

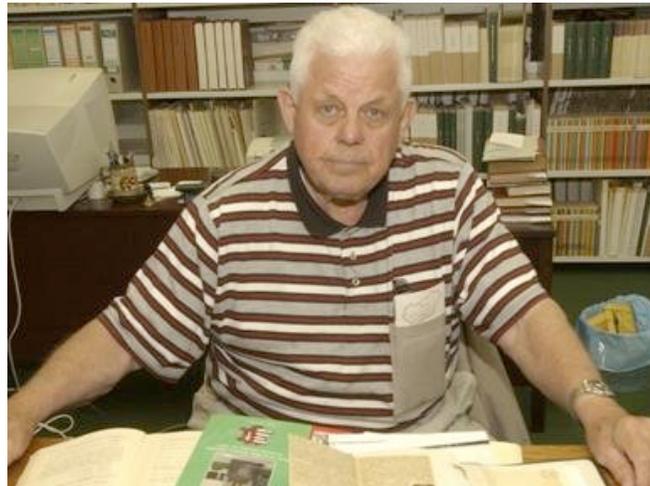
Member Spotlight: Rezső Ralph Gracza

By Al Nadosy

With special thanks to Susan Gracza Moscovich



Ralph as a university student...



And much more recently, in his home office

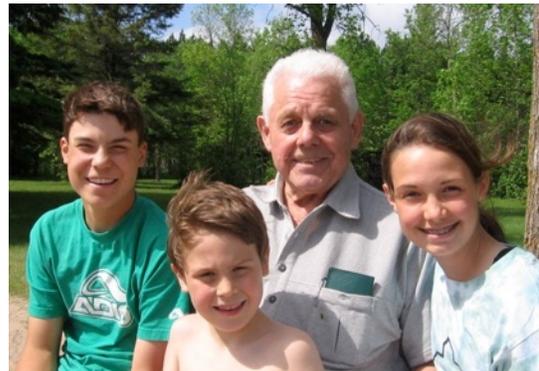
Ralph Gracza, often addressed as Rudi Bacsı (Uncle Rudi), is one of those of us for whom a short biography is not easily written. Ralph was born Rezső Miklós Gracza to Karoly, a mechanical engineer, and Zsuzanna Gracza on June 7, 1921 in Budapest. Educated entirely in Hungary, he graduated from the Piarist Order's realgymnasium in Magyaróvár (now Mosonmagyaróvár), and earned his diploma (an MS degree in the U.S.) in mechanical engineering and his golden diploma, for his professional activities, from the József Nado Technical University in Budapest, where he also taught in 1944. (He was to polish his engineering credentials later, at the University of Minnesota, in 1972.)

Though a man of prolific technological expertise, Ralph was and remains very fond of his relationships with others, and especially his family. Nonetheless, his fascinating professional career was only beginning to take off: Following his teaching stint, he went to work for the Airplane Division of the Győr Wagon Works. In 1945, the military occupiers of Hungary "had other plans for him and reassigned" him to work on Messerschmitt 109s, just as the war was ending, and just as his daughter, Susan, was born -- delivered, as Susan fondly notes, by Ralph, in a barn, in the displaced persons camp in Bavaria where he and his young family spent the next six years. There Ralph worked as a mechanic for the U.S. Army. And there both his wife, the former Sarolta Pollerman, and their daughter contracted tuberculosis.

Sadly, Sarolta eventually died of the disease. Susan, now Susan Gracza Moscovich, survived her illness and immigrated with her father and Ralph's sister, Elizabeth, to the United States in 1951. Arriving in New York City aboard a troop ship from Bavaria, Ralph went to work designing

refineries and pipelines for Bechtel Corporation. While there, because his coworkers were unable to pronounce Rezső, he took on the name of Ralph. Seven months later, a headhunter recruited Ralph to work for the Pillsbury corporation in Minneapolis. There Ralph was an engineer in Pillsbury's research and development department. In that capacity, he earned several patents for the machinery, processes, and particle size technology used for the air sifting of flour. While at Pillsbury, Ralph made contact with the local Hungarian community, helping some of its members secure employment in the Twin Cities area. After Pillsbury, Ralph worked as a consultant for a variety of design engineering firms, gaining experience in industrial vehicle, food processing, HVAC, and air pollution control design, all the while also serving the legal system as an expert witness,

While living in New York City, Ralph had married Fulbright Scholar and artist Margaret Ann Young. Equipped with a masters degree in language and art education, Margaret was "passionate in her teaching of painting and drawing" and served as a docent for the Minneapolis Museum of Art. Margaret died in 2001. She and Ralph have a son, Edward, a dentist, who with his wife Jane, also a dentist, owns and operates a dental clinic in Roseau, MN. Through them, Ralph has three grandchildren. Ralph's daughter Susan (a pianist) and now retired cardiologist husband Michael live on Vancouver Island B.C., Canada, where they founded and raise funds for two college scholarships, one in music, and one in art, the latter they named the Margaret Gracza Fine Arts Award. Through his daughter, Ralph has two grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.



Photo, above right: Ralph with grandsons Philip and Gabriel, and granddaughter Rose.
Photo below left: Ralph with grandsons Ben and Dan and daughter Susan. Below right: Ralph with great-grandson Ethan. Brand new great-grandson Dylan is not shown



Over his work career, Ralph increasingly developed an empathy and sympathy for "Hungary's always coming up on the short end of the historical stick," which motivated Ralph's interest, as "a guy living over three generations," in things historical. He chronicles his thoughts in historical matters, both global and local, including his personal commentary on the Minnesota Hungarians, on his his website, <sinira.com>. Ralph has authored a number of publications, including *The Hungarians in America*, with his wife Margaret in 1969, and *How and Why Iowans Named Kossuth County in 1851* in 2001. *The Hungarian Diaspora after World War Two* is currently a work in progress.

During the years 1956 and 1957, Ralph worked with Pál Rupprecht, another Minnesota Hungarian legend, and Lorant Andaházy, to resettle Hungarian refugees in the U.S. Ralph served as secretary of the Minnesota Hungarians during the years 1988 and 1990 and was one of those responsible for succeeding in having the organization registered as a 501c3 (non-profit) organization.

Ralph notes in conclusion, with sardonic wit, that in 2011 his children “decided to remove him from his comfortable home to ‘shelve’ him in independent retirement” at St. Therese’s in Hopkins. Ralph insists that it should be recognized that he “obviously doesn’t like it, but (he) can’t think of any better fate for an old (expletive deleted) such as (himself)!” Amen, Rudi Bacsi.

Writer’s note: One of this article’s reviewers observed how sad portions of this story appeared. If so, then that quality should underscore the hardships and sacrifice our immigrants often endured before and during their journey to this country. Al N.