate way that I had never heard before. This was also true of the classes held by Katalin Balla, who gave lectures on the geography and folk art of Hungary and of the neighbouring countries where Hungarian minorities are found. For instance, I remember a class she held on the various types of *fejfa* (carved wooden poles used in the graveyards of Székelyföld, a region in Transylvania) and *székely kapu*, (wooden gates carved with a similar technique as used for the *fejfa*) which are unique forms of artwork in Transylvania.

At that time, the school also offered a matriculation exam for the students who were in their last year of high school according to the American school system. Although this exam was not equivalent to its counterpart offered in official Hungarian schools, it did expect students to have a basic knowledge on Hungarian culture, mostly history and literature. Regrettably, the contemporary teachers of the Széchenyi Hungarian school have mentioned that today's students do not seem to be interested enough to continue their studies at the Hungarian Saturday school after they reach the age of fourteen or fifteen.

As it has been mentioned previously, I have noticed other differences as well between the present-day situation of the school and that of eight-ten years ago. My observations, which have been confirmed during a conversation with Juan Gorondi (who was serving his second term as the principal of the school at the time), have been the following. The majority of the children who attend the school are not the offspring of the 1956-ers or of the Displaced Persons, as they used to be. Many of them come from post-1989 immigrant families, and a number of them were born from ethnically mixed marriages. Juan Gorondi also stated that the students generally show a difference from the point of view of their religious background as well. Whereas the descendants of the 1956 and post-World War II immigrants have mostly received a Christian upbringing, the number of students who are of a Christian back-

ground has significantly decreased. This is partly due to the effects of Communism, which prohibited religious education in Hungary, but also to the diversity of the immigrants who arrived in the USA after the Cold War. Today, it is more common to have students who are atheists or agnostic or Hungarian students of a Jewish origin.

At the present time, the curriculum of most ethnic Hungarian Saturday schools on the East Coast United States does not offer religious education, although the schools are under the custody of the churches. The main objective of these schools today is founded partly on the non-denominational educational principles initiated by the Hungarian Alumni Association and the Anyanyelvi Konferencia (Native Language Conference), and partly on Christian traditions. The primary goal of the Hungarian Saturday School, sponsored by the Hungarian Alumni Association, was to pass on Hungarian cultural heritage without offering any kind of religious education, whereas its successor, Széchenyi Hungarian Saturday School and Kindergarten was also based on religious principles. Although the latter institution, along with St. Stephen Hungarian School of Passaic, the other Hungarian Saturday school in New Jersey, are strongly supported by the Roman Catholic Church and the Magyar Reformed Church, as well as by the Hungarian Scout Association Abroad; the present day curriculum of these schools does not involve religious education. What has remained of religious education; however, is a non-denominational prayer said before the first lesson of the day. Since a large number of the students who presently attend the school have not received any religious upbringing, Juan Gorondi believes that in this way, non Christians, Jewish students for instance, are not excluded from the prayer, and those who are non-believers are not forced to say it either.

The curriculum offered by the previously mentioned Saturday schools of New Jersey includes Hungarian language and literature, history and geography, some folklore, besides reading and writing in Hungarian. Classes take place on Saturdays from 9.00 a.m. until 1.00 p.m. Hungarian dance lessons were reintroduced in Passaic in 2001. The New Brunswick students may also attend folk dance classes after school, on Saturday afternoons. Recently, Hungarian as a Second Language was re-introduced to Széchenyi Hungarian Saturday School and Kindergarten once again, after an absence of several years.

I have noticed a great difference among the language skills of those who attend the Montessori School and the students of Széchenyi Hungarian Saturday School and Kindergarten. As mentioned earlier, many of the students who attend the Hungarian Saturday School are not able to speak Hungarian at a native level, and show a great variation according to their level of Hungari-

an. A number of students who come from an ethnically mixed background have difficulty in expressing themselves in complete sentences, and they often use words pertaining to a basic vocabulary. At the same time, there are also American-born students whose parents had immigrated at a young age and who speak Hungarian almost at a native level. It is often a challenge for the teachers of the school to organize classes in a way as to have students of the same age group and of similar language skills placed together, as well as to find suitable text books created for the purpose of teaching second or third generation immigrant children. Nevertheless, the educators' optimism and dedication creates a friendly and enjoyable atmosphere for students, which is exactly what they would like to achieve. In fact, their motto is that they cannot teach students everything on a weekly basis of four hours, wherefore their goal is to have children become interested in Hungarian culture and to have them start reading in Hungarian by themselves. They also stress the importance of the family in encouraging the daily use of Hungarian at home.

### **The Hungarian Scout Association Abroad**

One of the most important organizations that has great influence on Hungarian language maintenance, besides the instruction provided by Hungarian Saturday schools, is the Hungarian Scout Association Abroad (*Külföldi Magyar Cserkészszövetség*). Besides having a crucial role in language maintenance, it also provides children with a basic knowledge of Hungarian history and culture, and some religious education. The Hungarian Scout Association Abroad serves as a movement that holds together the Hungarian scouts of not only the United States, but also of other countries with significant Hungarian minorities.

The Hungarian Scout Association Abroad owes its existence to the Hungarian post-World War II refugees. Before they could enter the United States, they were temporarily housed in barracks in Austria and in West Germany, sometimes even for eleven years. It was in these barracks already in 1945 that Hungarian Scout leaders privately started organizing Hungarian education for their children by teaching Hungarian folk songs and history in addition to reading and writing. This, in fact, had a double purpose—to have their children's thoughts occupied and to make sure that they spent their time usefully.<sup>6</sup>

As it has been mentioned earlier, the main objectives of the Hungarian Scout Association was to transmit Hungarian language and culture to the younger generation and to maintain Hungarian scouting in the world. Regard-

ing the preservation of the Hungarian language, Gábor Bodnár, the founder of the Hungarian scout movement in America, also introduced a special requirement for those who wanted to participate in the movement. He decided that only those could become Hungarian scouts who could speak Hungarian.<sup>7</sup>

When children are in the Hungarian Saturday school or in the Teleki Pál Scouting Home in New Brunswick, they are not allowed to speak English. Scout meetings are held regularly, once a week. They are organized by the younger generation; mostly by those who are between their late teens and early thirties. The main purpose of Hungarian scouting in America is to preserve and pass on Hungarian language and customs through folk songs, games, and various other activities, including drawing. Through scouting, children can also learn about important events in Hungarian history. On the anniversaries of the 1848 and 1956 revolutions it is common for them to act out famous historical events.

Summer camps organized by the Hungarian scouts have an especially valuable influence on the linguistic behaviour of children. During these camps, which are usually ten days long, children are only allowed to speak Hungarian. Tamás Tamás, who formed the first Boy Scout troop in New Brunswick, and his son Péter, who is presently the scoutmaster of Bornemissza Gergely Boy Scout Troop of New Brunswick, have both mentioned that they have seen young children, who usually speak English to each other, start conversing in Hungarian after spending several days in camp.<sup>8</sup>

Although Gábor Bodnár's decision has had a clearly good impact on the language maintenance efforts of Hungarian Americans, there are people who do not fully agree with this requirement. They believe that besides having its positive effects, the exclusion of those who are not fluent in Hungarian may lead to the loss of otherwise valuable members of the community. This general issue regards not only the members of the scout movement, but also of other local organizations in New Brunswick. In some instances, one can hear of people who do not speak Hungarian at a very good level. These people often receive criticism for their poor level of Hungarian, while those who speak it well receive praise, as valuable members of the community. I have also noticed a similar kind of attitude towards some children who come from ethnically mixed families, and who were not able to acquire the language as well as children whose parents are Hungarian on both sides.

Besides taking into consideration the usefulness of the enforced use of Hungarian from the point of view of language maintenance, one has to mention that it does cause difficulties for Hungarian American scouts. Since most of the young adults who become scout leaders are second, third, and sometimes even fourth generation Hungarian Americans, at times it happens

that younger children, who have recently arrived from Hungary, speak a better Hungarian than their older leaders.<sup>9</sup> For the same reasons mentioned earlier, teaching reading and writing has also become more difficult for current scout leaders than it had previously been. Therefore, according to a new law that concerns Hungarian American Scouts, scout leaders are now also required to pass a test based on reading and writing skills in Hungarian, in order to receive their certificates.

Even today, it is Hungarian scouting that holds together the Hungarian diasporas of various countries as Argentina, Venezuela, Germany, United States, and Canada. The Association provides regular opportunities for children and young people to meet through excursions and camps. Marriages are also common among Hungarian scouts who were born outside of Hungary, for instance, among the members of the New Brunswick community and those of Canada or Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The other merit of the Hungarian Scout Association Abroad has been the assistance its members gave to the Hungarian scouts of the Carpathian Basin at the rebirth of Hungarian scouting in post-Communist countries after the fall of socialism. As Hungarians living abroad, they could especially assist Hungarian scouts of the neighbouring countries of Hungary, who were also struggling to preserve their cultural identity.<sup>10</sup>

### **Cultural and Educational Organizations of Adults**

Besides the activities organized for children and teenagers of New Brunswick's Hungarian community, its adult population can also participate in several interesting pursuits. For example, they can attend poetry events organized by Vers Hangja Hungarian Poetry Club, or the meetings of the Rutgers Alumni Association (Bessenyei Kör), or the Bolyai Lecture Series on Arts and Sciences. These gatherings are held at the Hungarian Heritage Center on Somerset Street. There is also the Hungarian language radio program (The Hungarian Hour) broadcast by Rutgers University every Sunday afternoon. In addition there are the friendly gatherings and folk dance rehearsals that are held regularly at the Hungarian American Athletic Club (HAAC). Commemorations of the national holidays and the celebrations of the Annual Hungarian Festival also take place in the building of the HAAC. Recently, a summer university, American Hungarian Collegium, has also been organized by Hungarian American university professors for Americans of Hungarian descent, with the participation of eminent scholars of Hungarian origin.

*The Hungarian American Athletic Club (HAAC)*

The Hungarian American Athletic Club, founded nearly a century ago by the pre-World War I Hungarian immigrants, was originally established for purely athletic purposes. Although presently it does not function according to its original goals, it is one of the most important gathering places not only for the Hungarians of the New Brunswick area, but due to its location and uniquely modern facilities, also for those who are living in Central New Jersey or in the New York-New Jersey-Pennsylvania area. Dinners, celebrations of national holidays, and dances are held here, besides bingo games and the rehearsals of the Hungarian dance groups. HAAC was established in 1913 in order to enable young Hungarians to practice sports: mostly baseball, but also wrestling, track, and bowling. In the later decades, fencing, soccer, and karate were also introduced. Today, fencing is the only kind of sports activity offered by the HAAC, besides the various Hungarian folk dance activities, which draw a large number of people to the club.

Although it has always been centered in the heart of the Hungarian American community in New Brunswick, the Club has been relocated several times over its history. Shortly after its foundation, it operated in the gymnasium of Saint Ladislaus School with pool tables and bowling facilities.<sup>11</sup> The Club also held cultural events already during this period, as a drama club, for instance, along with the joint HAAC-Saint Ladislaus Choir: both were initiated in 1914.<sup>12</sup>

In 1921 a new house was bought on Somerset Street (no. 198), which served as a home to the HAAC until 2006. Thirty years after its purchase, plans were initiated for the reconstruction of the building. With the coming of the new immigrants due to the 1956 Revolution, the Club's life was revitalized again. Soccer games, which had been extremely popular in the mother country, were introduced among the athletic activities offered by the Club.<sup>13</sup> Citizenship classes were also organized and attended by the newly arrived Hungarians, with more than 600 participants.<sup>14</sup> The new immigrants also started a fund raising program for the reconstruction of the building, and finally, in 1959, the HAAC was able to repay the remaining loans.<sup>15</sup>

The early 1990s were especially active years in the Club's life. A scholarship program was initiated in 1991 to fund the studies of talented college and university students of Hungarian origins. With the help of this program, the HAAC supported 34 college students. In 1992, the Hungarian Folk Dance Ensemble of New Brunswick was established, which incorporated dance groups for people of various ages, ranging from kindergarten to

university level. The older members of the ensemble later created a separate group together with the older Hungarian scouts, the Csürdögölő [barn-stomping] Folk Dance Ensemble, which holds its rehearsals and performances in the building of the HAAC even at the present time. The folk dance ensemble of the HAAC is still active and serves as a recruit for the Csürdögölő Folk Dance Ensemble. A prominent cultural organization, the Széchenyi Kör, which conducted a series of oral history interviews among Hungarian Americans, also found its home in the building in 1993.<sup>16</sup>

Already in 1992, the neighbouring Robert Wood Johnson Hospital advised the Club to initiate negotiations, for due to the expansion of the hospital, the territory of the HAAC on Somerset Street was needed by the hospital. After several years of talks between the hospital representatives and the committee set up by the HAAC<sup>17</sup> the new building was planned. It finally opened on October 7, 2006 at 233 Somerset Street, very close to the previous site and to the other historic buildings of the Hungarian neighbourhood.<sup>18</sup> The members of the Hungarian community are very pleased with the new site, for it resembles the old building from the inside; nevertheless, it is more spacious and was built according to modern needs. In fact, they are proud to have one of the most elegant Hungarian clubhouses of the area. The Mayor of New Brunswick, James Cahill, was also very supportive of the construction plans and still maintains good relations with the Hungarian community. It is partly due to his help that the new building could be completed in one year. László Strasz, a former president of the HAAC, mentioned that the mayor's wife is of Hungarian origin.<sup>19</sup>

The older members of the Club usually meet twice a week in the evenings. Friday evenings are especially lively for the members of the Club, for these are the occasions when both the younger and the older members of the community gather. The older members usually meet in the bar of the Club to play cards and have a drink or dinner together. During these evenings, Hungarian television programs, as Duna TV, a television channel that serves also Hungarian minorities, are often on the air. Simultaneously, the younger members hold dance rehearsals on the second floor of the building, making the clubhouse live with folk music.

### *The American Hungarian Foundation (AHF)*

The American Hungarian Foundation (AHF) is one of the most significant Hungarian cultural institutions in the United States, as well as a basic gathering point not only for the Hungarians of New Brunswick, but also for



those of other areas of New Jersey and the neighbouring states. Located in New Brunswick, in the heart of the historic Hungarian neighbourhood on Somerset Street, the Foundation maintains good relations with the nearby Rutgers University as well as with scholars and cultural and educational institutions in Hungary. As stated among its primary goals, it serves as a bridge between the Hungarians of the mother country and those of the American immigrant communities.<sup>20</sup>

Although founded in the 1950s, the origins of the Foundation can be traced back to earlier times, to the beginning of a Hungarian studies program at Elmhurst College, Illinois.<sup>21</sup> It was at this college where the first Hungarian studies program was established in the United States, under the guidance of the Barnabas Dienes, a Calvinist professor, who was asked to offer the first Hungarian courses by the Evangelical and Reformed Church in 1941.<sup>22</sup> In 1952 Molnár started teaching Hungarian language in addition to his regular world history course. The aim was to give an opportunity to second generation Hungarian Americans to continue their education in Hungarian language and culture at the university level.<sup>23</sup> When Professor Molnár began teaching at Elmhurst College he had only one student in the Hungarian program, for after Professor Dienes left the institution in 1947 the number of students who attended the Hungarian program decreased rapidly. Therefore, Professor Molnár's main function became the recruiting of students. In an interview made in August 2008 he mentioned that within two years he managed to increase the number of students to about 20 or 30. Already at that time, in the 1950s, he had conceived of the idea of establishing a foundation that would enable Hungarian students to enrol into the Hungarian programs of higher-level educational institutions with the help of scholarships. He raised money to fund Hungarian studies not only at Elmhurst College but also at other colleges and universities.

The American Hungarian Studies Foundation, which was later re-named American Hungarian Foundation, was established shortly afterwards, in 1955. The original plan was to establish a library, a museum and archives, to collect materials on the history of Hungarian Americans: all that the Foundation was able to carry out in the later years. Their primary means of collecting money was through correspondence and advertisement. August J. Molnár recalls:

We had big plans: to have perhaps a great concert in Carnegie Hall, where we would present Hungarian music and the works of Hungarian composers. And I went to talk about this with Antal Doráti, (I first wrote to him), the conductor of the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, and he was happy to hear about this,

and advised that this should be a kind of concert where all of the works presented would be by Bartók, and that this should be the first concert based entirely on the works of Bartók in Carnegie Hall. He also said we would invite Yehudi Menuin to present the piece that Bartók also composed for him.

Molnár had been discussing this project with Doráti already in 1954 and 1955, years ahead of the concert, in order to think of how to fill the concert hall that could accommodate 2500 people. They owed the success of the concert, which was finally held in February 1957, to the fact that the money raised at the concert was donated to Hungarian refugees a few months after the Revolution broke out. At that time, there was much talk about the Hungarian Revolution in America; therefore, the American public was happy to sponsor this event, which also helped to spread the name of the Hungarian American Foundation.

The Foundation, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2005, has been active in countless other programs ever since its beginnings. One of these is the organization of the Annual Festival of Trees, which can trace its traditions to the years at Elmhurst College. Along with those representing other ethnic groups, Professor Molnár and his students had been invited each year to a Christmas festival held at the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry, in order to decorate a Hungarian Christmas tree, which stood among the Christmas trees of various other nations. With the help of his wife, Piroska, they prepared traditional Hungarian cookies called *mézeskalács*,<sup>24</sup> which they used as decorations.

This tradition was continued after Molnár's arrival at Rutgers University in 1959; however, not in a museum, as it was the custom in Chicago, but at the Professor's home, where he invited his students, both Americans and Hungarians, to decorate a Hungarian Christmas tree. Professor Molnár says that his students tell him even today, after twenty, thirty or forty years, that they have a small Christmas tree in their homes with *mézeskalács* on it.

After the opening of the Museum of the Foundation in 1989,<sup>25</sup> they decided to organize a Christmas tree festival similar to the one that was annually held in Chicago. The festival, which is open each year from the first Sunday of December to the last Sunday of January, is attended by the representatives of fifteen nations, among them the Italians, the Danish, the Swedes, Estonians, Irish, and other ethnic groups. The sister cities of New Brunswick are also involved in the festivities: Christmas decorations are sent from Debrecen, Hungary, two cities of Japan, along with one city in Ireland. Choirs made up of Polish children; Ukrainians and Belorussians perform songs on these occasions along with the Choir of Saint Ladislaus Catholic

Church. Children brought by parents or schools also attend these celebrations, as well as with people of the various ethnic groups.<sup>26</sup>

Simultaneously, the Foundation also remembers the feast of Hanukkah, which is held in the same period as Christmas. In fact, the main goal of the Foundation is to involve other nationalities in these celebrations, in order to become more open. "Hungarians have" Molnár said, "always been living together with people of other nationalities. Therefore, we ought to get to know them, as they should also get to know us. They are very happy to come and are glad to present their Christmas traditions. This event plays an important role in the life of the Museum for two months."

The American Hungarian Foundation was also active in supporting research related to Hungarian studies at several universities. In 1959, the American Hungarian Foundation moved to Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, and established the American Hungarian Institute, to which the later created Hungarian Studies Institute at Rutgers owes its existence. Dr. Mason Gross, the president of the university, welcomed the idea of the program. Between 1959 and 1962 the Foundation sponsored courses in Hungarian literature, history, and culture with a sum of \$20,000, with the help of churches, organizations, and individuals.<sup>27</sup> Refugees of the 1956 Revolution were also offered special scholarships and grants to various universities. Besides Rutgers University, the American Hungarian Foundation also supported Hungarian Studies programs taught at Columbia University, Western Reserve University, Northwestern University, Loyola University, University of Chicago, and Elmhurst College.

The American Hungarian Foundation was also successful in establishing good relations with famous scholars. Among them are sociolinguist Joshua Fishmann, author of *Hungarian Language Maintenance in the United States* (1966), who headed the Survey of Language Resources of American Ethnic Groups, and with whom the Foundation cooperated in the project regarding the language, history, and culture of Hungarian Americans. Guest lecturers were also invited to the American Hungarian Institute of Rutgers University: Dialectologist Elemér Bakó and Nobel laureate Eugene Wigner held a series of lectures in 1961-1962.<sup>28</sup>

The present day home of the Foundation, located at 300 Somerset Street, houses a museum, a library, and the archives. The Library, consisting of 60,000 volumes (including printed books that are 500 and 400 years old)<sup>29</sup> is an affiliate library of Rutgers University: the volumes of the Foundation's library are listed on the online catalogue of Rutgers University (IRIS); nevertheless, the institution is not funded by Rutgers, and is therefore independent of the university.<sup>30</sup> The archives of the Foundation hold treasures of

Hungarian cultural history, as letters written by Lajos Kossuth, Count István Széchenyi, and poet Attila József.<sup>31</sup> Fulbright scholars from prominent Hungarian institutions, as the National Széchenyi Library and Eötvös Loránd University, are granted scholarships to do research in the archives of the foundation. The cataloguing of the Bethlen collection, which consists mostly of documents and yearbooks of Hungarian Reformed churches related to Hungarian life in America, was also done by three of these scholars, Ilona Kovács, András Csillag and Nóra Deák, with the contribution of the librarian of the American Hungarian Foundation, Margaret Papai.<sup>32</sup>

The Museum of the Foundation also leads significant activities. Over the last twenty years, since its opening, it has received over 80,000 visitors. Among the most memorable art exhibits of the Museum were Munkácsy in America (2000), Herend-Hungarian Porcelain at its Finest (2000/2001), and the photo exhibition of the famous photographer, Stephen Spinder, Through My Lens: Budapest and Transylvania (2003).<sup>33</sup> Among the recent (2007-2008) exhibits are Dynamic Color, which presented paintings by Joseph Domjan, a highly celebrated artist among Hungarian Americans; and that of Gyuri Hollósy, who has his studio at Grounds for Sculpture (NJ), entitled Hollósy: 40 Year Sculpture Retrospective with Paintings and Drawings, in 2008/2009. The well known artist, Victor Vasarely, also exhibited his work at the AHF.

Presently, the Museum houses Hungarian Folk Art Collection-Magyar Népművészet (April 19, 2009-February 28, 2010). The exhibit, which mostly concentrates on the Matyó, Mezőkövesd, and Kalotaszeg styles, presents Hungarian folk art through the display of carved furniture, embroidered clothing, pillows and other textiles, as well as glazed pottery. The former curator of the Museum, Patricia Fazekas, said that this was an exhibit that many Hungarian Americans had been wishing to have at the Foundation for many years, for they wanted to show their American friends and relatives the aspects of Hungarian culture which they are especially proud of.

### *The Hungarian Alumni Association*

The Hungarian Alumni Association, also known as the Magyar Öregdiák Szövetség – Bessenyei György Kör is one of the most active Hungarian organizations in the United States. Ever since its beginnings in 1960, it has served the Hungarian community of New Brunswick in several ways: it initiated the Hungarian Saturday Classes (*Hétfélig Magyar Iskola*), a lecture series and an oral history program, History Makers Testify (*Tanúk – korunkról*).<sup>34</sup> The Alumni Association also held close relations with the Native

Language Conference (Anyanyelvi Konferencia), an association that collaborated in the creation of the first textbooks for Hungarian minority students.

Prior to the Hungarian Alumni Association's establishment in 1960 there had also been a student organization, Hungarian Students at Rutgers University, which recruited members for the Alumni Association. The organization, also known as Magyar Diákok a Rutgers Egyetemen [Hungarian students at Rutgers], was founded in 1958, mostly by 1956-ers.<sup>35</sup> Their mission, as one of its founding members, Károly Nagy has mentioned in an interview, was to spread the message of the Revolution: "We decided that we had to do something: to spread the message of the Revolution, because it seemed to be that one of the reasons why America had left the 1956 Revolution on its own was that people were minimally informed about Hungary, the Carpathian Basin, Hungarian minorities. People had hardly any knowledge about Hungary, for high schools did not offer even Geography."

Tamás Tamás, who was also among the founding members of the student association along with his wife Mária, stated that the students who were active in the association started to organize exhibitions. The first such project was an exhibition on folk art, which displayed the works of Joseph Domjan. The collection of the artist was housed in the Ledge, which served as the Student Center of the University. In an interview in September 2008, Tamás asserted: "this, of course, to put it that way, energized Hungarians a lot, and thus we got to know countless people: they came to help or offered us materials for exhibitions."<sup>36</sup>

The organization was in operation until the graduation of its founding members, who later on joined the already existing Hungarian Alumni Association, which was largely made up of DPs and also functioned at Rutgers University. The first President of the Hungarian Alumni Association, Béla Gyengő, was a post-World War II immigrant and a prominent member of the Hungarian community of New Brunswick. Among the main goals of the Alumni Association were the preservation of Hungarian language and culture abroad, besides the review and the presentation of crucial issues related to Hungary and to the Hungarians.<sup>37</sup>

One of the most important activities initiated by the Hungarian Alumni Association was the Hungarian Saturday Classes (Hétfélig Magyar Iskola), which operated between 1960 and 1986. Károly Nagy stated that the more the 56-ers founded families and started having children, the more they felt that they had to keep their Hungarian heritage. For this reason, Nagy, who had previously been a schoolteacher in Hungary, distributed a questionnaire among the churches as well as in the newspapers, asking parents if they were interested in organizing Hungarian Saturday classes. Surprisingly, a large

number of parents were interested in the idea.<sup>38</sup> Rutgers University provided free classrooms until the beginning of the 1980s, when the school found its new place in one of the buildings of the Magyar Reformed Church. Classes were held on Saturday mornings from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. in four to five classes consisting of 30 to 50 children and adults. The curriculum involved the basics of music, reading-writing, composition, literature, history, folk songs, folk arts; besides Hungarian as a Foreign Language for mostly adult students.<sup>39</sup>

The school, however, faced several difficulties: without proper textbooks, it was difficult for teachers to collect the materials for teaching and to photocopy them week after week. Therefore, Károly Nagy conducted a survey among 26 Hungarian Saturday schools in order to exchange their experiences in teaching, and sent the findings to some of the most prominent figures and educators of Hungarian cultural life: Gyula Illyés, Zoltán Kodály, and Mihály Váci, whose collaboration led to the founding of the Native Language Conference (Anyanyelvi Konferencia) in 1970 in Debrecen and in Budapest.<sup>40</sup> After many years of struggles and cooperation with Hungarian textbook authors, who were asked to create the appropriate textbooks for these schools, the new books were finally ready. Their uniqueness consisted of the fact that they lacked all kinds of political and religious propaganda, while at the same time concentrating on the works of all Hungarian authors, including those of the minorities of the Carpathian Basin, as well as the Western authors. Musical and drawing activities were also present in these textbooks in connection with Hungarian historical events, including Petőfi and Kossuth songs. Professor Nagy, who taught sociology at several colleges, asserted in this regard: "Language is culture. There is no language without culture. There is no culture without language. Furthermore, Latin became famous, because there is a culture behind the language: language transmits culture."<sup>41</sup> Tamás Tamás, who taught Hungarian history and geography for eight years in this school, besides being its principal for a period, stated that the school had played a significant role in the preservation of the Hungarian language within the community.<sup>42</sup>

The Hungarian Alumni Association has been active in countless other projects besides the operation of the Hungarian Saturday Classes. Although these classes ceased to function in 1986, Széchenyi Hungarian Saturday School and Kindergarten has carried on its work with similar methods of instruction and has continued the education of Hungarian children up to present times. Nevertheless, the Alumni Association continued its regular lectures and conferences, which are held even today. After the establishment of the Hungarian Institute at Rutgers University in 1991, the Hungarian Alumni Association often held joint lectures with the Hungarian Institute. The

language of these events was usually Hungarian, except on the occasions when they were organized jointly with the University.<sup>43</sup>

The most significant project of the Hungarian Alumni Association was an oral history project, History Makers Testify (Tanúk-korunkról). It was launched in 1977 and held its lectures on a monthly basis. Among the prominent invitees had been Nobel Prize winner Eugene Wigner, who gave a presentation on his role in the Manhattan project and the invention of the atomic bomb. Zoltán Nyeste gave a lecture on his experience as a victim of a Communist political prison camp in Recsk, and Miklós Duray of Bratislava (Pozsony) of his imprisonment by the Czechoslovak Communist government for organizing a committee in defence of the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia in 1978. Sándor Püski, one of the best-known publishers of the populist movement, was also an invitee of the oral history project. In addition, thirteen of the twenty-three lectures were held by participants of the 1956 Revolution: Miklós Vásárhelyi, Sándor Kopácsi, Péter Gosztonyi, and Sándor Rácz gave first hand accounts of their experiences during the Revolution.<sup>44</sup> According to Károly Nagy, the stories told by these active participants in Hungarian history significantly helped many people of Hungarian origin to maintain their Hungarian pride and cultural heritage.<sup>45</sup>

### *Hungarian Studies at Rutgers University*

Although the Institute for Hungarian Studies at Rutgers University was founded only in 1991, it owes its existence to the Hungarian studies program that had been set up in 1959 at the same university. It was a continuation of the Hungarian studies program that had been initiated in 1954 at Elmhurst College, near Chicago. Its founder was August J. Molnár who after his years at Elmhurst College, started teaching at Rutgers University in the same year.<sup>46</sup> At that time, both regular and evening courses were offered in Hungarian.<sup>47</sup>

During this period in the Cold War, several other universities established Hungarian Studies programs. Among them were Columbia University in New York and Indiana University in Bloomington. Besides Rutgers, there were also other universities that offered minors in Hungarian: Berkeley, UCLA, Cleveland, Duquesne, Stanford and Portland.<sup>48</sup> According to Steven Béla Várdy, the main reasons for the creation of these programs were the evolution of the Cold War and the establishment of Soviet, East European, and Uralian studies centers at American universities. Other events were the birth of the National Defense Education Act, after the launch in 1958 by the Soviets of *Sputnik*, the first satellite to be put in the Earth's orbit. Another important factor, according

to Várdy, that contributed to the establishment of these programs was the ethnic revival of the 1960s, which gave a new impetus to the study of the cultures of ethnic minorities in North America.<sup>49</sup> Some of the famous professors who taught at these educational centers were linguist János Lotz and historian István Deák at Columbia University; and linguist Tamás Sebők, anthropologist Linda Dégh, and historian Denis Sinor at Indiana University.<sup>50</sup>

The Hungarian studies program at Rutgers underwent many hardships during its existence. The 1960s were not only the decade of ethnic revival, but also of student unrest. In an interview made in August 2008, August J. Molnár recounted that the students demanded that the two-year obligatory language instruction in Hungarian or other languages be cancelled. He recalled that for this reason there was no obligatory language teaching for about two or three years, which meant that there were no Hungarian language courses offered. This, of course, was a serious disadvantage for the instructors of Hungarian language and culture as well as for teachers of other languages and cultures. Finally, in the 1970s, courses in Hungarian and on Hungary were reintroduced.

Katalin Miklóssy, a Hungarian Fulbright scholar at Rutgers University in 2008/2009, said that the great turning point in the history of Hungarian education at Rutgers came in 1991, after the fall of Communism. It was in this year that Géza Jeszenszky, the Hungarian Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, signed an accord with Rutgers University according to which the Hungarian state would send a jointly paid Hungarian Fulbright visiting instructor to Rutgers each year. The instructor is shared by the Institute for Hungarian Studies and Rutgers University's Department of Germanic, Russian, and East Eastern European Languages and Literature.<sup>51</sup> The courses offered by the instructor concern Hungarian language and literature, and are attended mainly by students who have some connection to Hungary, such as a Hungarian spouse or Hungarian ancestors. Besides the courses offered by the Hungarian Studies Department, students can also attend those offered by the Institute for Hungarian Studies, for instance on the history of Hungary. Students can choose to take courses related to Hungarian culture either in English or in Hungarian; however, English language courses are preferred by students, according to Professor Paul Hanebrink, the Institute's director.<sup>52</sup>

### **The Role of the Churches**

It is a well known fact that the ethnic churches have played a vital role in the survival of ethnic communities. This was also the case for the Hungarians of



New Brunswick, a city that is characterized by the presence of various American and ethnic denominations. By the end of the nineteenth century, there were 20 churches in New Brunswick, including several Catholic ones, and two synagogues.<sup>53</sup> The extent to which the ethnic churches among these were able to preserve their special character varies. It seems to be that among the Christian congregations, the orthodox ones have been the most successful in language maintenance, while the Roman Catholic parishes have been less effective in this regard. The reason for this seems to be that, while the hierarchy of the Orthodox churches usually helped in the endeavour of the local parishes to preserve their ethnic heritage that of the Roman Catholic Church did not. In fact, after the initial help given to new immigrants to establish their own parishes, they were soon put under the pressure of Americanization by the local Roman Catholic hierarchies.<sup>54</sup> Many Hungarian R.C. parishes in the United States are now struggling to keep up their ethnic character, even Saint Ladislaus Parish, which used to be a viable Hungarian Catholic center in New Brunswick.

The situation of Hungarian-American Jews used to be similar to that of Catholics. Hungarian Jews, as in the case of Hungarian Catholics, were encouraged to identify with each other more on a religious than on an ethnic basis. The anti-Semitism Jews experienced in Hungary during World War II was also influential in their decision to avoid association with other Hungarian Americans.

The role played by the Protestant churches in the preservation of ethnic heritage varies a great deal. The success of these churches often depends on their numerical strength. The largest Hungarian-American Protestant church is the Hungarian Reformed Church which has been the most successful in the preservation of Hungarian heritage. The other Protestant churches — as well as the Greek Catholics — have been less successful. This is probably due to their small numbers, both in the Carpathian Basin as well as in New Brunswick. Many of their congregations have lost their ethnic Hungarian character by now.<sup>55</sup> In New Brunswick these are the Bayard Street Presbyterian Church (established in 1903), the Ascension Lutheran Church (established in 1913), St. Joseph Greek Catholic Church (founded in 1915), as well as the High Street Baptist Church (which dates from 1918).<sup>56</sup> The same is true for the Hungarian Jewish immigrants to New Brunswick, who initially made Hungarian the official language of their Orthodox synagogue (Ohav Emeth), but later on decided to change it to English, in order to become open towards Jews of non-Hungarian background.<sup>57</sup>

Due to the large percentage of Roman Catholics and Calvinists among Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin, most Hungarians of the New Brunswick

area form part of either Saint Ladislaus Church or the Magyar Reformed Church. Both are found on Somerset Street, in the heart of the historic Hungarian neighbourhood. They have been important centers of the local community and have aided its members in several ways, ever since the beginnings. The pastors of these congregations have welcomed new immigrants in various periods of their arrivals, especially after the outbreak of the 1956 Revolution. The pastor of the Magyar Reformed Church, Reverend Zsolt Ötvös said that his congregation is also dedicated to helping new Hungarian immigrants to get adjusted to life in America.

Among the various ethnic churches founded by Hungarian immigrants in the late 1800s and early 1900s, the only ones that offer services in Hungarian nowadays are the Magyar Reformed Church and Saint Ladislaus Church. The pastor of the Magyar Reformed Church, the above-mentioned Reverend Ötvös, holds one Sunday service entirely in Hungarian and another one in English for the descendants of earlier immigrants who do not speak Hungarian. The Roman Catholic mass at Saint Ladislaus is offered only partly in Hungarian. Father Capistran, an American-born priest of Hungarian descent, delivers the sermon in English, while the rest of the mass, along with the singing, is in Hungarian.

There was a time when Hungarian American parishes had a thriving ethnic and community life. Nowadays many of them are having difficulties recruiting priests who are native-speakers of Hungarian. Saint Ladislaus Church, which used to be under the jurisdiction of Hungarian Franciscan friars, now belongs to a local American diocese, led primarily by Italian Americans. As a result, the recruitment of Hungarian priests becomes increasingly difficult. In fact, the pastor of Saint Ladislaus Church, Father Capistran who grew up in the Hungarian neighbourhood of New Brunswick hearing Hungarian but not speaking it, started learning Hungarian in order to be able to serve the local Hungarian community.<sup>58</sup> Until recently, even the St. Joseph Greek Catholic Church offered services in Hungarian; however, due to the declining number of Hungarians at the parish and the increasing age of the pastor, the situation hanged. The priest moved to Hungary. Services are still held at the church but not in Hungarian.

### **Folklore and Music**

For the Hungarian Americans of New Jersey, passing on Hungarian language and culture is considered essential. Other aspects of Hungarian culture they cherish include Hungarian folk art and folk traditions. As a young person

coming from Hungary, I was amazed by the fact how much these American-born Hungarians knew about the culture of a country that I, as a native-born Hungarian, was expected to know better. Nevertheless, my experience has shown that most children who attend the Hungarian scouting events were significantly more familiar with folk songs, folk customs and Hungarian dances than the average Hungarian child who grew up in Budapest. In New Brunswick, I have seen even grown Boy Scout leaders help children with embroideries, because for these Hungarians, everything pertaining to Hungarian folk traditions is a peculiar feature of Hungarian culture that is to be preserved.

The preservation of Hungarian folk culture has a long tradition in New Brunswick and in the other communities of the East Coast. Although nearly ninety percent of the later Hungarian immigrants to New Brunswick came from urban areas, Ágnes Balla, whose family immigrated to New Jersey in the early 1970s, stated that the political refugees of 1956 and post-World War II were especially eager to retain their national culture. They did everything to remain Hungarian, for they did not choose to leave their homeland. As people belonging to communities in exile, they dearly held on to the values and the distinctive features of a culture that was uniquely Hungarian.

Even today, second, third, and fourth generation Hungarian children learn traditional Hungarian dances, which they perform in authentic clothing. Boys wear typical Hungarian boots and hats usually purchased in Hungary, while girls' outfits must also include all the necessary elements of traditional style clothing. On the occasions that I was performing with the younger dance group of the HAAC, we could borrow original costumes made in Kalocsa, the ones that are the most expensive due to their elaborate hand-made embroideries. In 2000 each of these dresses cost nearly 500 dollars, which was and is an expensive price even today for the Hungarians of the United States; nevertheless, they are willing to spend even significant amounts of money for such worthy purposes.

It is interesting to note that native Hungarians or Americans who are familiar with present-day Hungarian culture often look with bewilderment on the admiration of folk culture on the part of Hungarian Americans. To those who do not belong to the Hungarian American communities, it seems as if in the eyes of these Hungarian Americans time had remained still, as if they were living in a time that was brought to them by their ancestors. This is partly true; nevertheless, as stated above, most of these people, who are presently active among the Hungarian American communities in New Jersey, do not have ancestors who originated from villages or rural areas. Rather, they cherish a kind of idealistic culture that has been passed on to them probably by the

generation of the post-World War II immigrants through the 1956-ers and through the scouting movement.

As it is in the case of ancient Greek arts and literature, which has influenced Roman, and later European artistic movements and writing, people have often identified peasant life in Arcadia with an idealistic lifestyle. One can find the same motifs in Hungarian folk culture as in the case of ancient Greek art: ceramics with flower motifs, as well as shepherds with flutes. Birds, heart motifs, and the use of colors are also common features of Hungarian folk art, which are symbols of warmth, and the hearth of family life. It is probably also for this reason that I have seen many homes of Hungarian Americans decorated with these folk motives. For instance, I have seen heart shaped chairs in these homes, which have an especially homely character, and show the idealistic aspect of peasant life, as it is described in the collection of short stories entitled *Tót atyafiak* by the famous Hungarian writer, Kálmán Mikszáth.

Several people I have encountered have told me that folk culture is not what could be considered the most characteristic aspect of Hungarian culture today. They have often asked me the question how well young Hungarian Americans are acquainted with contemporary Hungarian culture. Although it is difficult to give a precise answer to this question, basically, one could say that Hungarian Americans do have frequent relations with Hungary. Many families try to send their children on vacation to Hungary to meet relatives or to scout camps, which are a great opportunity to get to know the country, if one does not have family in Hungary any more. Nevertheless, countless people have told me in New Jersey that the first encounter of their children with Hungarian reality was disappointing. The negative experience might be explained with the strong idealistic image of Hungary that has been passed onto those children by their parents. Despite this fact and their initial disappointments in Hungary, many young Hungarian Americans choose to come to study to Hungary for a longer period. One of the opportunities they find especially useful are Hungarian language and cultural programs offered by the Balassi Institute for students coming from abroad. This is an especially useful opportunity for them to learn the language at a higher level and to pass on the knowledge they have acquired to other members of their communities at home. I have personally met several people in New Jersey who have made use of this possibility.

Among the most significant representatives of folk culture in New Jersey are the Életfa Hungarian Folk Band and Csürdögölő Folk Dance Ensemble. The members of folk band and the dance ensemble are in close contact with each other and often perform together. They have earned not only

a nationwide success in the United States, having performed at various ethnic and inter-ethnic festivals and prestigious American theatres, but also participate regularly in musical and folk dance festivals in Hungary. The dances and music they perform has become widely appreciated and well known through the Annual Hungarian Festival of New Brunswick.

## **Conclusions**

Although it is evident that the forces of assimilation in the United States are particularly strong even today, at the present time it is easier to keep one's heritage than it had been before the ethnic revival of the 1960s. The ethnic diversity of New Jersey and of the East Coast area also helps many Hungarians and people of other ethnicities to maintain their language and identity, for in today's American society people are proud of where one's family came from. This is especially true of most Hungarian Americans, while a few, who wish to belong to prestigious American social and economic circles, are less interested in the local Hungarian communities.

The Hungarian-American communities of New Brunswick are made of immigrant families and their descendents who arrived in different periods of Hungarian history. The descendants of the "Old" pre-World War I immigrants have mostly assimilated by now, even though many of them remember the stories of their grandparents and do speak a few words of Hungarian. Only a few people are alive among the post-World War II immigrants, mainly those who had arrived as children. They had acquired an excellent command of Hungarian from their parents, and were often able to pass it on to their children as well. The people who immigrated after 1956 are mostly still active and energetic and continue to take part in the life of New Brunswick's Hungarian-American community. The younger generation of this community is made up of the descendants of the previous two immigrant waves, as well as the people who arrived after the fall of communism.

The image that Hungarian Americans have formed of Hungary and of its people often seems biased to outsiders. One can often hear of strong negative opinions voiced by older Hungarian Americans of more recent immigrants. This has been true of the previous immigrant waves as well, and is caused by the fact that Hungary is constantly changing, and so do the values and norms that the new immigrants bring with them.

Nevertheless, it seems to be that in New Brunswick the members of these different immigrant waves have had fewer conflicts than many other Hungarian-American communities. The new immigrants also form a diverse

group, ranging from people who have come to work in the country as au-pairs, to those who are staying in the United States illegally, and the people who form the intellectual circles of researchers and university professors. The people belonging to each of these circles can find their place among the many Hungarian organizations of New Brunswick, although the members of these organizations often complain that those belonging to the other groups or their leaders are not as cooperative as they would like them to be.

Although the English language influences the speech patterns of the American-born generation in several ways, many families have been able to maintain the use of Hungarian in their everyday communication. Moreover, in the most well known Hungarian centers of New Jersey, as Passaic-Garfield and New Brunswick, Hungarian is taught in an institutionalized form as well, among the scouts and at the Hungarian Saturday Schools. Regarding the Hungarian-born generation, their level of Hungarian also seems to be considerably higher than that of those who lost touch with other Hungarians in the United States. The numerous activities organized in Hungarian by different organizations that serve the various cultural needs of the Hungarians of New Brunswick undoubtedly favour the language maintenance efforts of the community's members.

In many cases, the Hungarians of New Brunswick hold strongly on to the use of Hungarian and try to enforce it among their families and local Hungarian institutions. It is difficult to determine whether this has positive or negative effects on the survival of the immigrant community, which needs both the use of the language as well as enough members for the community to survive. In New Brunswick, however, the constant arrival of the new immigrants may mean a solution to this problem.

People are curious to know what Hungarian life in New Brunswick will be like in the future. It is difficult to estimate this, for it both depends on changes in American society as well as on those that characterize Hungarian society. However, a positive sign towards the survival of the Hungarian community and that of the Hungarian language in New Brunswick seems to be the determination of young Hungarian Americans to pass on their mother tongue to their children. Although as teenagers they had opposed their parents' authoritative methods of enforcing the use of Hungarian within the family, now, as young parents, many of them have consciously decided to speak less English and to speak only Hungarian in front of their children.

This endeavour is also helped by the opportunities of the new era that followed the demise of communism in Hungary. Now, people are completely free to travel and many young people have taken advantage of this possibility. Relations between the host country and the mother country have become

especially good among American-born Hungarians and Hungarian-born individuals. People can also come from Hungary much more freely than before whether to do research or simply to try their luck in America, as the Italian expression *fare l'America* says it, to improve their prospects.

More than a hundred years after the arrival of the first immigrant masses from Hungary in the USA, Hungarian culture still flourishes in the city of New Brunswick. Due to their outstanding achievements in preserving Hungarian culture both at the present and in the past, the Hungarians of New Brunswick deserve praise. They have not only contributed to the cultural diversity of the East Coast United States, but have also helped countless Hungarians recognize the values of their own heritage, which have already been forgotten by many in their homeland. Moreover, they have not only opened the eyes of native-born Hungarians, but with their solid presence in New Jersey, they have also brought fame to Hungarian culture among Americans and people of various ethnicities.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Csilla Bartha, "Nyelvhasználat, nyelvmegtartás, nyelvcseré az amerikai magyar közösségekben" [Language use, language maintenance, language shift among Hungarian-American communities], in *Tér és terep. Tanulmányok az etnicitás és az identitás kérdésköréből*, ed. Nóra Kovács and László Szarka (Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 2002), 132.

<sup>2</sup> Katalin Balla, telephone interview, 9 Dec. 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Anna Borbély, "Kétnyelvűség és többnyelvűség" [Bilingualism and multilingualism], in *Magyar nyelv* [The Hungarian language], ed. Ferenc Kiefer (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2006), 606-613.

<sup>4</sup> Szilvia Németh, "Hétvégi magyar iskolák az USA-ban – 2008" [Hungarian Saturday schools in the USA – 2008] in *Beszédből világ. Elemzések, adatok amerikai magyarokról* [A world recreated from words: Analyses and facts about Hungarian Americans], ed. Attila Papp Z. (Budapest: Magyar Külügyi Intézet, 2008), 264.

<sup>5</sup> Joshua A. Fishman and Vladimir Nahimy, "The Ethnic Group School and Mother Tongue Maintenance," in *Language Loyalty in the United States*, ed. Joshua A. Fishman (The Hague: Mouton, 1966), 95.

<sup>6</sup> Agnes Balla, personal interview, 7 Oct. 2006.



<sup>7</sup> Károly Nagy, personal interview, 15 Sept. 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Tamás Tamás, personal interview, 3 Sept. 2008.

<sup>9</sup> Gábor Tarján, “Nemzedékváltás az amerikai magyarságnál” [Succession of generations among Hungarian Americans] *Magyar Szemle Online*, 20 Aug. 2003. Website accessed 2 Nov. 2009.

<sup>10</sup> Judit Némethy Kesserű, “Magyar oktatás a Külföldi Magyar Cserkészszövetségben” [Hungarian language education within the Hungarian Scout Association Abroad], in *A magyar nyelv és kultúra megtartása az Amerikai Egyesült Államokban 1997* [Preserving the Hungarian Language and Culture in the United States 1997], ed. Károly Nagy and László Papp (Budapest: Anyanyelvi Konferencia, 1998), 55.

<sup>11</sup> Judit Prékopa, *Hungarian Immigrants in the United States: New Brunswick* (Budapest: ELTE, 1997), 28.

<sup>12</sup> Hungarian American Athletic Club (hereafter HAAC), *The Hungarian American Athletic Club, A brief History 1913-2008*. Accessed on the web.

<sup>13</sup> Prékopa, p. 28.

<sup>14</sup> Hungarian American Athletic Club, “The Hungarian American Athletic Club, A Brief History, 1913-2008,” See the HAAC website, accessed 11 Nov. 2009. Cited hereafter as HAAC.

<sup>15</sup> Prékopa, p. 28.

<sup>16</sup> HAAC.

<sup>17</sup> The building committee was headed by Joseph Vargyas.

<sup>18</sup> HAAC.

<sup>19</sup> László Strasz, personal interview, 12 Sept. 2008.

<sup>20</sup> American Hungarian Foundation (hereafter AHF), “Chronicling the Hungarian Cultural and Historical Heritage in the United States,” Web. 11 Nov. 2009.

<sup>21</sup> Ilona Kovács, et al., eds., *The Hungarian Legacy in America. The History of the American Hungarian Foundation. The First Fifty Years. 1955 – 2005* (New Brunswick, NJ: American Hungarian Foundation, 2007) 4.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 13-16.

<sup>23</sup> August J. Molnár, personal interview, 27 Aug. 2008.

<sup>24</sup> Resembles honey-cake or gingerbread.

<sup>25</sup> AHF.

<sup>26</sup> Molnár interview.

<sup>27</sup> Kovács, p. 69.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155.

<sup>30</sup> Molnár interview.

<sup>31</sup> AHF.

<sup>32</sup> Molnár interview.

<sup>33</sup> Kovács, pp. 200-207.

<sup>34</sup> Károly Nagy, *Emigránsok Küldetésben: Magyar Öregdiák Szövetség – Bessenyei Kör, Hungarian Alumni Association 1960-2000* [Hungarians on a mission:

the Hungarian Alumni Association 1960-2000] (Debrecen: Csokonai Kiadó: 2000), 123-127.

<sup>35</sup> Among the founding members were Tamás Tamás, Gyula Vámos and Károly Nagy.

<sup>36</sup> Tamás interview.

<sup>37</sup> Nagy, p. 18.

<sup>38</sup> Nagy interview.

<sup>39</sup> Nagy, p. 23.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>41</sup> Nagy interview.

<sup>42</sup> Tamás interview.

<sup>43</sup> Béla Várdy, *Magyarok az Újvilágban* [Hungarians in the New World] (Budapest: A magyar nyelv és kultúra nemzetközi társasága, 2000), 599.

<sup>44</sup> Nagy, p. 131.

<sup>45</sup> Nagy interview.

<sup>46</sup> Várdy, p. 596.

<sup>47</sup> Molnár interview.

<sup>48</sup> Várdy, p. 596.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 595-596.

<sup>51</sup> Katalin Miklóssy, personal interview, 15 Sept. 2008.

<sup>52</sup> Information from Paul Hanebrink.

<sup>53</sup> Julián Füzér, *A Catholic Hungarian Community in America. Saint Ladislaus Parish New Brunswick, N.J.* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1980), 4.

<sup>54</sup> András Prékopa, personal interview, 28 Oct. 2008.

<sup>55</sup> Zsolt Ötvös, telephone interview, 4 Nov. 2008.

<sup>56</sup> August J. Molnár, "Hungarian Pioneers and Immigrants in New Jersey sine Colonial Days," in *The New Jersey Experience*, ed. Barbara Cunningham (Union City, N.J.: Wm. H. Wise & Co., 1977), pp. 260-266.

<sup>57</sup> Tamás Tamás, "Education of a Global Community: New Jersey Hungarians in a Trans-National Ethnic Network," in *Internal Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 10, 4 (winter, 1977): 633.

<sup>58</sup> Capistran Polgar, personal interview, 28 Aug. 2008.

## Appendix

### Notes on research methodology and the speech of Hungarian Americans

**During my stay** in New Brunswick in August-September 2008, I conducted 46 personal interviews and four group interviews with families. The number of hours I have recorded is 30, most of them being in depth interviews and a few shorter ones. Additionally, I also made three interviews of approximately two and a half hours length in October and November 2009 during my five-week stay in New Brunswick. Two of them are personal interviews and one is a telephone interview. Among the 49 interviewees, 24 people were born in Hungary or in its neighbouring states; 20 of them in the United States; and five people in present-day Slovakia, Serbia, Germany, and Argentina. Among the American-born subjects, three people were second-generation American-born Hungarians, and three of them were Americans who do not have Hungarian ancestors, but who studied in Hungary and participate in the activities of Hungarian-based organizations in New Jersey.

Concerning the age of the informants, four people were under the age of 20, sixteen of them were between 20 and 40 years of age, eight people between 40 and 60, and twenty-one people were over 60 years old in 2008. A considerable number of people among my interview subjects were leaders or previous leaders of Hungarian-American organizations that have lead an active role within the Hungarian community of New Brunswick. Besides interviewing those who have taken an active part in the life of the community as its leaders, I also wished to speak with those who took an active part in the social life of the community as members of any of, or often several of these organizations. Above all, I was most interested in the motivation of those who are eager to pass on their cultural heritage, including the Hungarian language, to their children and grandchildren.

Regarding the purely linguistic aspect of the interviews, several observations can be made. Nearly all of them reflect the bilingual character of the members of the speech community, as well as the influence of English on their native language.

I have found several similarities among the speech patterns of present-day Hungarian Americans, mostly American-born individuals, with those mentioned by sociolinguists Miklós Kontra and Anna Fenyvesi. For instance, regarding phonology, in his study on the speech patterns of bilingual Hungarian Americans of Southbend, Indiana, Kontra mentions the aspiration of the

sounds p, t, and k. He also mentions that geminate consonants and the rules of vowel harmony are difficult to learn for the American-born generation. I have noted the same difficulties in the case of American-born Hungarians in New Jersey. Two examples for vowel harmony violations I have noticed in New Brunswick are *feet-ot*, *koncertok*, instead of *feet-et* (*feet* in the Accusative form) and *koncertek* (*concerts*), while an example for the problem of making a distinction between geminate and simple consonants are the spelling of *kelet volna* instead of the correct form of *kellett volna* (should have).<sup>1</sup>

Regarding morphology, Kontra mentions the use of city names with the case endings -on/-en/-ön, as *New Brunswick-on* (meaning in New Brunswick — literally translated: on New Brunswick), for instance. This and other similar examples I have heard (*Cleveland-on*, *Garfield-on*, *Passaic-on*) with the names of other Hungarian immigrant centers are very commonly used form in New Jersey, whereas according to the rules of Standard Hungarian, one would have to use *New Brunswick-ban*. Kontra asserts that Hungarian city names often take the endings -on/-en/-ön, and that the endings -ban/-ben are usually used with foreign cities. Kontra and other scholars agree that immigrants consider these cities their hometown and not a foreign city anymore.<sup>2</sup>

Regarding syntax; syntactic calques, sequence tense deviations as well as communicative interference and failure are also characteristic of Hungarian-American speech, and reflect the influence of the English language. Examples I have heard in New Brunswick for syntactic calques are *leesni* used instead of *elesni*, which in English both mean to fall down, used, for instance in case a person falls to the ground. Another interesting example I heard was the phrase: *Ne rendetlenkedj a kazettámmal!* (Don't mess with my tape!), instead of which native Hungarians would use the following in slang: *Szállj le a kazettámról!* (Get off my tape!). A third, frequently used expression of this kind is *ki-játszani*, which in Standard Hungarian would be equivalent to trick someone. Hungarian Americans, on the other hand, use it in sense of to act out (a play). An example of sequence tense deviation I have recorded is *Nem is tudtam, hogy magyar voltam* (I did not even know that I was Hungarian). Here, one should use the verb *voltam* (I was) in the present tense, according to Hungarian grammar. Regarding communicative interference and failure, a common example that Hungarian Americans frequently use when referring to a habit or an act frequently repeated in the past is *szoktam*, which in Hungarian American means I used to, whereas in Standard Hungarian it is used when speaking of a habitual act done in the present.<sup>3</sup>

Anna Fenyvesi's findings in connection with the Hungarians of Toledo, Ohio also concern the influence of English in Hungarian speech. For instance, in her study "A toledói magyarok nyelve. Nem standard nyelvhasz-

nálat vagy a nyelvkontaktus hatása?” the author mentions the lack of possessive suffixes (*birtokos személyjel*) in Hungarian-American noun phrases and the plural use of nouns after quantifiers. An example I have heard for the previous phenomenon is *Nekünk nincs gyerek* (We do not have any children), whereas for the second type I have heard *egy halom iffjú magyar gyerekek* (A heap of young children), besides *sok éveken keresztül* (throughout many years). Instead of using the Hungarian equivalent for children and years in the plural form as in English, one should use these nouns in the singular form, according to Standard Hungarian grammar.<sup>4</sup>

The speech of some older members resembles the Hunglish described by linguists in the case of other communities, for they use many English words in their Hungarian speech. However, one has to say that most Hungarian immigrants in New Brunswick were able to maintain their knowledge of Hungarian at a considerably higher level than other immigrants who live in isolation, and that many people in their native land are surprised at the good level of Hungarian they speak even after fifty years.

Code-switching, on the other hand, is a characteristic aspect of the speech patterns of young Hungarian Americans. Only those members of the community use it who are confident in speaking English as well as Hungarian, and speak English at a native level. Code-switching is characteristic only of those individuals who grew up in a bilingual environment. According to Anna Borbély, not all bilingual individuals are capable of using it, for it has specific grammatical rules and its use depends on the situation in which its speakers find themselves as well as on the interlocutors who take part in it. Moreover, only those members of the community use it who are familiar with each other or share a common background.<sup>5</sup>

For instance, during Hungarian activities, for example in the Hungarian Saturday school or during scouting activities, people are more likely and are also required to use only Hungarian; whereas once they find themselves in an informal situation outside these institutions, they will normally start to speak according to the rules of code-switching. An example for this I have heard is the sentence *The piros esernyő is in the way*, where *piros* means red and *esernyő* stands for umbrella. Another one is *Let's take a picture with all of these zászlók*. It is interesting to note that the word *zászló*, meaning flag, is used in the plural form, according to the rules of Hungarian grammar.

Elemér Bakó's findings were also useful for me from the point of view of dialectology. In *American Hungarian Dialect Notes*, published in 1962, Bakó mentions that the speech patterns of Hungarians in the United States often resemble dialectal features of the Hungarian language. He asserts that this is true even of the generations born in America, for they have

acquired the language from their parents and grandparents. The author states that besides the dialects, Standard Hungarian also influenced these linguistic styles, due to the popularity of Hungarian newspapers written in Standard Hungarian. At the time of his study, most Hungarian Americans belonged to the group of the Old Hungarians or their descendants.<sup>6</sup> Although today the members of this group do not constitute the majority of Hungarian Americans, one can still hear dialectal expressions in New Brunswick and in the Passaic-Garfield community. Examples I have heard from a third-generation descendant of Old Hungarians are *értékülték* (valued), instead of the standard form, *értékelték*; *gyüttem* (I came) and *gyüttek* (they came), as opposed to *jöttem* and *jöttek* in Standard Hungarian. The expression *nem-e* (isn't it?) is also frequent in dialects, similarly to the word *aztat* meaning that in the Accusative case, instead of its standard variant, *azt*. The latter ones are still in common use among young Hungarian Americans.<sup>7</sup>

## Notes to the Appendix

<sup>1</sup> Miklós Kontra, *Fejezetek a South Bend-i magyar nyelvhasználatból* [Chapters of Hungarian language use in South Bend] (Budapest: Az MTA Nyelvtudományi Intézete, 1990), 182-183.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185-197.

<sup>4</sup> Anna Fenyvesi, "A toledói magyarok nyelve. Nem standard nyelvhasználat vagy a nyelvkontaktus hatása?" [The language usage of the Hungarians in Toledo. An effect of non-standard language use or of interference?] in *Tanulmányok a diaszpóráról*, ed. Nóra Kovács (Budapest: Gondolat, MTA Etnikai-nemzeti kisebbségkutató Intézet, 2005), 58-73, especially pp. 66-67.

<sup>5</sup> Anna Borbély, "Kétnyelvűség és többnyelvűség" [Bilingualism and multilingualism] *Magyar nyelv* [The Hungarian language], ed. Ferenc Kiefer (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2006), 606-613.

<sup>6</sup> Elemér Bakó, *American Hungarian Dialect Notes I. Goals and Methods of Hungarian Dialectology in America* (New Brunswick, N.J.: American Hungarian Studies Foundation, 1962), 5-12.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*