

In the following minutes, I will present the life of Magdolna Pollák, who happened to be my great-uncle's grandmother.

But who was she? To me, as a narrator, she is an emblematic figure with an incredible historical background. True, there was never a blood relationship between us, but I have always admired the fascinating life journey she undertook despite the trials of fate.

I am grateful to my great-uncle, Gábor Váradi, and his father, György Váradi, for greatly contributing with authentic information to the completion of my work.

September 17, 1926, Budapest. This is the day Magdi néni was born, affectionately called Magdus. She had a happy childhood and excelled in school. Her parents often said that this girl must be educated.

At an early age, around 12-13, she helped out in her parents' spice shop on Stefánia Road. Not long after she turned 18, in the autumn of 1944, the deportation of the remaining Hungarian Jews began. She and her family were among thousands of others taken to the brickyard in Óbuda, from where they were sent on foot to Hegyeshalom.

She stood out from the crowd with her blonde hair, charming gaze, and beautiful character. One Hungarian captain took notice of her. He pulled her out of the line, and in exchange for her survival, she had to pay with her innocence. This trauma deeply broke her, but due to the responsibilities of starting a family, she buried this bitter memory for decades.

In 1947, she married Róbert Váradi at the Dohány Street Synagogue. Due to a sudden decision, their lives became intertwined. Two years after World War II, both of their families struggled to recover from the horrors of the past six years. At that time, the opportunity arose for them to marry with foundation financing. Thus, they embarked on 51 years of happy marriage, from which 4 children were born: 3 boys and 1 girl.

Shortly before the regime change, Magdi néni and Robi bácsi embarked on an incredible adventure. They traveled through many countries to visit their friends and relatives. From the Eiffel Tower in Paris to the Riviera in Italy, all the way to Sherman's tree in the United States, they traveled. In addition, they visited the Western Wall in Jerusalem, Buckingham Palace in London, and the pyramids in Giza.

After the war, Magdi néni initially distanced herself from her religion and roots, rejecting them. As the years passed, she began to return to Judaism and its surrounding customs. Although she did not raise her children religiously, their Jewish identity was present in their home. Klezmer music often played, each boy had his own yarmulke, kosher delicacies were frequently prepared in the kitchen, and beautiful menorahs adorned the rooms.

After the children flew the nest, Magdi néni and Robi bácsi often spent time at their vacation home in Dömsöd. Here, a family specialty was born, the pörkölt, made by Mrs. Róbertné Váradi. The story of this dish is as follows: Magdi néni once got so absorbed in a phone call while cooking pörkölt that she only noticed the burnt smell. By the time she aired out the kitchen, Robi bácsi had already come home hungry, so there was nothing to do but serve the slightly burnt portion. After they ate, Robi bácsi said it was the best pörkölt he had ever

eaten. Whether this statement was sincere or not, no one knows anymore. Magdi néni not only became famous in the neighborhood for this, but also for the incredibly beautiful flower garden she created around the house. Pink peonies, sweet-smelling begonias, and hydrangea bushes adorned the simple rural house. But it wasn't just flowers that flourished in the garden: fruit trees, magnolia trees, and shrubs thrived. When a gentle breeze passed through the flowering magnolia trees, an amazing petal shower began.

Unfortunately, a tragic event occurred in Magdi néni's life. Her beloved husband, Robi bácsi, passed away in 1998, which deeply affected the entire family. Not long after, the Dömsöd estate was put up for sale, and an era ended in the life of the Váradi-Pollák family.

After that, she lived in the same apartment where she raised her children until the end of her life. Even at the age of 90, she led an incredibly active life, often going for walks in the City Park, spending a lot of time bustling in the kitchen at Christmas, and reminiscing about the old times with her friends while often visiting the Gerbeaud House.

October 4, 2023, Budapest. On this day, at the age of 97, Magdi néni passed away, having led an admirable life journey. I believe that her story can be an inspiration to people today.