

Portrait

Dr. Balázs Bokor



“Career diplomat, supporter of culture, a man with a ‘yes attitude to Life’” is how the Hungarian Consul General of Los Angeles, Dr Balázs Bokor described himself in short when I asked him to summarize his characteristics.

Balázs Bokor, **the career diplomat** looks back at almost thirty years of an uninterrupted diplomatic career. His professional assignments began during the communist regime in the Arab world as a low position diplomat. His special studies during his university years and his knowledge of Arabic language qualified him to serve Hungary in Arab countries for 24 years and from 1992 as an Ambassador.

MBH: How do you think it is possible that through changing political trends and governments you were able to have an uninterrupted diplomatic career? What is the secret of your resilience?

BB: *I served the Hungarian colors through 13 consecutive Hungarian governments. My career can be divided into two distinct parts: Before and after 1990. In 1990 a very marked political change occurred that was welcomed by me, also. Because I always tried to serve a country and a nation instead of political trends, that is why my expertise and work received the approval of József Antal and the first freely elected government of Hungary and I was appointed as ambassador right after the changeover. My goal was always to fulfill the requirements and expectations of the diplomatic position. I saw the career diplomat’s responsibilities in such way.*

Balázs Bokor, the **supporter of culture**, became the consul general of Los Angeles in 2007. He recognized the opportunities that the United Hungarian House of Los Angeles offered and set out to improve its cultural life. As consul general he approached the leadership of the Hungarian House with open arms and they in turn recognized the good intentions. As a result, the Consulate General supported, assisted, organized, sponsored 100-200 programs, shows and events in the last 2 years alone in cooperation with the Hungarian House.

MBH: There is a couple in our community who moved here from Los Angeles. The husband who is originally from Transylvania could never feel at home in the Los Angeles Hungarian community, but that was before you were appointed here. Now, looking on the Internet I see that the Los Angeles Hungarian House has a very rich and varied cultural program. How much can be credited to your work and influence?

BB: *I find this an interesting observation. I am aware of it that before my arrival there were complaints regarding the Hungarian House, but the fact that the Consul General and the consulate has a co-operative approach has found a positive response in the Los Angeles Hungarian Community. You need two to tango and I have found a receptive partner in Los Angeles.*

By Márta Boros Horváth ©

The territory of the Consul General, however, goes beyond Los Angeles to a total of 19 Western states.

MBH: What is your impression of the immigrant organizations livelihood and future? How and in what do you see the role of the Hungarian language here in the immigrant world, in the American environment?

BB: *The upholding of the Hungarian language is a beautiful and noble goal that I also support. However, we have to be inclusive with the second and third generations, also, who may not speak the language any longer, who live and work in American environment. The reality requires compromising. We should give a chance to those, who sympathize with us.*

Balázs Bokor, **the man with “yes to Life” attitude** is grateful that for almost thirty years as a diplomat, in a single profession, he was able to witness and live through so many changes and historical events. The Consul General, who speaks six languages, considers this as a special privilege of his life. To him a man with “yes to Life” attitude means that one should strive to live to the fullest, acquiring knowledge along the way and use it so we could tell about the purpose of this life.

Another manifestation of his “yes to Life” attitude is that in addition to his diplomatic duties he is an author of three books, the last one of which was published this year in Hungary by Media Mix Publisher. The book, titled *The Far Away Hungarian – 56 of them west of the Mississippi* includes 56 interviews that the Consul General himself conducted, most of them in person. This is a testament to his limitless interest in the world and people around him. As he states it in the Introduction to the book, his contacts with Hungarian Americans made him realize that at “various time periods, examples of the American Hungarian community life and vanishing stories emerged” and he felt that these stories needed to be recorded and rescued for the future.

Balázs Bokor is planning a trip of lectures and business meetings to Washington at the end of April. On the 30th he will visit our community, also, to discuss the new laws of Hungary regarding citizenship; to meet the Hungarian community, and to introduce his new book. We look forward to his coming with interest and wish him success with his book tour. The book will be sold at the event by the Consul General at a 25% discount.

Correction

In the March Portrait article I incorrectly stated that Paul and Babi Juhasz were the only couple in the history of our Association both serving as presidents. In reality Lucy and Tibor Fueresz also holds the same record. We are all aware of their deep commitment to Hungarian causes. I sincerely apologize for my mistake.

Márta Boros Horváth