

# Portrait

Imre J. Takáts



The 88-year-old retired research engineer and inventor met with me in his comfortable Bellevue home. I've known Imre Takáts ever since the Hungarian Association was formed some 25 years ago. Imre served as vice president and then president for two terms (1991-1993), during which time we were co-workers on the Board.

Again and again, I'm impressed with the courteous and respectful manners that Imre exhibits to everyone he comes in contact with, especially with the ladies. His true, gentlemanly manner can be attributed to the way he was brought up in Hungary.

Imre Takáts was born in January 1921 in Budapest. He received his mechanical engineering diploma in 1944 from the Budapest University of Technology and Economics. He earned his master's degree many years later from Penn State University. His university education and his God given talents produced a very successful professional career.

His first employer was the Hungarian Aeroplane Equipment Factory in Budapest. Part of this factory was moved to Germany in 1944, and so Imre relocated to Germany. This is where he met his German-Sudeten wife whose family was displaced by the Czechs. They were blessed with a daughter and a son. Imre wanted to immigrate to America, but with the assistance of International Refugee Organization in 1951 they were accepted by Australia instead. After journeying for five weeks by boat, the family arrived to Melbourne. Here Imre worked for the Ford Motor Company for 2½ years as a factory worker due to his lack of fluency in the English language. From 1944 to 1974 a long list of employers and locations followed.

His first significant achievement was at the Australian Moore Hydraulics. Imre was the designer of the first oil power steering made in Australia. His design was sold by Moore to the Chrysler Corporation. The school buses of Melbourne were also equipped with power steering designed by Imre.

His next success followed when Vickels, the large American firm's Australian partner, received 500 orders for the oil hydraulics' piston designed by Imre. Ironically, his own boss' design only received an order for two pieces. "This is how I became an oil hydraulics specialist", recalled Imre with some satisfaction.

When one of Vickels' American representative visited the Australian plant, Imre mentioned to him that he would like to immigrate to the US since his brother lived here and so they began the immigration process. In the meantime, the Takátses moved to New Castle, Australia. "Let me brag a little", said Imre as he recalled this move. He described how his design for the new oven of the Broken Hill Property Ltd. Ironworks was chosen over three other offices' submissions.

In the meantime the immigration officials in America were urging them to immigrate. Finally Imre received an ultimatum, so they parted with beautiful Australia, with the permanent position, and with the substantial income. The family once

again got on boat to journey to America - this time, to Florida and from there to New Jersey, where Imre's brother lived.

Imre soon found a position as an engineer. He worked on the hydraulics for military transport helicopters at Lockheed Airplane Co.'s Marietta plant in Georgia. From here he moved on to Bell Helicopter in Fort Worth, Texas where Imre again solved important problems. The helicopters used in the Vietnam War had an idling noise that made the pilots worry. Imre isolated the origin of the vibration, and with minor adjustment on the pistons, eliminated the problem and saved lots of money for his company.

For the next several years he worked for the Boeing Company's Vertel firm until work slowed down. Boeing then offered a position to Imre in Wichita or Seattle, and Imre accepted the Seattle offer. His long journey finally came to the end, and he anchored down by the shores of the Pacific Ocean. Unfortunately his family did not follow him here because his wife divorced him. Imre started in 1974 at Boeing's research team working on the "fly-by-wire" technical designs first in the commercial, then in the military section. During his Boeing years he had seven important inventions which were patented by the US Patent Office under his name. He has the plaques to prove it and he received special recognitions and monetary awards from Boeing. During this period he also authored a technical book.

Imre is a sharp and outstanding expert in his field of hydraulics, fly by wire and redundancy management. To his credit, he was able to explain to me in easy, simple terms how these technologies work.

Imre talked about his private life somewhat less. In his free time he enjoyed skiing (up to age 75), using his motorboat, water skiing, and dancing. He gave marriage a second try and brought a wife from Hungary, but the union did not last. Imre was always interested in the stock market, and since his retirement in 1995 he spends many hours each day at the computer, following the market, and buying and selling stocks. His daily routine does not go without stress, but he maintains that it keeps him alert and sharp.

His care is provided by a likable lady, Judith from Hungary, who is also an intelligent partner and friend to Imre. They recently celebrated Imre's 88th birthday with close friends. In honor of this occasion we, the members of the Hungarian community, also congratulate our former president and wish him a long and healthy life.

