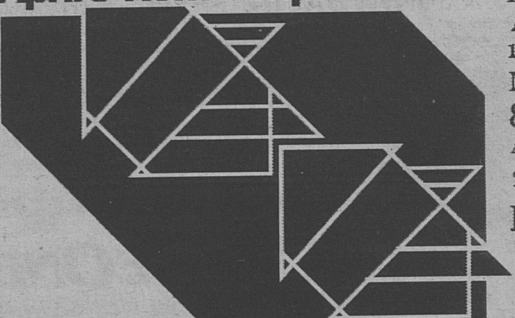


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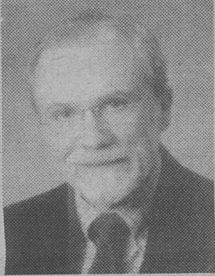
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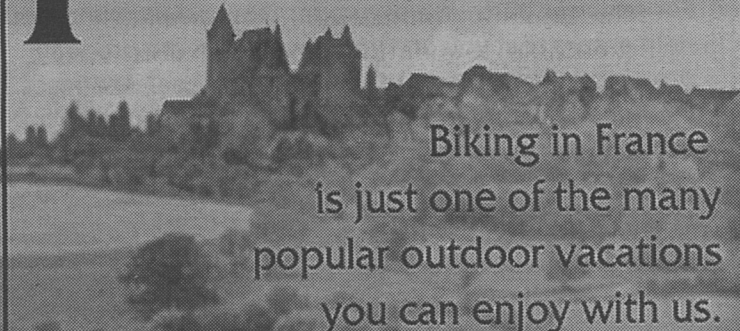


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Letter From Hungary

Editor's Note: OITM contributor Stacey Horn has been in Hungary since September, learning the language and making connections. She's there to teach English and on a church-related mission to work with Roma children and families. The Roma, who have been called "Gypsies" (a pejorative name), are treated as outcasts in many countries.

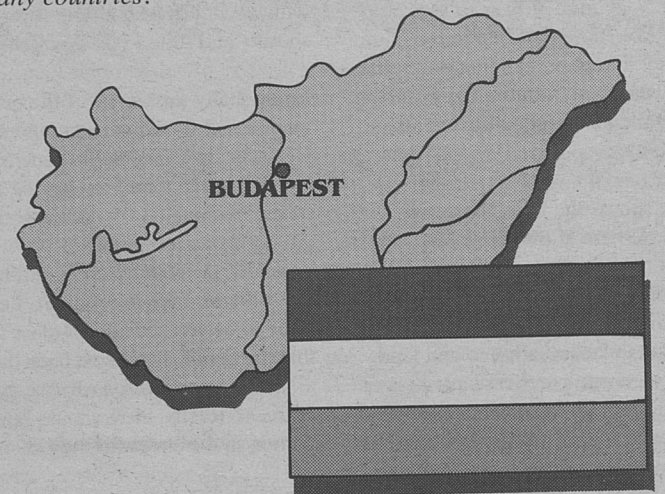
Drága (dear) Friends and Family,

Jó napot! Greetings from Magyarország! I hope you all are well. I am slowly settling into my life here in Miskolc. Here are some updates from the past month:

Nyelv (The Language): During the first two weeks of September, I joined volunteers from all over Europe for two weeks of language school in Monoszlo, a *szép, kicsi faló* (beautiful, tiny village) near Lake Balaton. I am far from fluent, but I can more or less explain myself and my work here: *Horn Stacey vagyok. Önkéntes vagyok. Egy év Magyarországon fogok élni.* (I am Stacey Horn. I am a volunteer. I will live in Hungary for one year.)

When I tell Hungarians *tanulok Magyarul* (I am studying Hungarian), they usually shake their heads and say, *nehéz* (difficult). I say, *nehéz de érdekes* (difficult but interesting). Unlike English, Hungarian does not rely on prepositions and pronouns. Instead, suffixes communicate who is doing what. For example, if I am going for a walk, I simply say *Megyek sétálni*. You know that I am the one going because I said *megyek*, not *megy* (s/he) or *megyünk* (we). I am slowly learning to trust the language, but I often point enthusiastically at myself to emphasize that I am the one walking because it seems so unbelievable that a mere suffix could sufficiently communicate this point.

Dolgozni (My Work): *Angolul tanár vagyok. Élek Lévy József Gimnázium.* (I am an English teacher. I live at Lévy József boarding school.) Four days a week, I teach English as a second language in a Christian secondary school with about 650 students, 200 of whom live at the school. There is an English department, and I teach one or two lessons a week in each English teacher's class. For example, on Tuesdays, I teach Szilvi's students, and the rest of the week she teaches them. This means that I see many different stu-



dents each day. Learning names is a challenge, but the good news is that many families in Hungary give their children traditional names, so I actually need to remember far fewer names than faces. Boys are often Laci, Istvan or Balazs, and girls are frequently Zsophi, Enikő, or Réka. I teach 8th through 12th graders (in different classes), and their skills vary widely. We all face a steep learning curve.

Teaching at the school is only part of my work here. On Wednesdays and some Saturdays, I will travel with Anita, a local minister to the nearby village of Sárospatak where after-school programs for Roma (gypsy) children are held. I will have my first opportunity to work with Anita this Saturday, so I will write more about this part of my work in my next letter.

Varos (The City): Miskolc is the second largest city in Hungary, but it is the third most populous (after Budapest and Debrecen). My favorite spot in the city is the old TV tower atop Avas Hill. From here, you can see the history of the city in its architecture. The skyline is dotted with factory buildings, which were erected during communist times. As any Hungarian school child will tell you, the soil in Hungary is very rich. Sunflower seeds and grapes (which are used for making Hungary's famous wine) flourish here. However, during communism, cities like Miskolc were industrialized, and the basis of the economy shifted from agriculture to industry. Miskolc is an interesting study

in contrasts: block houses, rich green farmland, factories, and the Bükk Mountains in the distance.

Emberek (The People): I have been warmly welcomed here. On Sundays, I go to Isten tiszta (worship – literally the words mean "God clean") in nearby Avas, and members of the congregation often invite me to lunch. I have eaten many, many different kinds of *leves* (soup) and sampled lots of *sütemény* (baked goods). All *finom* (delicious).

The other teachers at the school are very friendly. József, the phys ed. teacher invited me to join a group of students and teachers who play tennis on Mondays and Wednesdays. I am a terrible tennis player, but József is very patient and encouraging. When I do well, he excitedly exclaims, *az, az!* (there there!) and after lessons he always asks *Jó volt?* (Was it good?) I say, *Nagyon jól!* (Very good!)

In addition to tennis, I have joined a singing group of students and teachers that practices once a week. We sing in Hungarian, which is great for my pronunciation, and I can usually translate at least a few words of each song. Perhaps by the end of the year I will be able to understand what I am singing.

It has been a pleasure to hear from many of you via email and post. Thank you for your words, thoughts, and prayers. Take care and keep in touch.

Áldásbékesség
 (Blessing and peace),
 Stacey