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MEMORIES AND REFLECTIONS

It is a great privilege to be invited to contribute my memories and reflections of life with my father, Stephen Schäfer. I was the only child of Stephen and Lili Schäfer, and I was 28 years old when he died in 1976.

My father didn't speak much – or maybe I didn't ask enough questions – about his life before I was born. So, over the course of my adult life I have had to piece together that period of his personal story from several sources: my recollections of conversations with my grandparents (his parents), with whom I spent much time during my childhood in Hungary, the widow of my beloved pediatrician who was also one of Stephen's best friends (they were my godparents), my visits to Budapest in the past four decades during which I have spent time with the children of Stephen's closest friend, Dr. Magyar Imre, a preeminent physician of his generation, some of Stephen's former students in the United States, and many old photographs that were not long ago discovered.

My father appears to have lived a relatively carefree life in Budapest for his first 30 years. At least that is the impression one would get from old photographs. The faded pictures show him as a student traveling around the world on different ships with his friends, swimming or skiing, and practically always in the company of one or more very attractive young women. They give the appearance of a handsome young man who was a *bon vivant*. It was an aspect of my father I certainly never knew. But in retrospect it was merely a veneer beneath which lived a man of great intellect with a fierce ambition to contribute substantively to the welfare of society. His father, Schäfer Zsigmond, was a stern taskmaster. Even in his old age when I knew him as my grandfather, Zsigmond was a tall, imposing, humorless, and sometimes even frightening man who was a prominent citizen of Budapest. He had been an officer in the Hungarian army in World War I and then became one of the country's most distinguished legal scholars. Of course I loved him very much but I never saw him with even the slightest smile. He reputedly drove my father to study and work relentlessly. A story my father told was of his first trial in court after graduating from the Royal Hungarian Pázmány Péter University of Budapest as a Doctor of Jurisprudence. He prepared for that case intensively, as his father had always commanded, and he was too nervous to sleep the night before the court date. So, very early the next morning, Stephen walked through the deserted streets of Budapest, arriving at the court house just as the sun was beginning to rise, to be

certain that he wouldn't be late. He walked up the great steps of the court building with nobody in sight and when he arrived at the top, his father jumped out from behind one of the Greek columns and yelled at him, "Stephen, you are *late!*" This strictness must have been transmitted through the generations because I have always compulsively timed myself to arrive at airports or train station at least two hours before scheduled departure.

By all accounts, Stephen began to practice law very successfully. He was emerging as a young legal scholar of note when World War II broke out. I believe that is when he met my mother who was from a rural part of Hungary. Near the end of the war Stephen was forced to serve in a brutal labor camp, where he was imprisoned with his lifetime friend Magyar Imre who actually wrote a short book about their experience there. Unfortunately, neither Magyar Imre's son nor I can find that book. My mother was an attractive woman who was deported to a concentration camp, most likely Auschwitz. Unlike her younger brother who perished there, she somehow survived. They were married after the war and he rebuilt his law career, becoming Professeur Agrégé at the Royal Hungarian Pázmány Péter University of Budapest in 1947.

This is when his prolific writing began and continued up to the day he died without interruption. His earliest writings in Hungary were diverse in focus: he wrote about the white collar criminal (*A "Fehérgalléros" Büntettes* [1948]), juvenile delinquency, and prison reform (which helped vault him to the Chairmanship of the Hungarian Prison Commission and the presidency of Hungary's supervising board of delinquency at the age of 36). He even wrote on eclectic legal subjects like a short book (now also lost) that vigorously justified the actions of Victor Hugo's Inspector Javert, the villain of *Les Misérables*, who obsessively pursued Jean Valjean for stealing food. I distinctly remember him telling me, while the two of us were walking down Andrassy út when I was only seven or eight years old, that Jean Valjean was no different than a common criminal and Inspector Javert was simply 'doing his job' as the prosecutor. I must have thought the book was a satire, but now I realize that Stephen was a strict legalist at that point in his career and he was completely serious. It was also at this time that the seeds of interest were laid for what was to be later called the field of victimology. My grandfather had pointed out to him many years earlier that all the law books focused on was the criminal and nothing significant was ever written about the "criminal's victim." Surely the victim deserves at least as much attention as the criminal, he often said to me.

In retrospect, I now understand how ruthlessly he must have been prosecuted by the Stalinist Communist regime for refusing to join the Party in the early 1950's. He was forced out of his positions at the University, he was stripped of his government appointments, and his law practice was shut down. He never told me what happened or what he did after that for a living, but my mother said he was now working in a big factory. Yet he went there each morning wearing a suit and tie and he returned home late at night in the same attire. I thought he was a famous lawyer throughout all those humiliating years. I have vivid memories of that Tuesday evening, October 23, 1956, when he came home past midnight, still in his suit, white shirt and tie, after the big march under the window of our apartment building at Andrassy út 77 was dispersing. (I myself had been swept away by the crowd earlier

that evening on my way home from the barber shop, not knowing what was going on, and got to witness the attack on Stalin's statue. I can only imagine the panic of my poor mother with neither of us coming home until late.)

We left Hungary in 1957, after the Revolution, and went to England where our entry was sponsored by an old family friend who was now a dentist there. By now I was old enough to be completely aware of what how my father was occupied in London to just survive. He simultaneously took on all kinds of odd jobs, mostly different kinds of menial labor which he was completely unqualified to do. I clearly remember his coming home one night in despair because he had just been fired by a Chinese restaurant where he was working by himself to try to install new linoleum flooring with glue, only to find the new flooring become completely warped the next day when the glue had dried and the restaurant was heated. These were the kinds of manual labor jobs he was doing in London for four years. And at night, he would write. He now wrote ceaselessly in our little living room in a very poor neighborhood of London while I was doing homework and my mother was watching TV. The room was freezing in the winter, pipes were always dripping, and we were infested with insects. But he kept writing into the early morning hours every day. What came out of it was *Restitution to Victims of Crime*, published in 1960. He realized he could never be a lawyer again, in a foreign country, so he transformed himself into a criminologist and sociologist. The book earned him a part-time job teaching evening classes at the Polytechnic Institute of London.

He sent an early draft of the book to as many connected people as he could identify. And it caught the attention of Margery Fry, the renowned British prison reformer, who was Secretary of the Howard League for Penal Reform and also a Principal of Somerville College at Oxford University. By inheritance Margery Fry was also a wealthy woman and she became a patron of my father's work. I remember my father taking me to her home for lunch or "tea" on several occasions. I still have the affectionately signed book she once gave me on the History of England. Margery Fry was already a proponent of compensation for victims of crime, arguing that the state should provide financial reimbursement to victims of crime for their losses.

In 1961, my father was finally offered a university faculty appointment in America. The position was at Florida State University in Tallahassee, Florida, at that time a backward, isolated town with a population of about 40,000, situated in the Deep South of the U.S. where racial segregation was strictly and often violently enforced and where immigrants and Jews were generally not welcome. The job came with an academic rank of Assistant Professor and a salary I estimate to be about 20 times less than that of the university's football coach. Both the rank and the salary were at the lowest possible levels for any faculty at the university. Stephen's superior, the Dean, was a virulent racist and anti-Semite. He hated my father from the moment he arrived. And so it was that at the age of 50, Stephen Schafer once again had to reinvent himself and begin a new career in those alien and hostile surroundings.

The conditions of his employment were humiliating, but I never heard him complain. My father's extraordinary survival instincts and his aptitude for accommodating and assimilating to any condition life would present now allowed him to plunge into his work with

the same obsessive zeal he had in Budapest and London. Again, every night he would work at his desk at home for hours at a time without interruption, except to light yet another new cigarette or say a few words to my mother and me. The result this time was perhaps his seminal work, *The Victim and His Criminal*.

During the day, he became one of the most popular teachers at the university. There were understandable reasons for this. The students loved his very Hungarian, deadpan and sardonic sense of humor, his terrible jokes, and his thick but charming Magyar accent. And perhaps most importantly, he became popular among the students for his philosophy of education. He really believed that the lowest final grade any student should get for a course must be a "B" (on a scale where "A" is superior, "B" is good, "C" is average, "D" is marginal, and "F" is failure). The reason for this, he explained to them, was that any grade worse than a "B" should not be the student's fault: it had to be the responsibility of the professor. Therefore, the only grades he ever gave his students were an "A" or a "B," nothing lower. It made the Dean furious because this was not the way things were done at the university. But very quickly it expanded his classes from seminars with 5 to 10 students to gigantic lectures in huge auditoriums seating 200 or more students.

He did not mind this at all because he was really a showman. One of the many mischievous pranks he played repeatedly when he taught in front of a very large class would come as an abrupt surprise in the middle of a serious lecture. He would suddenly stop and point to a male student he didn't know at all in the middle of the auditorium, a young man he would always call his "innocent victim" on all these occasions, who happened to be sitting next to a particularly attractive female student. Typically, neither of the students he pointed to knew each other. He would then ask the embarrassed young man, in front of hundreds of fellow students, if he found the young lady sitting next to him attractive. As both students' faces turned red, the male student would usually have to mumble something like "yes," to the roaring laughter of the entire class. My father would then ask the male victim if he would like to ask the young lady to dinner that night. If there was any resistance at all on the part of either of them, my father could badger, and nag, and harass them until they both agreed to the rendezvous. The next day, my father would complete his crime by calling on each of them to tell the entire class in great detail how their evening assignment went. Within three or four years my mother and I estimated that we had been invited to at least 5 or 10 weddings as the guests of honor: my father had created them!

From there, the published work flowed quickly: *Theories in Criminology* (1969), *Juvenile Delinquency* (1970), *The Political Criminal: The Problem of Morality and Crime* ((1974), *Social Problems in a Changing Society* (1975), *Introduction to Criminology* (1976), *Readings in Contemporary Criminology* (1976), and *Criminological Theory: Foundations and Perceptions*, co-authored by Richard Knudsen (1977). In the face of a major crime wave that was sweeping the United States in the early 1960's, President Lyndon Johnson appointed him Consultant to the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice.

He took a better faculty position at Ohio University in 1965, and we moved there for only one year before he was appointed a Full Professor at Northeastern University in Boston. Finally, he was getting the international recognition he had so industriously and pains-

takingly earned. He became one of the organizers of the First International Symposium on Victimology in Jerusalem. But even then, it was not easy for an immigrant. On June 5, 1968, while he was in Los Angeles campaigning for the presidency of the United States, Robert Kennedy, John F. Kennedy's younger brother, was assassinated by a deranged man named Sirhan Sirhan. Bobby Kennedy was beloved by much of the country's population and the nation was in deep mourning. Knowing about my father's interest in political crime, a popular American magazine interviewed him about Bobby Kennedy's murder. My father tried to explain to the magazine reporter that any well-known politician is, by the nature of all the publicity he receives from the mass media and his position in the spotlight, a necessary "participant" in the assassin-victim relationship. But the magazine obviously must have wanted a comment from him that was much simpler and more explosive. So, he was quoted in the publication as saying that "Bobby Kennedy was asking for it when he was killed." The following week, the magazine published Letters to the Editor that blasted my father, one of them saying he should get out of America and go back to his Communist homeland. He even received personal "hate" mail and threats at home.

Stephen's final dream was to host the Second International Symposium on Victimology in his new home city of Boston and he worked hard in organizing it. My wife and I presented to him our first child, his grandson, in June, 1976, and he was immensely proud to hold him. But one month later, and 38 days before the opening of the long-awaited international congress, he died of a heart attack on July 29, 1976. His colleagues and students joined forces to make sure the congress was a success. And indeed I know it was a great success because I attended it. It was there that I fully realized how extraordinary a man he was to contribute so much to society in the face of so many unbearable personal adversities without ever complaining or even talking about them.

My father, Schäfer Stephen, was buried in West Roxbury, a suburb of Boston, in the Baker Street Jewish Cemetery, surrounded by cemeteries of other religions. This is what he wished. A few years later my mother Lili was laid to rest beside him.