

## IN MEMORIAM

### LINDA DÉGH

March 18, 1920 – August 19, 2014

Linda Dégh was born in Budapest, Hungary, where she graduated from Péter Pázmány University. She began her teaching career at the Folklore Department of Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest. As Soviet power strengthened in Hungary, she left her homeland and started work at the Folklore Institute of Indiana University, Bloomington, in 1965. When the Folklore Institute needed an Europeanist, she became an Indiana University Distinguished Professor of Folklore and Ethnomusicology in 1982.



Linda Dégh was a folklorist and ethnologist, who specialised in the identity issues of traditional rural and modern urban communities as well as individuals, both in Europe and North America. She also focused on groupings and folkloric phenomena which had not been formerly studied, such as spiritism, use of folklore in films, person's and personal folklore, and new forms of folklore.

Dégh published 18 books and about 200 essays, which have been internationally recognised as initiators of a new approach to folklore study. In 1968, she founded the journal *Indiana Folklore*, to publish her students' studies of folklore. This journal developed and tested a new method for collecting, analysing and interpreting what is now internationally known as urban or contemporary legend. In 2001, she initiated a pilot study of Hungarian-Americans, which offered students a unique possibility to observe the essence and evolution of ethnic cultural identity.

She was an honorary member of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research and the International Society of European Ethnology and Folklore, as well as Fellow of the American Folklore Society (1971) and a member of the Folklore Fellows of the Finnish Academy of Sciences, Helsinki, Finland (1993). During her long academic career (her last lectures were delivered in 2013) she received numerous awards and research grants.

The American Folklore Society commemorated Linda Dégh at its 2014 conference in Santa Fe. Also, each participant was able to leave a personal note on the memorial board or bring an item in her memory.



Photograph by Andres Kuperjanov 2014.

Estonian folklorists will always remember the ever-energetic and industrious Linda Dégh. When looking down at folklorists and the hustle and bustle of the world, you must have found interesting material for research!

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