

## Simon Schwitzer's Birthday Gathering of three generations



The picture is of **Simon Schwitzer**, seated at left, Grandad's Grandad and patriarch of the Schwitzer family in Grandad's time, with the next two generations. The picture was probably taken at the celebration for his 72<sup>nd</sup> Birthday on 7<sup>th</sup> February 1923.

Simon was the third of six children growing up in a Slovak village inn, but at 16 ran away to work as a drinks waiter in a restaurant in Budapest (supposedly "Gabinus" in what is now the smart and pedestrianised Váci utca, on the site of the Hotel Mercure). After his father discovered his whereabouts, he brought him home, and Simon ended up a farmer at Madunice. At some point he became Catholic, and lived for a while in Nitra. Later, he retired to the hills in Tepličky, and was buried in his mausoleum there. Simon Schwitzer, born Kovarce 7.2.1851, died 4.3.1937 aged 86 - a good age for the times.

A not-very-good copy of this photo is on page 34 (chapter 6) of Grandad's memoirs, where Grandad states it was taken for Simon's 75<sup>th</sup>. However I don't think that date can be correct, as I set out below; I believe it is three years earlier. I have finally got round to scanning it and doing some digital restoration to eliminate visible scratches and tears; this is the result.

### Middle Generation

At the time of this photo, both of Simon's wives had already died, but all four of Simon's surviving children are present. Berta, the mother of the four Szőrenyi grandchildren present, had died four years earlier (in 1919); their father is not present either.

Simon's eldest, **Josef Schwitzer** (George Bielik's grandfather and spitting image!) stands on the right. He was the only child born of Amalia Schlesinger, who died in childbirth. Josef's wife **Stefanie Schwitzer** is seated second from right in the white dress, who was also Simon's niece, as Josef and Stefanie were first cousins.

After Amalia's death, Simon married her older cousin, Johanna Kuffler (7 years older than Amalia) whose mother was also a Schlesinger, who bore him four more children, but also died in 1919 (when Grandad was 2).

Second child of Simon and Johanna was **Štefan Schwitzer**, our grandfather, standing in the middle of the photo with bow tie. His wife, our grandmother **Alice Schwitzer**, is seated on the right in black with large floral design, looking at the photographer.

Third child of Simon and Johanna was **Leonka Schlesinger**, standing to the right of Štefan, her husband **Emil Schlesinger** is the tall man with moustache at the back the other side of Štefan. They never had any children.

Simon's youngest, **Frieda Szemző**, is standing second from right. Her husband **Béla Szemző** is in front of her, with handkerchief in jacket pocket; these are Ilona's grandparents. Béla studied chemistry in Berlin before WW1, and after seeing active service continued his studies after WW1. He lost his first wife Marianne and newborn baby (Peter) on Valentine's Day 1920 to the Spanish Flu, and married Frieda, 5 years his senior and still living at home with Simon, by then in her early thirties. At the time of this photo, Béla was already doing some sort of advocacy work for the sugar beet industry in Hungary and also internationally. In this photo, Béla and Frieda were probably very recently married. She does not look pregnant, and there is no evidence of their children (Janos their eldest, Ilona's father, was born February 1924). This is one reason why I believe this photo, if it was a birthday gathering of Simon, was probably February 1923, not February 1926.

## Grandchildren

Now for Simon's ten grandchildren in the picture.

The eldest **Bőzsi Szőrenyi** (=Elizabeth), age 18 (if my date is correct) is standing in the centre in white knitted top in front of the tall Emil. She never married, and was working in the university in Geology when I met her in Budapest in 1979. Her three younger brothers are: **Imre Szőrenyi**, 17, seated in front of Leonka, facing photographer; **Gyuri Szőrenyi** (George), 16, standing at left; and **Pista** (Steven), 15, standing second from left.

Josef and Stefanie's three children are: **Marinka Schwitzer** (17) standing 4th from left; **Bandi Schwitzer** (14) in white jacket standing 3rd from left; and, after a gap of 11 years, their youngest **Stefanie Schwitzer** (nickname Schnuki), age 3, with Simon and with large hair bow.

Finally, Štefan & Alice's three children are: **Grandad** (almost 6) seated in front, in front of his father, **Anny Schwitzer** (4) with hair bow seated on table in front of her cousin Marinka, and **Susanna Schwitzer** (our Auntie Jean), 2 years and 4 months, seated in front next to Grandad.

It is from Jean's appearance that I believe the photo must be February 1923: she looks more 2 and a half, than 5 and a half. Would you agree?

## Whom have we met?

Now to summarise which members of the family in this picture some of us have met.

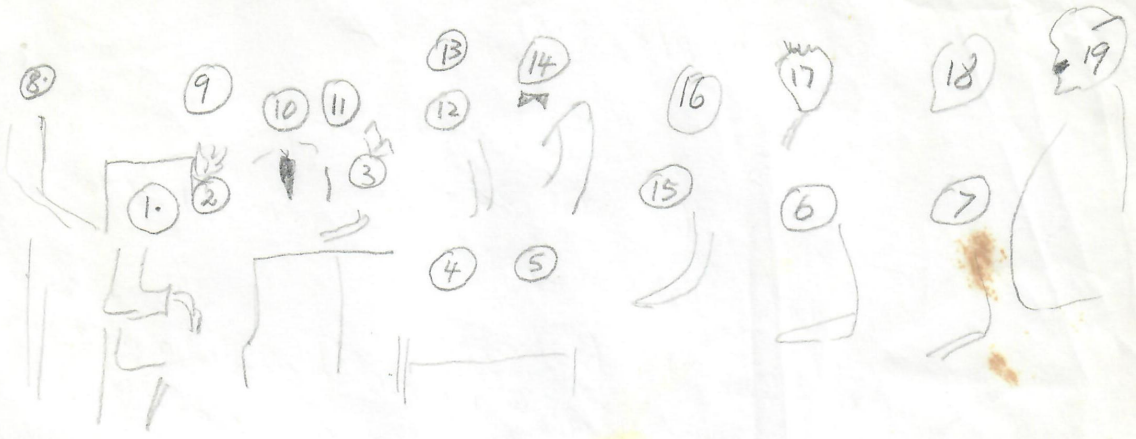
Of the middle generation, none of Simon's children survived the war, and of their spouses I think it's only Béla who survived; with whom there was much contact, and of course with his descendants (grandaughter Ilona, and sons Gabor & Csipi).

Of those of the youngest generation in this photo who survived, apart from Grandad and Auntie Jean, Bőzsi I met in Budapest as mentioned. Imre fled to the USSR and worked in Kiev but I don't think Grandad had any contact. Pista emigrated to Argentina and later had a family in Canada then turned up in Shepherds Hill in August 1977 - I have pictures of him visiting Wrights Farm. Stefanie (Schnuki) visited us in London in the mid 1960s with family, and there was much contact over the years, and with her sons Peter and George Bielik. Her much older sister Marinka survived

the war and had a family in Bratislava, but I am not aware that Grandad was in contact with them.

### Grandad's Key

Finally here is Grandad's key for the scene, to be read with the provisos above.



POSSIBLY GRANDFATHER SIMON SCHWITZER'S 75<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY (7 FEB 1926)

- 1. GRANDFATHER
- 14. MY FATHER
- 7. MY MOTHER
- 5. MRS (IF DATE CORRECT I WOULD HAVE BEEN 5 DAYS TO MY 9<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY)
- 4. JEAN
- 3. SISTER ANNI
- 19. FATHER'S STEP BROTHER JOZEF
- 6. HIS WIFE STEFANIE

THEIR CHILDREN

- 11. MARINKA
- 10. BANDY
- 2. SCHUKI
- 12. BOZSI SZÖRENYI      COUSIN
- 15. IMRE      "
- 8. GIURI      "
- 9. PISTA      " (YOUNGEST)
- 13. EMIL SCHLESNGER
- 16. LEONKA, HIS WIFE, FATHER'S SISTER
- 17. BELA SZEMZÖ
- 18. FRIEDA, MARRIED BELA, MAY HAVE BEEN ENGAGED ONY WHEN PHOTO TAKEN; FRIEDA WAS FATHER'S YOUNGES SISTER