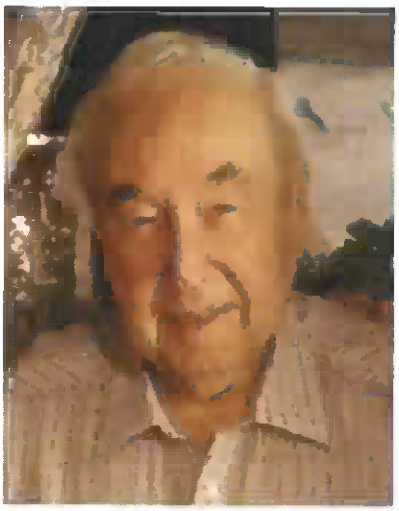
FROM PESTSZENTERZSÉBET TO LOS ANGELES: CELEBRATING THE COLORFUL LIFE OF BOB MORGAN ON THE OCCASION OF HIS 100th BIRTHDAY

by **Csaba L. Kohalmi**



I came to know Bob about 35 years ago as a modest man with a mission. His mission was to prove how wrong an exhibit judge was when he dismissed Bob's early attempt at exhibiting the postal history of the 1945-46 Hungarian hyperinflation with the comment "Hungary's inflation is no big deal - every country had its inflation."

Initially, Bob and I started corresponding by mail. I no longer remember how our connection got started. Soon thereafter, the internet came along and our communication became almost instantaneous by email. It was about this time that I started my 25-year stint as the editor of the SHP newsletter. I was happy to get his writings to fill the pages, and he was happy with the historical background that I could provide for him.

Most of our communication was focused on philately, so I only know snippets of his personal life. He was born on March 11, 1924 under modest circumstances in Pestszenterzsébet, a provincial town on the southern periphery of Budapest at the time. He told me an early memory he had of his mother ironing in a room under a single lightbulb. I assume that was her source of income. A more vivid memory he had was being disciplined with a large wooden spoon, the emphasis being on 'large.' (My memory of a 'large wooden spoon' is of a canoe-paddle size one used to stir the cauldron when cooking plums for canning preserves.) Bob was a young lad when Hungary was dragged into the conflagration of World War II. Because of his Jewish heritage, he was conscripted into a forced labor battalion. At an opportune time, he managed to escape and go into hiding, thereby saving his own life.

After the war, Bob started a new life in America, initially on the East Coast. Károly Szücs told me that Bob had a successful business in New York refurbishing fur pieces that were popular with the ladies at the time. By the time I got to know him, he was living in Los Angeles and had an import business that required him to make countless trips to Hong Kong.

Bob encouraged me to pursue the collection of the postal history of the hyperinflation. Since I was born in the middle of it and heard many stories from my mother and grandfather, I found this interesting. Bob also wanted me to try exhibiting, but I shied away from that. It was about this time that we had a midnight rendezvous at LAX (I was taking a red-eye flight home from a business trip in San Diego), and exchanged inflation covers. I had a red, 5 million tax pengő stamp on a cover that he wanted, and he gave me a large stack of other covers in return. At the time, I don't think that anyone in the philatelic world knew how scarce this franking was.

Bob eventually documented his findings in the book published by the Collectors Club of Chicago in 2003: **The Hungarian Hyperinflation of 1945-1946**. This is the definitive reference on the postal history of the world's greatest inflation that has not been eclipsed even by the one that that has been raging in Zimbabwe for the past twenty years. The metric for this is the fact that at its peak (July 1946), inflationary prices doubled in Hungary every 10-12 hours! Bob's reference work navigates the hundreds of postal rates, their special application during grace periods, the rates for obscure postal services, and highlights the dedication of postal clerks who had to work unaccustomed with astronomical numbers. Much to their credit, they accomplished their work with relatively few mistakes. The above-mentioned book received the Reserve Grand Award at Stampshow 2004 and the Diane D. Bohret award for the best philatelic handbook of 2003-2004.

One important aspect of the hyperinflation that I had the pleasure of working with Bob on is the tabulation of the surviving airmail covers mailed from Hungary during May-July 1946. The current list contains only 72 known examples. Since mailing airmail letters was restricted to the Budapest 72 post office and involved extra cost, this service was not well publicized or utilized. The other reason that so few covers survived is that stamps were not used to mail covers (there is only one known using stamps); therefore, the stampless envelopes were considered undesirable and were discarded.



Needless to say, after many years of hard work, Bob did succeed at showing the skeptical judge that the inflation in Hungary was way out of the ordinary. In addition to the lesser awards at the beginning of his exhibiting career, Bob earned the Grand Award at Aripex (Mesa, AZ). This is the only Hungary themed exhibit to have EVER earned this level of award in the USA. Bob earned an extraordinary seven gold medal awards at FIP-sanctioned international stamp shows exhibiting his collection:

WASHINGTON 2006
ISRAEL 2008
EFIRO 2008
LONDON 2010
NEW YORK 2016
FINLANDIA 2017
THAILAND 2018

Bob also received a LARGE GOLD medal at LONDON 2022. Such a high award for a post-1940 exhibit is a rarity that has happened only three or four times before.

WANTED

Examples of MBK #159A or 159B (Scott P8) on newspaper clippings, cut squares, or newspaper wrappers showing a cancel from a town or city in Slovakia with a date between 28 October 1918 and 28 February 1919. Please contact James Buckner at wellseats@hotmail.com if interested in selling.



Bob and his wife Edith were married for six decades. Edith faithfully attended many stamp shows with him over the years before her passing in 2014. She was a familiar face at our Society tables on countless occasions. She faithfully sat there allowing the rest of us to go about our meetings and to rummage through dealers' stocks. There is no record of how many new members she recruited for us with her friendly demeanor, but there must have been many. I can personally vouch for the fact that she was always a delight to be around.

Bob has been a member of SHP since 1974. He was inducted into the Hungarian MAFITT society in 1992, and the topic of his inaugural lecture was about the use of single or fewest stamps for franking mail during the 1945-46 inflation-era. Recently, Bob became the first recipient of MAFITT's newly established Gábor Visnyovszki Award for Lifetime Achievement. The announcement of the award was made via a Zoom meeting on November 11th attended by Dr. György Lővei, the president of Mafitt, Mariann Csatlós along with many members of the Internet Stamp Club of Mabéosz, Alan Bauer and myself representing SHP. Bob, of course, was the guest of honor and was visibly moved by the recognition that he received. (Visnyovszki [1945-2022] was the president of Mafitt from 1991 to 2011. He was the driving force [and a significant contributor of the entries] behind the publication of the 'Black Book,' **A magyar bélyegek kézikönyve**.) The award was co-sponsored by the Patria Philatelic Organization.



A Magyar Filatéliai Tudományos Társaság

OKLEVELE

A Mafitt Elnöksége az első alkalommal kiadott
Visnyovszki Gábor életmű díjat

Robert Morgan

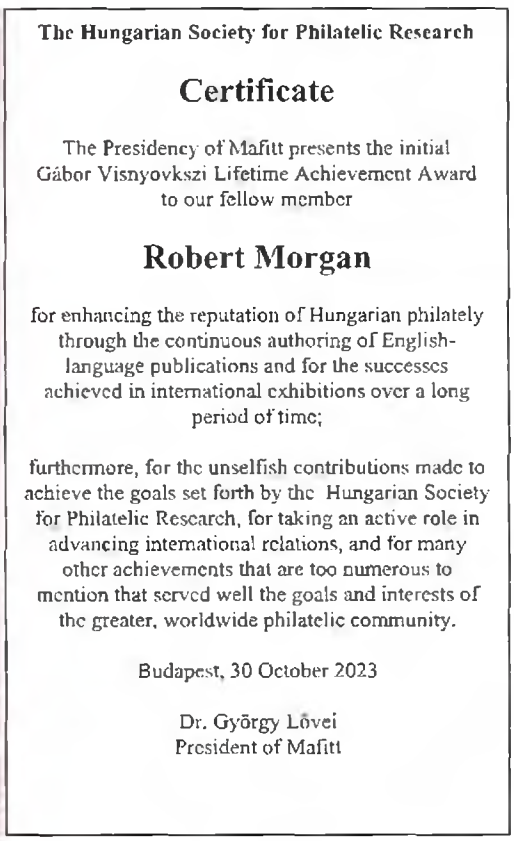
tagtársunknak ítélte,

a magyar filatélia nemzetközi hírnevének öregbítésében
angol nyelvű szakirodalomban való folyamatos ápolásában
és nemzetközi kiállításokon hosszú időn át kifejtett, eredményes munkásságáért;

továbbá a Magyar Filatéliai Tudományos Társaság céljainak
megvalósításában tanúsított áldozatos közreműködéséért,
nemzetközi kapcsolatainak építésében vállalt támogató szerepéért;
és egyben minden olyan, itt teljes körűen fel nem sorolható erőfeszítéséért,
amellyel egy egész világra kiterjedő,
nagy filatéliai közösség céljait és erőfeszítéseit szolgálta.

Budapest, 2023. október 30.

Dr. Lővei György
a Mafitt elnöke



The Hungarian Society for Philatelic Research

Certificate

The Presidency of Mafitt presents the initial Gábor Visnyovkszi Lifetime Achievement Award to our fellow member

Robert Morgan

for enhancing the reputation of Hungarian philately through the continuous authoring of English-language publications and for the successes achieved in international exhibitions over a long period of time;

furthermore, for the unselfish contributions made to achieve the goals set forth by the Hungarian Society for Philatelic Research, for taking an active role in advancing international relations, and for many other achievements that are too numerous to mention that served well the goals and interests of the greater, worldwide philatelic community.

Budapest, 30 October 2023

Dr. György Lővei
President of Mafitt

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