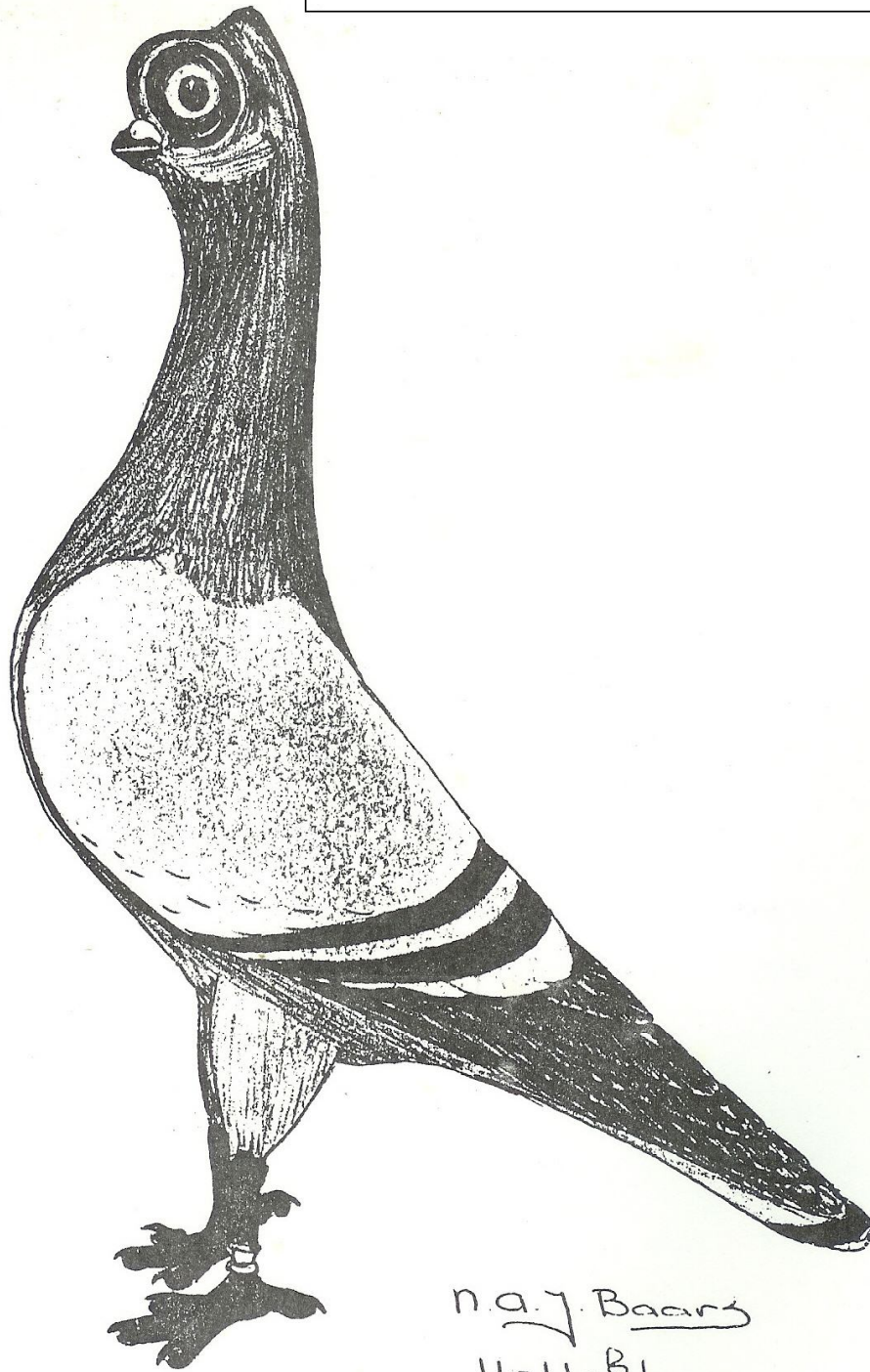


AZ EGYSÉGES BUDAPESTI RÖVIDCSŐRŰ
FAJTALEIRÁSA

The Budapest Short Face



This book was printed in six languages. This English copy is for your reading enjoyment.

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THE ORIGIN, HISTORY, AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE BUDAPEST SHORT FACE.

By Dr. Istvan Szecsenyi, Budapest, Hungary 1986

The origin of the different breeds of pigeons are mostly unknown, including the Hungarian ones. The explanation for it is partly given by the fact that to breed a bird with special characteristics and the related inheritance factors, takes a very long time, often several human generations and partly that "secrets" about the method of achieving this indeed remain a secret. It is undeniable that each variety is a result of manipulation by the breeder, but the possibility to do this lies in the inclination for change in the breed, sometimes with unexpected new characteristics such as crest, feathers on the leg, blowing crop, number of feathers in the tail, etc. For example, it would be a waste of time if someone wanted to breed a pigeon which is self colored as a nestling and then after the first moult to expect the pigeon to develop white shield markings on the wings, unless the particular characteristic had occurred sometime in a primitive form. The human element enters here at this point to notice it, fix the new characteristic or mutation and then develop it.

A more common method to create new varieties is by crossing existing breeds and transplanting some quality to the other breed, or altering the existing qualities. By arriving in this way to a new breed with a standard is not, however, the end of the story. A standard of perfection, as everything in nature, is subject to constant change. This change and the speed of change by different breeds in pigeons vary considerably, but it can be observed in each case. We have only to compare pictures taken or drawn a few decades ago with the same birds in question today. The tastes and with it the aims to reach a new ideal, are changing all the time.

So, shaping a new breed is a very complex and complicated procedure and is, therefore, difficult to untangle. The Budapest Short Face is no exception, but compared to other breeds we have numerous written evidence which can be regarded as authentic from the middle of the last century, regarding the history of the breed. In addition, we have "lip services" from old fanciers of previous generations, although few of them can be taken as evidence, because they are mostly contradictory.

The present Budapest Short Face has three ancestors. the Budapest Storked, the Buda Blue, and the Viennese Short Face Self and Ganzle. From the origins of these, I quote the following literature to trace certain facts.

Gustav Prutz in his book "Illustrierte Taubenbuch" (1886) mentioned for the first time the Pest Storked (Buda and Pest were two cities, divided by the river Danube and joined only later) and describes it with the Prague Storked. According to him, there is no difference between the two, apart from the Pest Storked being a bit smaller. He mentions that the Prague Storked has a darker grizzled variety as well.

German literature refers to writings of Gasparetz, Petz, Szulzberger, who reported that already in the 1850's there existed outstanding Storked birds in Buda and in Pest. Unfortunately, these reports are lost but in the above mentioned book from Prutz, there are pictures of these Pest Storked birds.

Again, German sources inform us about the distribution of our Storks in the 1870's to the southern parts of Poland which was then part of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, especially in Wroclaw, Krakow, Lemberg, and Stettin. For decades several breeders bred them there and also used them to create local variants. The first outstanding Hungarian author Gyorgy Balassa gave the title "Budapest Storked Tumbler" to his book published in 1901. In spite of the above given title, Balassa refers to this bird in his text only as "Pest Storked." In the same book he also deals with the "Vienna Storked Tumbler." In his opinion, the two are identical but the Pest Storked is smaller and more regular in marking.

The book by Lavallo and Litze in 1905 gives us highly interesting facts. In the chapter "The Budapest White Storked Circler (Tumbler)" they write as follows "The Budapest Storked" is extremely valuable if it attains the expected requirements, but most pigeons, which are referred to in Budapest as highflyers under the name of Hungarian "Lightning-Flyers", "Cloud-Pushers", etc. are not real Budapest Storked, only poor crossings without any high or endurance flying abilities."

Again, at the turn of the century we find Henrik Zaoralek, a distinguished Vienna breeder writing: "The mistaken theory that had been upheld for years was suddenly settled by a lucky coincidence. It was generally assumed that one part of the flying pigeons with medium long beaks are not of Far Eastern origin. Dr. Binder, a ship's doctor from Trieste - a member of the First Austrian-Hungarian Poultry Federation in Vienna - traveled often to the Far East and 18 years previously brought pearl eyed Storked Tumblers from Calcutta which were a little stronger in structure, but otherwise not much different from the birds of Vienna bred under the Viennese name."

In 1914 Ferenc Peschky, the highly regarded president of the Hungarian Pigeon Federation writes the following in the Pigeon Journal about the Storked of his day; "I believe, it can be stated beyond any doubt, that the Budapest Storked, like other breeds, is the result of skillful crossing. Unfortunately, our predecessors took the secrets of these crossings with them to their graves. However, by closer study it becomes clear that while one specimen has colored plumage, the other one is white, even white self, the third has an edge, or even the edge lacking and the whole tail is bluish black, one has a red cere, the other one black or bluish black, even the beaks are different; we find light, black and blue black as well. These diversities point to a pigeon which was created by crossing." An Austrian expert, Panek arrived at the same conclusion in his book titled "The Viennese Tumblers." According to him the Pest storked is nothing else more than a refined Viennese Storked, "which was intentionally, or by chance created with the "Black Viennese Short Face Tumbler." The Pest Storked owes its shape not only to the breeders whose name it bears; its present form owes a great deal to the breeders in Vienna, Prague, Bratislava and to other places as well." One of the best known breeders, Gyorgy Baramtler, a flour merchant, near to the end of his life in 1897 being over 90 years of age refused to accept the name "Pest Pigeon". He asserted that "the light short beak ones" were already kept as flying birds in his childhood. However, Panek concludes that the name and the right to a standard should be left to Budapest, as this bird gained ground and is most popular there.

After the first, but especially after the Second World War, several journals at home and abroad dealt with our Storked, but essentially nothing new had been added which can be regarded as reliable concerning genetics, ancestry, or evolution. I once asked, in the early 1930's a man then about 70 years old nicknamed "King of the Storked", Mr. Gedeon Saska, a proud driver of a horse drawn cab in Budapest. What do you know about the pedigree of our Storked? He answered, "It was gained by crossing the Buda Blue with the Viennese Short Face White Self." According to this, the Short Beak Storked did not descend from the old Storked Tumbler.

So, the given facts point in all probability to the Eastern origin of our Storked and they were already bred at the beginning of the last century at the three capitals of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire; Vienna, Budapest and Prague under various local names but rather identical in structure. Later, however, by crossings - two different breeding aims emerged, which according to the above quoted literature was already at work at the turn of the century. This is very interesting regarding the origin of the Budapest Highflyer as well.

In the 1920's the Budapest Storked Tumbler still existed. I remember them myself. Small in body, stocky, regular storked in marking with more or less square head with pearl eyes and was a good flyer. They were popularly known as "Struchti", "sturkli", "sturak", or "stork". This breed was later destroyed by indiscriminate crossing with all sorts of flying breeds and so disappeared. The only survivor of this family which is well known even today is its feather legged version.

The Pest Storked has had only a general description, its first standard was laid down in 1910 under the name "Budapest Storked." The earlier tumbler breed became partly a show pigeon and in 1919 this was acknowledged as a breed under the name "Budapest Show Storked." In 1958, a new standard was written, keeping the old beauty ideal, but with a more refined version. So, the "fine nosed" Show Storked, which not so long ago was considered as an ancient breed, is not that at all, but rather a gradual progression to a beauty ideal, whose development has gone on for decades and is continuing.

We know even less of the origin of the Buda Blue, than the Storked. It is strange that German literature, which at the turn of the century gives detailed information about our Storked, but does not mention the Buda Blue at all. Instead the Eger Blue (Erlauer) is described. The Buda Blue emerges in German literature much later, for the first time in a book by Richard Seliger.

In 1901, Balassa, in his book, puts the group of Short Faced Tumblers together with the Eger Blue next to the Budapest Storked, again not mentioning the Buda Blue. However, apart from the color, he describes the Eger Blue identically to the Budapest Storked; "His head is beautifully square, eyes pearl, big and bulging". According to this, this is how the Eger Blue looked at the end of the last century, as we now believe the Buda Blue was like. It is in the very noteworthy collection of Bela Barbai's German pigeon literature after the first world war dealing with "The Budapest White Storked Pigeon", among others, that we find; "From the beginning of the century, here and there until the First World War, they kept in Budapest and certain provincial towns in Hungary a very small bodied, light blue short beaked pigeon, which had beautiful light pearl eyes and a large dark blue cere. This bird was often used to improve certain aspects of the Budapest Storked. This crossing explains the recurrent appearance of the mottled head and neck and bars on the wings of the Grizzle. This small, light blue pigeon is today virtually extinct. In Budapest, the bird was incorrectly called the "Eger" and in Eger it was called "Buda Blue." This seems to strengthen the assumption even more, that around the turn of the century the Buda Blue and the Eger Blue was the same breed with perhaps slight local variations.

In all those areas, where the Budapest Storked is liked and bred (Poland, Czechoslovakia, Germany) it has been well known for a long time as a small bodied, short beaked blue pigeon, which differs from ours today mainly by its broader head, smaller eyes and has a very short but thin beak. They are today the blue version of the Prague, Polish and Stettin Short Face.

Regarding the extinction of our Buda Blue at the turn of the century, about which we have ample proof in our literature. Ferenc Pesschky ("The Pigeon" June, 1914) writes; "In my opinion crossing the Budapest Storked and the Buda Blue with its short, black beak and square head would be the best choice, if we could find one of them."

Two books (Janos Winkler: "Pigeon Breeding", published in 1925 and Ferenc Moldvai ("Handbook for Pigeon Breeding" 1938) both written by devoted experts, did not even mention the Buda Blue, and again, Geza Cserei in the July, 1932 issue of the "Modern Fancier Journal" repeats; "For this purpose (fresh blood for the Storked) the dark skinned Buda Blue would be the best, but unfortunately this breed is lost forever."

The lines of Ferenc Bango sound quite dramatic (in the October, 1938) issue of "Small Animal Breeder Journal") under the headline; "The decline of pigeon breeding in and around Budapest". He laments; "To breed the Buda Blue, one needed an appropriate skill and knowledge. Where are all of our Buda Blues? Where have they gone, these universally known beautiful pigeons of ours? Exterminated, perished..... Extreme inbreeding led to their disappearance."

The Hungarian Pigeon Journal, in its May issue in 1938 published an article by Henrik Braunz about the "Buda Blue Tumbler". According to him, the Buda Blue Tumbler is a product of an exclusive Hungarian crossing, a testimony of the art and steadfastness of our breeders. The Buda Blue can be regarded as one color variant of the Budapest Show Storked. It did lose much of its originality by improper crossings. The beautiful specimen of bygone days cannot be seen anymore and those still around are cross bred freaks."

In 1929 in Magyarovar (a town in West Hungary) two pairs of short faced Eger Blues turned up from Eger itself and I was able to acquire one pair of them. The cock was light blue and the hen was dark blue with lustrous neck feathers. The description given by Braunz fitted completely to these birds. "The Buda

Blue is a small, delicately figured, decorative, perky, showing off pigeon, with a relish to please dancing on its tip toes like a ballerina and giving the impression that it boasts of its beauty". I have to mention here, this pair I bred faded red colored offspring as well, which certainly hints to cross breeding.

From 1930 on, a group of Budapest Fanciers set up a working program to re-create again the Buda Blue. Ferenc Szabo, *one* of them, kept for years 20-30 pairs of crossings of short faced pigeons in the attic of the Hungarian National Museum, until - at last - in 1940 he succeeded in presenting the first Buda Blue corresponding to the Standard. The photo of this specimen can be seen in the book "Pigeon Breeding", by Ferenc Bango.

Other efforts by breeders were crowned with success as well. Some used remaining freaks and crossed them with good quality Show Storked, Viennese and later they used Budapest Short Faced Blues and Blacks.

I have made the same crossbreeding in the 30 subsequent years. Taking into consideration that by crossing pigeons it appears the inclination to regain the color of the ancestor, - the rock pigeon's blue and black beak, black nail, was relatively easy to obtain, but to change the light color of the ceres to dark blue was a long term procedure. This was the time to breed Budapest Short Face, the time for effective crossing of the Viennese Short Face and the Budapest Show Storked, which resulted in a very useful by product in recreating the Buda Blue. Several fanciers used this method to set up new blue stocks.

The first draft of the Standard of the Buda Blue was planned by Henrik Braunz and the Hungarian Pigeon Association's Fancy pigeon section ratified it with slight alterations on the 8th of May. 1938. The next standard followed twenty years later in 1958 with the amendment that the Budapest Show Stork and the Buda Blue are only two color variations of the same breed. With this accomplishment the new chapter of the Buda Blue story was closed.

At the turn of the century, the Viennese Short Face was probably more favored in Hungary, especially in Budapest, than the Pest Storked. All opinions agree that the origin of the breed being the Barb was crossed with other medium beaked tumblers to obtain a short beaked flyer. The "heart" shape of the back (German; geherzt, or geelstert, Viennese-German; Gansel. English; lately called the "magpiedtt) , according to the literature was obtained through a smooth headed version of a magpied crested tumbler, which was bred in Northern Hungary and Southern Poland and which was crossed again with the Barb to reach the self type. The Prague Short Face Self alone reminds us today of this breed. Both in Vienna and Budapest the short face birds were smaller in body, but still with marks pointing to the Barb.

Whether this breed came to us from the East or the West is disputed. Peschky writes in the "Pigeon" in 1914, "To name it as Viennese is a mistake, no written evidence exists whatsoever supporting the claim that Vienna is the birth place of this pigeon, nor any trace of a record concerning any crafty crossing there for producing it. Even 35 years ago breeders, then 70-80 years old, testified that in their childhood this bird was widely popular in Pest and Buda." Quoting the "Pigeon Breeding Journal" March, 1937 under the headline "Foreign Connections of Hungarian Fanciers, we can read; Miklos Petz, a confectioner from Buda traveled regularly every month to Vienna to satisfy both the breeders of Vienna and Budapest in their requirements. Most of the Viennese Short Face arrived in Hungary in exchange for the Budapest Show Stocked from Hungary to Austria. But at the time the Budapest Breeders possessed such a high quality Viennese Short Face that these were often taken back as well to Vienna."

It is interesting that although the Barb is a breed with a straight beak, the breeds originating from it lacked this quality. The downwards pointing beak became a part of the Standard of the Prague Short Face. With the Viennese they aimed for a straight beak, but in general this was not achieved, even today. In regard to this, Henrik Braunz writes ("Small Animal Journal" June, 1934); originally the beak of the Viennese Short Face was always pointing slightly downwards, only in the last 25-30 years breeders tried to breed an entirely straight one."

The most favored colors of the Viennese Short Face were in the following order; firstly; black, then yellow, finally red. Dun, lark, faded blue were not valued much and were regarded as transitions. Even the rare white self and their quality fell behind the other colors. In Buda, Alayas Weiszenau was the sole breeder of them. Ferenc Bango writes in the July 1928 issue of the "Small Animals" under the title; "The Viennese Short Beaked Pigeons" as follows; "The white self version of the Viennese were allowed to die out. From various breeds of white pigeons with short beaks we attempt now by crossing, to develop good whites again. It is better not to speak about how primitive these efforts are at present." However, today we have to thank Ferenc Bango for his relentless persistence and expert skill to have extremely high quality beautiful white Budapest again.

In Budapest, the breeding aims and requirements of the Viennese Short Face have parted ways many decades ago. Here the aim was to breed - in contrast to the original square head with its flat top to a bird with larger, sharply marked head, with larger eyes surrounded by lemon yellow ceres. For this reason, in the twenties the idea emerged to name this altered breed Budapest Short Face. About this new beauty ideal, the opinions were, however, far from unanimous. At that time, there was an intention to alter the Viennese Short Face to a form which many breeders rejected, and in retrospect, with today's eyes it can be regarded as incorrect. Without diminishing the merits of Ferenc Bango's contributions to the breeding of the Budapest Short Face, here we have to point out one of his mistakes. He wanted a bird to be accepted with such an exterior as the Budapest Short Face, which it is true - had not much to do with the Viennese one, but at the same time was disliked by the majority of the breeders in Budapest and consequently stopped and has nothing in common with the Budapest Short Face bred today.

Istvan Pachman wrote about the unlucky move by Ferenc Bango in the June 1927 issue of the "Small Pets" under the title; "The Budapest Short Beak" Approximately, 15-20 years ago our pigeons with short beaks changed entirely, the aim of the breeder took a new direction, a new breed was created. Compared to the old type birds, this specimen has a much larger and bulging eye. While the old standard requires the square head, our short beaked bird's head tend to be more rounded. The short, thick beak forms no right angle with the forehead anymore, but instead points slightly downwards." The answer to this claim came in 1927 from the Viennese Journal "Der Taubenzuchter" (The Pigeon Breeder); Josef Farneck, a famous Viennese Breeder gives the answer in the name of the Viennese Breeders and rejects the Hungarian claim of a new breed. It can only be called a "Refined Viennese Short Face." During the long standing verbal arguments, this pigeon was referred to as the "calf headed one" (early Budapest Short Face) and was not long lived, the majority of Hungarian breeders with better taste did not accept it either and so it soon disappeared completely.

The Turning Point

Apart from this very unlucky start, the Viennese Short Face bred in Budapest went through such fundamental changes, that the time came, when the different tastes could be unified in a club, consisting of the community of the breeders who understood, it is high time to agree on all the details of the new beauty ideal. This happened in **1956** and from that time the Budapest Short Face Self and White flighted became a registered breed in Hungary.

The Hungarian Short Face Breeders Club distributed the standard worldwide, which resulted in several reviews in the foreign press concerning pigeons. (Deutsche Gefugelzeitung DDR, Die Taubenwelt, Deutscher Kelintierzuchter, Geflugelborse FRG, American Pigeon Journal, Pigeon Review, USA, and Pigeon World, England, Raceduen Denmark, Duevennen, Norway, Aviculture, Holland, Vogel-Kleindier-Magazine, Belgium.) Heated arguments followed on an international level with the Viennese Breeders, but the "battle" was won by the Hungarians.

In 1957, Lerch wrote in the Taubenwelt" as follows; "We have here beyond any doubt a new breed, the described pigeon is not the Viennese Short Face anymore. Why should the Hungarians have no right to breed after decades of strenuous efforts their own breed according to their own tastes? The world became richer with a beautiful short face and many breeders would like to keep them." Since that time all the "trade" books everywhere describe the difference between the Vienna and Budapest Short Face.

However, our goals about further development of this new breed was by no means finished. By reaching the united beauty requirement (Standard) with the Budapest Show Storked and Buda Blue - two breeds which were always ONE Breed, we wanted to extend this to the Selfs (solid colors and patterns), White Flights and "Heart on the Back" (Ganzles) as well. The ideal of head, eye, beak, figure, carriage became identical, only the color of the plumage, or marking and corresponding with it the color of the beak and nail remained different. It meant that we have produced an identical breed - **Budapest Short Face Tumblers**-both light beak and dark beak varieties.

Lajos Gingl, an outstanding figure concerning our Short Beak Breeding, in the early 1960's already drew a unified picture of our Budapest Short Face, which appeared in the book "Pigeon Breeding" by Dr. Szuch and Dr. Szecsenyi in 1965 and in several foreign journals.

After twelve years of preparations and arguments, a Standard was proposed, outlined by Ferenc Bango, Karoly Jano, Alfred Mayer, and Dr. Istvan Szecsenyi and after point by point discussions during a period of one year by eighty selected members of the club, it was finally accepted in 1968. According to this conclusion, the Self, White Flight and "Magpied" Budapest Short Face are nothing else than various color, pattern, and marking varieties of the Budapest Show Storked with all its gracefulness, delicacy and noble fineness.

In the textbook for Judging Pigeons, issued by the Hungarian Pigeon Federation, we find Alfred Mayer - the outstanding pigeon expert writing that The Budapest Show Storked, the Vienna Self and the Buda Blue (which died out, but was re-bred again) were mixed to such a high degree by us that in the last decades the specimens formed such a new, unique type, that today we are able to state: here is a new breed with various color and marking varieties and there is no need to call them by different names. There are many breeds of Hungarian birds and it would be unjustified to add new ones to their numbers by giving names to slight local varieties.

The Standard, which is based on the figurative characteristics, gave us further possibilities to breed new colors as, for example, the Prague Short Face, or Stettin Short Face. Actually, we ourselves had these colors for years, only they were not in the Standard. Consequently, in December, 1981, the Budapest Short Face Club in a full meeting ratified the resolution to admit all color variations to the standard, for instance, the Blue Checker with black beak, the Black with black beak, the dilute of Blue called Silver, and the faded yellow. In April and May, 1982 the Club held meetings to supervise the resolution yet again. The new varieties were already partly introduced at the Show in Gent not a very long time ago and we hope to see new results of our breeding programs at Shows held in Hungary in the future.

This is the last letter I received from Dr. Szecsenyi before his death. We were pen pals for many years (3 decades). I started corresponding with him when I just started high school. I visited my mentor 3 times in Budapest at the annual Budapest Show in 1986, 1988, and 1992. After his death, I visited Hungary in 2004 to see his widow and the members of the short face club.

Translated by:

Dr. Bela K. Kiraly

Budapest, Hungary August 4, 2000

Dear Mike,

Istvan Szecsenyi gave me a beautiful book dedicated to you requesting its shipment, which is in progress, you shall receive it by air soon. In the meanwhile he also gave me a letter for translation to you. Here it is:

Dear Mike,

Please accept with love the book you are to receive. It contains selections of my articles I wrote during the past 50 years about the Budapest Short Face. Alas most of them were published in Hungarian, you are familiar with those which appeared in English, also, over the years.

My illness prevented me from writing you before. I wish to make up for this now. Alas I can not write anything good. You are aware of my loft situation. At least for the past two years I am unable to visit my pigeons. My wife Elly feeds the pigeons but the breeding activities have stopped. The pairing up of the individuals is thus not proper. That of course is shown by the quality of the offspring. That is the reason why I am unable to send you specimens in the quality you expect.

The two reds you sent to Dr. Istvan Meleg by Bela, especially the cock were very much to my liking. Regarding heads, eyes, and beaks, they are truly beautiful. Probably something might be desired as regarding their shape and bearing.

As you see among the pictures of the book some of them are selected out of what you sent me. Thus they will remain on the disposal of future generations. A red cock of yours could be found among the pictures. This red cock is perfect even in shape and bearing. The black cock has met the standard of perfection!

My flock suffered other disaster. I became aware too late that during the past three years someone has been systematically stealing my pigeons. He must have been a true expert since all the time my best birds disappeared. This spring a total disaster occurred. A predator penetrated the loft, killing almost all of the youngsters particularly the hens which were sitting on their nests. Since we did not find the entrance of the predator for a while, the killing lasted for three days. After that only a few breeding pairs remained. Bela helped me out by giving me a few foster hens which I badly needed.

Dear Mike! I am most pleased that the breeding birds I gave you are in the possible best hands and you continue successfully our breeding effort what I invested into that breed and you. I congratulate you and wish you continued successes. With friendly greetings,

Dr. Istvan Szecsenyi