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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **In Memoriam: Dr. August J. Molnar 1927-2016**



NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY- Professor August John Molnar passed away on August 30, 2016 at the age of 89. He was born in Cleveland, Ohio on March 24, 1927 and moved to New Jersey settling in New Brunswick in 1959. He was the founding President of the American Hungarian Foundation for 59 years. He retired in January of 2015, becoming the vice-chairman of the Board of Directors.

His father, a stonemason, immigrated to the United States in 1910 from Kissikátor, Hungary, as did his mother. Both of his parents were passionate about Hungarian culture, instilling in him the importance of family heritage. Professor Molnar graduated from Charles F. Brush High School in Lyndhurst, Ohio and went on to study at Elmhurst College in Illinois graduating in 1949. He continued his education with graduate studies at the University of Michigan, Lancaster Theological Seminary, and Columbia University, where he was a Chohnoky Research Fellow. In 1957, he spent five months in Europe working with the Columbia University Project on Hungary. Never one to stop learning he also studied at Indiana University and Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey. He was an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ (Calvin Conference). He served the Magyar Reformed Church in Staten Island for 24 years and was a member of the First Reformed Church (formerly Hungarian Reformed Church) of South River.

His professional career began at Elmhurst College (1952-1959), where he was chairman of the Department of Hungarian Studies and also assistant professor of History. From 1959 to 1965 he was a member of the faculty of Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, where he was instrumental in developing the Hungarian Studies Program. While at Rutgers he also was a project consultant in ethnic studies and a lecturer at the Rutgers School of Education.

Beginning in 1961, Professor Molnar served as project consultant and Hungarian section member of the University of Pennsylvania/Yeshiva University survey of language resources in the United States. He also directed a project supported by the Rockefeller Foundation to catalog and microfilm the Edmund Vasvary Collection on Hungarians in America.

Professor Molnar's numerous articles and publications include the Rutgers University Press book: *Hungarian Writers and Literature: Modern Novelists, Poets, and Critics*, which he edited with an introduction. In the *Dictionary of American Immigration History* and in the *Encyclopedia of New Jersey*, he wrote the entries entitled "Hungarian" and "Hungarian Reformed Church." To mark its fiftieth anniversary, he edited "The Hungarian Legacy in America" documenting the history of the American Hungarian Foundation. He also served as managing editor of the *Hungarian Studies Newsletter*.

Professor Molnar has served on several advisory boards, including the Ohio Northern University documentary film project about the Toledo, Ohio, Hungarian Community under a grant provided by the Ohio Humanities Council; the Sacred Heart University film project about the Bridgeport, Connecticut, Hungarian Community under a grant awarded by the Connecticut Humanities Council; and the Ethnic Heritage Project, Inc., a documentary film project depicting three generations of a Hungarian Family in New Brunswick, New Jersey, under a grant awarded by the New Jersey Humanities Council.

He participated in and lectured at national and international conferences: including the 2000 Convention of the American Library Association. His research and travel have taken him to Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Romania, Austria and Western Europe.

Since 1991 Professor Molnar served as a trustee of the Corvina Foundation, Inc., Princeton, NJ. He was an active member of the New Brunswick Sister Cities Association, which arranges programs with its Sister Cities in Fukui & Tsuruoka, Japan, Debrecen, Hungary and Limerick County, Ireland. He also served on the Community Advisory Board of the UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. He was a founding member of the board of The Mason W. Gross Foundation, the Hungarian Civic Association, which helped to plan the Hungarian Festival, and he was a member of numerous other professional and academic societies. In 2001, he was named chairman of the Board of Ethics, City of New Brunswick, NJ. In 2003 he was named by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences to its Hungarian Council of Sciences.

In 2004 Elmhurst College honored him with the Doctor of Humane Letters degree, and the same year he was awarded the Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Hungary by President Ferenc Madl. In 2005 the New Brunswick Sister Cities Association presented the Founders Award to Professor Molnar and the City of Debrecen, Hungary, bestowed the prestigious Csokonai Award in a special ceremonial session. In 2008 the American Hungarian Coalition in Washington DC, honored him for his service to the Hungarian community. In 2011, the board of the American Hungarian Foundation honored his work with the prestigious George Washington Award.

Predeceased by his wife of 43 years, Priscilla B. Arvay and his sister, Helen Leeders. He is survived by his son and daughter-in-law, John and Karen Molnar of South Brunswick, NJ; his daughter and son-in-law, Katherine and Fabio Sapienza, of Littleton, CO; his sister, Irene Molnar-McKee of Tulsa, OK; and his four grandchildren: Jessica, Christopher and Shannon Molnar and Alessandro Lauro, and many nephews and nieces.

Professor August J. Molnar has had an enormously successful and influential career, devoted to the study of Hungarian culture and heritage in the United States. The Foundation is respected worldwide for bringing the unique and dynamic presentation of the Hungarian cultural and historical heritage to its constituencies and for its portrayal of the contributions of Hungarians to American life since 1776.

A memorial service will take place in his honor at 11am on Saturday, October 1, 2016, at Kirkpatrick Chapel on the Old Queens Campus of Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey (81 Somerset St. New Brunswick, NJ).

Memorial contributions can be made in Professor Molnar's honor to the American Hungarian Foundation, PO Box 1084, New Brunswick, NJ 08903. For more information please contact *Managing Director* Melissa Katkó Pepin at [director@ahfoundation.org](mailto:director@ahfoundation.org).