

Obituaries

György (George) Bisztray **1938 – 2012**

György Bisztray was born in Budapest into a family of intellectuals, refugees from Transylvania after the post-World War I peace settlement. To his Hungarian friends he was “Gyuri” and to his Canadian acquaintances “George.” Following in his father’s footsteps, Gyuri studied languages and literature at Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest, where his father had taught until he was sidelined for his bourgeois background during the socialist transformation of Hungary’s higher education system in the late 1940s. In 1965 he left Hungary to continue his studies in Norway from where he moved to the United States. He completed his doctoral studies at the University of Minnesota in 1972. In 1976 he found a teaching appointment at the University of Alberta. In 1978 the opportunity of a lifetime presented itself for Dr. Bisztray when the Hungarian Studies chair was established at the University of Toronto, the first such chair to be created through the joint efforts of one of Canada’s immigrant communities and the Canadian government anxious to promote multiculturalism. The program’s Hungarian sponsors had hoped to fund a chair of Hungarian history but certain members of the U. of T.’s history department opposed the idea and the university’s administration decided to establish a chair of language and literature studies. For administrative purposes the chair was placed in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, a department that a few years later also became the home of a chair of Estonian Studies. Dr. Bisztray applied for the job and won the competition. As far as the writer of this obituary knows, he was the only professor with Canadian teaching experience among the applicants. He also had experience in language teaching.

As chairman of the newly-founded program Dr. Bisztray had a free hand in establishing a curriculum. There was a Hungarian language course (basic or intermediate) offered each year, as well as a course in Hungarian literature. Later Hungarian film studies were added and attracted many students. In order to enable Dr. Bisztray to focus on specialized courses, he trained Éva Tömöry, one of the program’s early graduates, to teach language courses. From then on Éva carried much of the chair’s language-teaching load while Dr. Bisztray taught upper-level courses. Some of these were taught in the Hungarian language which was a “first” in the U. of T.’s history. (Mrs. Tömöry continues to teach, almost every year, Hungarian language courses at the U. of T. to this day.)

Professor Bisztray’s other academic activities included joining the *Hungarian Studies Review (HSR)* as a co-editor. For some years the journal was supported by the Chair’s resources or those of the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures. Dr. Bisztray was also instrumental in making the journal a joint venture with the National Széchényi Library (Országos Széchényi Könyvtár) or

OSzK) in Budapest. (The link between the journal and OSzK theoretically continues to our days.) Another lasting achievement of Dr. Bisztray's tenure was the establishment in 1985 of the Hungarian Studies Association of Canada (HSAC). (HSAC continues with its annual conferences under the auspices of the Congress of Humanities and Social Sciences of Canada even nowadays.) Throughout these years Dr. Bisztray gave papers at conferences (usually in English but sometimes in one of the other half-dozen languages he spoke) and published articles and books. The most notable of the latter was his *Hungarian Canadian Literature* (University of Toronto Press, 1987). He retired from teaching, and from being a co-editor of the *HSR*, in 2004. He began his long battle with cancer soon thereafter. With his retirement the U. of T.'s Hungarian Chair was discontinued, although courses relating to Hungarian language, literature and history are sometimes still being offered, in recent years at the University's Munk School of Global Affairs.

N.D.

Jenő (Eugene) Horváth **1920 – 2013**

Jenő (Eugene) Horváth was born in Győr, Hungary. He obtained his secondary and post-secondary education in Budapest. During the war he served in Hungary's military. Following the 1956 revolution he came to Canada and settled in Vancouver where he continued his education at the University of British Columbia. He became a certified accountant in 1966 and practised his trade until 2012. His Canadian friends knew him as Gene. In his private life he was a collector of faience and Haban ceramics. His wife, the writer Maria Krisztinkovich (1918-2008), was also a collector. Between them they possessed the largest collection of the kind in Canada. Eugene also collected old books and maps. He published extensively on these subjects and on his and Maria's collections. The most recent of these publications was his *A Canadian Collection of Hungarica*, Vol. I: *Books 1494-1819*; Vol. II: *Maps & City Views 1493-1817* (Vancouver, 2001); there was also J. Eugene Horvath & Maria H. Krisztinkovich: *A History of Haban Ceramics – A Private View* (Vancouver, 2005); and *Hungarian and Other European Ceramics of the mid-17th to mid-19th Centuries* (Vancouver 2011). In old age Eugene donated most of his collections to various cultural and educational institutions including the National Széchényi Library in Budapest.

The Horvaths were avid supporters of Hungarian cultural and scholarly causes including the *Hungarian Studies Review* and the Hungarian Studies Association of Canada (HSAC). For the latter organization Eugene often published, at his own expense, booklets of the papers that he, his wife and others presented at HSAC conferences. He edited these papers with great care and precision.

(Adopted from the relevant writings of Éva Kossuth of Vancouver)