

About our Mother, Irene (Irén Zsuzsánna) Fekete

Irene Susan David was born February 17th 1924 in Budapest to parents of modest means but strong family values, in a very exclusive area of Budapest. Irene grew up through the depression with one sister, Elizabeth, who was four years older.

As a young girl Irene spent much time with religious studies and taught Sunday school for a number of years in a Presbyterian church where the minister was an exceptional world renowned theologian.

A diligent student Irene became a secretary. Irene met her first love, John (János) Fekete, in the early 40s and they married September 28, 1941 in Budapest during WWII; their love and friendship was eternal. They lost everything during the war. After the birth of Jim (Imre Lajos) in 1943, they moved as far from the ravages of war as was possible in order to raise a family in relative safety. The family grew with the birth of John (János Péter) in 1945 and Alex (Sándor Géza) in 1946.

Following the war, the family moved back to Budapest in 1953 with little more than the clothes on their backs and a young family to care for. Before having a suitable apartment allocated by the government, the family lived with Irene's parents in a tiny home consisting of a kitchen, bedroom, bathroom and pantry.

The family flourished with Mom working as an executive legal secretary for a renowned corporate lawyer and Dad working in the motion picture industry as a film technician. Moving downtown to the heart of Budapest was a wonderful experience for the entire family. Despite all the difficulties of rebuilding their lives Mom and Dad managed to not only raise their young brood but to help her parents and Dad's father, in his early 90s, lived with the family.

Mom worked and saved all year to make each Christmas special for her family. Every year during dinner she would vanish and within minutes a tree appeared in another room fully decorated including lit candles and many presents for the children and perhaps a few for Dad and fewer for Mom. We never knew Mom created the enchanted magic till we were much older. One year she was able to buy 100 grams of peanuts, which the children had never tasted, along with some meat, which was always hard to get and expensive under the post war communist years and she wept after someone stole the bag containing the precious treasures.

Family was always first and anyone else needing help came next before Irene's needs; often saving for six months just to buy herself a pair of ordinary shoes. Mom sold her wedding band for food during the war and prepared a meal distributing it among John and others in need, taking very little for herself.

After a mere three years of building a relatively comfortable family life, disaster struck once again in 1956, with the Hungarian Revolution. Realizing that the future for the children was much brighter in the new world, the family took enormous risks in escaping the ravages of communism and oppression and migrated to Canada.

Once again having nothing but the clothes on their backs and dogged determination to build a future for their young brood, Irene and John started over in Canada, where their children could make a meaningful

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future for themselves. With no knowledge of the culture, the language or the hardships; the family began anew in their new homeland. Instead of clinging to the past the children were encouraged to assimilate and immerse in their newly acquired homeland, its language and culture.

With Dad working at his trade at meager wages, Mom managed the family finances, occasionally taking menial jobs to supplement the needs of a growing family. Soon not only the bare necessities but a TV set, a camera, an enlarger and family car were acquired, while still providing financial assistance to the family in Hungary. Within 5 years of arriving in Canada a family home was purchased in 1962. The children were educated and created a life that anyone would be proud of, but no one was prouder than Mom.

Mom never complained about the sacrifices made for the welfare of her family. Irene was the matriarch of the family, strong willed, determined and dedicated to the family she was so proud of, making sure she did everything humanly possible to ensure success. The children were driven to Delhi from Toronto each weekend to attend church or perhaps to also meet some nice Hungarian girl.

A loving mother, who had the talent, perseverance and tireless dedication to see her dream of a happy, successful, "wanting for nothing family", become a reality. A wonderful cook and financial manager who loved life, her family and helped everyone she could; even risking her own life to save the lives of three enemy Russian soldiers during the revolution, because "they too had a mother".

I don't think Mom ever got the thanks she deserved but she never expected it. My dad died in July 1983 after Mom having nursed and cared for him for about ten years, following a heart attack and the onset of diabetes. Mom stayed and kept the family home for over 10 years till illness forced her from the home she loved, staying with son John for a few years before becoming wheelchair bound and institutionalized. She was happy with her accomplishment of raising a family she was so proud of.

Mom deserved much better than she got in the latter years of her life. The ravages of MS dealt a heavy blow to a woman who loved life so much and gave so much to everyone around her. Wanting little and taking even less, Mom was happiest when helping others. The joy her pets would bring her over the years was truly amazing.

Mom truly believed the biblical teaching about faith hope and charity the greatest of which is charity - she said I (Jim) should choose this for my confirmation. Mom, given a chance, could have solved the problems of the world. There would be no poverty, envy, hunger or violence; only love, peace, harmony and prosperity throughout the universe.