



My View



Fisherman's Bastion, Budapest

KINDNESS IN BUDAPEST

Recently, my wife and I visited Budapest Hungary. We had many memorable experiences in this wonderful cityvisits to glorious churches; a cruise down the Danube; shopping at the Great Market; and great meals in out-of-the-way Hungarian restaurants. But my most memorable experience was none of these. What I remember most clearly and fondly is an interaction my wife and I had with a local resident of Budapest.

We met Veronika at Heathrow Airport in London as we waited to board a plane to Budapest. Veronika was returning to Budapest after a business trip in London. Two minutes into our conversation she asked us *"Do you have transportation arranged from the airport to your hotel in Budapest?"* We said *"No."*

She said, *"OK, I'll drive you."* We protested (weakly) that she shouldn't put herself out. She insisted.

When we arrived in Budapest, Veronika greeted us as we left the plane, and she escorted us to the baggage area. Then we followed her to her car, and off to our hotel we went.

During the ride to our hotel, Veronika talked to us about the food in Hungary; the differences in Hungary now that it's not under Soviet control; tips about getting around Budapest and the financial situation in Europe (she works for IBM).

When we arrived at the hotel, I thought of offering Veronika compensation for the ride, but I knew she would say no and might even be a little offended. Her whole attitude was one of kindness and generosity.

The most memorable part of this memorable experience was when before she left us Veronika pulled out a piece of paper and wrote down her work and cell numbers. She said *"if you need me for any reason while you are here, please call me."* With that, she smiled warmly, hugged us and drove off.

We didn't need Veronika while in Budapest, and we didn't see her again. We probably will never will.

Why am I telling you about our "Veronika Experience"? You've probably guessed it already. Veronika did for us exactly what TIP Volunteers do for others. She reached out to us...strangers; she met our immediate need; she was warm and kind; she didn't expect anything in return (no agenda); she made herself available if we needed her; and she quietly exited our lives back into her own everyday life. She was for us what TIP Clients say TIP Volunteers are for them...an Angel.

One of the major challenges we have as TIP leaders and volunteers is keeping alive the belief that what we do makes a big difference in the lives of our clients. More often than not we don't receive feedback from our clients, the relationship we have with our clients is brief and we often don't DO anything. All of these things tend to lead us to minimize the impact we have on those we serve.

The fact that the most memorable experience of my trip to Budapest was a brief encounter with a kind stranger has reinforced my belief that brief caring encounters with the Good Samaritans who enter our lives are very meaningful and memorable. The next time I find myself questioning the value of what we do in TIP for our clients, I will remember Veronika's impact on me.

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