

Laszlo Racz

It has been a great privilege to have counted Laszlo and Helga as friends. Diana and I first met them when we travelled to San Antonio whilst I was still chairing our fellowship. We met them again in the planning and execution of the Fine Convention in Barcelona and on two visits to their home on the Algarve coast.

Laszlo was larger than life in so many ways and devoted to Rotary both in the States and later in Portugal. As my term was coming to a close he was an obvious choice as International Chairman. Born and brought up in Hungary, graduated in Germany where he worked and then for most of his working life, based in the USA his circle of friends extended far and wide. By the time we met he had retired to Portugal with Helga in a lovely area which they showed us with great relish.

It was after Barcelona that he told us that he was travelling to Hungary to meet up with friends for a radio rally and to stay for a time in the South of the country. He was keen for us to join them, which we did. The friends we met there were great and both the rally and the subsequent stay in the RV in the garden of his friend Feri's restaurant was a delight. Both Laszlo and his friends could not have been kinder. A wonderful experience!

I was able to persuade Laszlo and Helga to come over to the UK for our annual gathering in June last year when they met many of the UK members. They came back home with us afterwards and we took them around the west of England meeting friend and family.

Laszlo was very excited at the prospect of heading north again two or three weeks later for the Convention in Copenhagen. It came as a terrible blow to him and to all of his friends, when his doctor made him cancel the trip and have the operation, which was to be the beginning of a year of ever worsening health. In the autumn of last year we were in Northern Spain when he and Helga asked us to detour to Portugal to see them. By then he was already very ill but we had a lovely time with them and even accompanied them on one of his trips to the Specialist in Lisbon.

One of the last things Laszlo was able to take part in was a celebration of the Hungarian Uprising in which he was involved as a student. He and Helga went up to Madrid for a reception at the Hungarian Embassy where he received a Presidential citation and medal for his part in the history of those sad times.

It was only a few short years that we knew Laszlo but he will remain a fond memory and I know that will be the case for so very many of us.

Goodbye dear Friend

John and Diana G4HMG G4MVV