



In Memoriam

ARTHUR BARTFAY (October 1935 - December 2016)

Arthur Allan Bartfay was born October 10, 1935 on a farm near Flint, Michigan to Hungarian parents who immigrated to America in 1912 from small villages in Borsod County near the Tisza & Sajó Rivers. The youngest of four children born to Alex and Julia Bartfay, he had a brother (Alex) and two sisters (Anne and Mary). Bartfay graduated from Central High School in Flint, Michigan and earned a BA and MA from Michigan State University in East Lansing. He served on the faculties of Northern Illinois University in DeKalb and Central Michigan University in Mt. Pleasant. Arthur earned ABD credits at The Ohio State University in Columbus and, after 25 years, retired from the staff of The Ohio State University, where he worked in media broadcasting and held administrative positions.

Bartfay was an active member in Hungarian organizations and associations for more than fifty years. He became an early member of the AHEA in the late 1970's and he coordinated the 1984 AHEA conference in Columbus with president Marta Pereszlenyi-Pinter. For forty years he was a faithful attendee and frequent presenter at AHEA conferences in the USA, Canada, and abroad. In the decade of the 1980's he studied Hungarian Language and Culture at the Debrecen Summer School in Hungary. Also, from the 1980's he was past president of the Columbus, Ohio Branch 129 of the William Penn Association.

In the 1990's Bartfay continued to attend and participate in Hungarian activities and publicize these to many groups. For a decade from 1996-2006, Art organized recruitment and programmatic elements for the Hungarian portions of the Summer Research Laboratory (SRL) at the Russian and East European Institute REEI (now Russian, Eastern Europe and Eurasian Institute) of the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, held under the auspices of the US Department of State and the US Office of Education. The Institute and SRL provided scholars access to the resources of the University of Illinois collection within a summer timeframe where they could meet together, plan research agendas, offer lectures, view films, and seek research advice from librarians of the Slavic Reference Service (SRS). which included Hungarian materials. His leadership was appreciated and widely acknowledged by REEI staff and participants conducting research on other Eastern European areas who attended the Hungarian programs he organized. Art was passionate in promoting opportunities for graduate students and faculty members engaged in facets of Hungarian research and he provided handouts on the REEI Summer Research Laboratory at Hungarian conferences and at other relevant meetings.

During the period Arthur was coordinator of the summer Hungarian Research Workshop Week at the University of Illinois, he offered presentations at conferences of the American Hungarian Educators Association as well as the Midwest Slavic Association. In 2005, he taught conversational English to teenagers in Temesvár, Transylvania. At the 2008 AHEA conference in Pittsburgh in, he addressed the topic of Kossuth's Legacies in the USA.

In 2010, he delivered a paper at the American Hungarian Educators Association conference at the University of Szeged in Hungary, entitled “The Legacy of Louis Kossuth’s 1851-52 American Visit: Five Kossuth villages (in New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Mississippi), two Kossuth townships (in Wisconsin and Maine), and one Kossuth County (in Iowa).” The paper was accompanied by information about and pictures from the eight locations he visited. The material was provided to the Széchényi Library in Budapest and Szeged, and to the libraries of Miskolc & Tiszaújváros. His paper on Kossuth was published in the 2010 ITT-OTT volume of the Magyar Baráti Közösség, based on presentations he offered at their conference. This was followed by another article on the subject of Unitarianism he wrote for the Hungarian Communion of Friends in 2011. In October 2010, Bartfay of Branch 129 was one of the William Penn Association members from the Midwest representing 22 organizations attending the fifth Hungarian Americans Together Conference held in Chicago. The conference, co-sponsored by WPA and the Hungarian American Coalition (HAC), had the goals of communication and cooperation among Hungarian American organizations in the United States and continuing strategy development for strengthening and saving Hungarian American institutions to promote Hungarian heritage, culture and mutual interests. He was a member of the Hungarian American Coalition in 2014. He served as project consultant/advisor to the 2012 dramatic production "Kossuth's Message," an historical reenactment on the Hungarian statesman's visit to Ohio and the USA in 1851-1852, which featured Hungarian Americans serving as the actors and was presented in many Ohio locales, including John Carroll University.

In November 2012 Arthur Allan Bártfay was the recipient of Magyar Tarsasag’s prestigious Árpád Academy Alliance Award medal from Dr. John Nádas, President of the Hungarian Association, and Árpád Academy Secretary General Lél Somogyi for his service to the Hungarian Community. In 2013 he offered a presentation on Kossuth at the Hungarian Association conference in Cleveland. In 2014 he spoke on “Growing Up Hungarian in the USA.” In November 2015 at the Hungarian Association Congress in Cleveland, Bartfay presented a session entitled “A History and Analysis of Hungarian Life in Columbus.” In February 2016, Bartfay lectured on Kossuth at the Hungarian Reformed Church in Columbus. sponsor of the Hungarian Cultural Association programs he often arranged there. He offered another presentation on Kossuth at the church on March 15, 2016 to commemorate the start of the 1848 revolt for independence which Kossuth led, a day celebrated as a national holiday in Hungary. At that time Art also prepared information on Hungarian programs at the church for April, May, June, July, and August 2016 and invited those interested to contact him for further details. He was on the AHEA program in April 2016 at the University of Maryland to deliver his paper on Hungarians in Columbus in a session devoted to Hungarian Americans. Bartfay had planned to offer a presentation at the Hungarian Association conference in Cleveland in November 2016, but he had surgery and stayed in a hospice preceding his death at age 81 in early December, which occurred shortly after the annual Thanksgiving weekend event was scheduled to take place.

Marta Pereszlenyi- Pinter, who met Art in the 1970's when they both worked at The Ohio State University, recalled his quiet, laid-back demeanor belied his intense diligence on Hungarian American endeavors, which he modestly presented pertaining to his own work

yet energetically publicized regarding the work of others. Ruth G. Biro, who knew Art for 45 years and attended the Debrecen Summer School and participated in eight REEI Summer Research Laboratory programs with him, recollected his kindness to new AHEA members and his generosity benefitting Hungarian American organizations both in his time given and monetary donations made, all accomplished in an unassuming, gentlemanly manner. Kathy DeRose, acquainted with Art for 25 years through AHEA conferences and several REEI Hungarian Week Workshops, noted his pleasant, informative conversations on Hungarian topics and his interest in and supportive comments regarding research being undertaken.

Art Bartfay will be greatly missed by those of us who benefited from his consummate dedication to Hungarian studies in the AHEA, Hungarian Association, REEI, Columbus area organizations, and other venues where he offered his participation and donor support, including the Hungarian Studies Association and many others. We will fondly remember, yet regrettably never again enjoy, his warm smile, gracious welcoming greetings, and treasure trove of Hungarian information. Sadly, his interesting messages from his email address (tiszafolyo@yahoo.com), which incorporated his family's ancestral Hungarian homeland in the Tisza River region, will no longer grace our mailboxes.

Ruth G. Biro, Pittsburg, PA
Marta Pereszlenyi- Pinter, Cleveland, OH
December 2016