

As often happens in real life, we run across connecting paths through common activities. I have been playing cards with a group of friends, once a month, for over 40 years. And it was until just recently one of my card-playing friends discovered I was a First Friday Friar. He asked if that group was still around. I said, "Yes, in fact, I am the president this year." He then told me his father was a founding member of the group and, as a young man, he used to attend meetings with Dad.

My friend's name is Andy Ersek.

Andy's Dad, Joseph P. Ersek, was a very interesting individual and I had heard part of his life story before. He was born in Hungary, in 1905, and was a Farming Commissioner in the Hungarian Government when the Communists invaded his country during WWII. He was told he would have to join the communist party. Joe was a devout Catholic and refused to be a communist nor let any member of his family be forced to join. Joseph, his wife and their first child went underground prior to fleeing the country and lived a life on the run knowing death awaited them if caught. Andy says Covid is nothing compared to what he experienced living with multiple families in basements and caves.

Doctor Ersek arrived virtually penniless in the United States in 1948 with his family and settled in Anaheim. He spoke no English nor did his children. He started work as a janitor and did any other odd job to feed his young family. His first priority was to learn English and he enrolled in Toast Masters International. He quickly realized the advantage of business networking and discussed the idea with a few Catholic business acquaintances. Thus was born the **First Friday Friars** in Orange County. This was in the mid-1950s. Dr. Ersek finally found his vocational calling in Real Estate.

The picture you see is Doctor Joseph P. Ersek with wife, Anne, receiving the First Friday Friar Man of the Year award in 1981. The Friar jumpsuit he is wearing was also a gift from the club. A reminder he was always fixing things.

Dr. Ersek had a fierce loyalty to his Catholic faith and his adopted country. He was an unabashed patriot and flew the American flag every chance he could. His legacy will be remembered by current and future First Friday Friar members.