

Focus Television held an interview with author Attila Nemeti

R. The following will sound like a cliché but by the end of the report you will admit that I am right. I will make a report with a man who can tell us that he had a success with the American dream. He started at zero... I mean really at zero and he succeeded in getting everything he wanted. My guest is Attila Nemeti.

A, Thank you fo

r inviting me.

R. Your name, Attila, it is a kind of unusual name. What does it mean?

A. It means " Whip of God...". Attila the Hun at the 440s was one of the most feared enemy of the Roman Empire and he was the most powerful ruler and king of the Hunic Empire.

R. You wrote a book call "Stepping Through" where you share your life story with the reader. You are a young man...most people do not write a memoir at this young age. What was your reason to write an autobiography?

A. In the book I covered 15 years of my instructive life from the emigration of the communist Hungary till year 2000 when I achieved the American dream and become multi millionaire. In the memoir I show my road through nine countries from homelessness to success.

R. Attila, do you have anything in your life at this moment what you wish to buy for money you couldn't buy ?

A. Yes. A lot of things... but I don't have any urge to chase materialistic dreams.

R. ... and 15-16 years ago?

A. I didn't have those dreams even then. I left hungry not because of economic but political reasons.

R. You can say that you are well off in your life...You live in the United States and you can do whatever you want in your life. But when you left Hungary in 1984 besides your little spending money, you didn't have anything.

A. I immigrated to Japan through Soviet Union with \$2000. I couldn't stay in Japan because at that time Japan didn't have immigration laws and I didn't have the right information. I was emigrating blind...no one had the book of "How to emigrate from a communist countries for Dummies". I had to come back to Austria, Vienna and then later I arrived to the United States without families, friends and the lack of English language. My money was long gone then.

R. It was very unusual that someone emigrates through the communist Soviet Union to Japan.

A. Yes, that's true...I didn't hear anyone to do so.

R. Was this a trick?

A. No, it wasn't a trick. I was drawn to the eastern cultures and philosophy and I picked Japan because I thought that in the future, spiritually and mentally Japan could help with my progress the most.

R. In the 1980s the economic situation of Hungary wasn't too easy, you had to use some trick to bring money out of the country.

A. Back then the Hungarian government didn't let most of their citizens to travel to the "rotten" capitalist countries. But if someone could get the visa they were unable to bring dollar out of the country legally. I cut a soap in half, scraped the middle, put my money in and wash the soap back together to one. That was my trick.

R. Did you tell your parents that you wanted to emigrate and you would not come back?

A. No. I didn't tell anyone. My uncle tried to emigrate in 1961 and he got caught at the border and he went to prison. I couldn't let anyone know about my plan. If some snitch would give me up for the secret police, I would be risking 16 years of prison and I couldn't risk that.

R. After you arrived to Vienna, Austria you had some unusual experiences there, too. You met with your "Guardian Angel".

A. Yes. I met with a strange girl named Karen on the bench at the middle of a park, who asked the time from me. She helped me with my situation. It was beyond reasoning as she helped me to find a job, a place to live, get to know people and she showed me how to survive at the time in Austria.

R. You didn't speak German at the time.

A. No, I didn't, we communicated with sign language and with dictionary.

R. Do you still keep the relationship with her?

A. She disappeared . . . She was like an Angel. When I needed her in Vienna, she helped me out but as my life started to roll on from one day to the other, she disappeared. Once I tried to contact her through phone with the same phone number I talked to her quite often . . . but the operator told me that the number I try to call does not exist...never existed. She vanished from my life, from planet Earth but I still feel her guarding and guiding me to this very day.

R. Attila, you never had a plan to immigrate to the United States. Was this just an accident you ended up there?

A. Yes. At the time when I was waiting for a political asylum in Vienna, four countries accepted immigrants from all over the world. Australia -- was little too far from everything, Canada-- was a little too cold for my taste, South Africa-- at the time, civil war was going on so by elimination I picked America which I didn't know anything about.

R. But even from Austria to get out, it wasn't easy.

A. Yes. When I went to an interview at the American Embassy on that day, from 100 applicants, only one could get the visa to the United States.

R. What do you think, why did you deserve the American visa?

A. I still don't know to this very day.

R. What happened at the interview?

A. After I filled out the application form that had questions like why did I leave my country and what are my plans in the United States, I had a conversation with an American gentleman through a translator. In that conversation, after I listed my plans, I told the nice gentleman I want to pay my taxes, too. He looked at me with a surprised but smiling face and after the interview I got my visa to United States.

R. After you arrived to Seattle they gave you \$100 to start your new life.

A. "Good luck in United States."

R. From the United Nations I don't think United States receives only \$100 fund after each immigrant they sponsor.

A. What I found out unofficially from my friend who works for the United Nation is that the private organizations receive \$25,000 from each immigrant they sponsor. . From that money I received \$100. That is a good business.

R. How long did that \$100 last?

A. I couldn't even pay my first month rent fully ...so I started with a debt.

R. For a situation like this what would give strengths for a person who is lonely and isolated in a strange country where he lacks having any family, friends or money? What did motivate you to find your future opportunities?

A. At that time I had two ideas in that situation. One, I leave everything behind and go home. I met with a lot of immigrants who had chosen this road. Two, I learn English as fast as possible and try to understand the society, the culture and try to fit into the American life. This was that point in my life when I understood if I want to be able to survive in my new country, I should kill my homesickness by not having any relationship and cut everything with my old country until I feel safe and secure.

R. You mentioned that you recognized the importance of language and I assume a good language school cost money.

A. Yes. I met with a nice Hungarian lady, who immigrated to United States at the time of the Hungarian revolution in 1956 and she introduced me to her girlfriend who was the director of the English As a Second Language department in the Washington University. It turned out in her office the English course for the next semester costs \$1100.

R. Were you able to start the English class?

A. I was so frustrated that in my desperation I set in the middle of her office and I begin a strike for my English class. I didn't want to move from the floor until everybody sees that I am dead serious to learn English.

R. How long were you sitting at the floor?

A. Four and a half hour. I could say I got lucky because the director didn't call security to see me off.

R. Nobody like extortionists.

A. She saw the situation from the positive side, I think she understood my desperation and after four and a half hour sitting in the middle of the floor the director agreed for me to study English at the next semester and in return I had to work four hours a day for the language department.

R. At the time when you tried to find your way, tried to create your new life, what was the lowest point in your life?

A. Starving ... when I was a homeless living on the street for eight months and I didn't know what would I eat tomorrow and next day and the next day... and being alone not to be able to talk to anybody about my problems or ask for any help. From this point on in my life, it was very hard to build the basic foundation, some kind of security emotionally and economically.

R. You were homeless in Seattle?

A. No, in Los Angeles. After 14 months of attempt to build my life in Seattle, gathering together my little savings, some small furniture, television , a beat up 20-year old Volkswagen bus, I drove to Los Angeles where at the first night I got burglarized and lost everything I brought from Seattle. That is how I become homeless in Los Angeles.

R. You are an educated men, graduated in a university but In the beginning of your immigration you took on a lot of different kinds of jobs up to the point when you got burglarized.

A. Yes. I worked without any discrimination. If a job gave me money to put food on the table and put my head down on a bed... I did it. I had jobs like dishwasher, night security guard, waiter, taxi driver, gardener, house painter, stable boy.

R. ...and how did you get out of a life of a homeless?

A. I found an International dealer school at Redondo Beach where I got not just educated to become a craps, black jack, roulette and poker dealer but they gave me a small capital advance, too. I finished the dealer school in six months with a plan to go to Las Vegas and become a dealer.

R. One chapter in your book talks about a detailed dream of yours and reading through it, it struck me that was a changing point in your life.

A. At the beginning of the book a young innocent guy try to find his place in the world without any security or wise information. The chapter of the dream is the point of the innocent guy's life where he grows up and becomes an adult understanding about morality and life responsibilities. This dream represents the borderline between an immature youngster and a responsible adult.

R. When you started to invest in the stock market you were already married, working full time, living happily.

A. Yes. Since the first time when I begin to understand the market's logic and philosophy, the life and the energy of the stock market grow on me daily. I could not afford to go to university not just by money but of time too, so after work almost every evening I visited a bookstore learning about the market and economy while drinking tons of coffee. .. After one year of studies when I thought I was ready I bought a computer and started to invest with \$3000 in 1992.

R. Have you achieved your goals immediately?

A. No. At the first months I profited \$6800 and I thought I know EVERYTHING! Was I wrong... In the following month I lost all of my money. I felt like I am an inexperienced beginner... even today I feel the same way. The first couple of months felt like a rollercoaster ride. The stock market is an infinite learning process.

R. What interested you, the operation of the market or how to make money?

A. Both. The stock market is a very complex mechanism driven by fear as it reflects our economical and political realities in the present and near future. Without understanding the existence of the market, its impossible to make money.

R. It is not polite to ask anyone about their wealth but because you wrote about it in the book I dare to ask, how much money have you profited in the time frame of 24 hours.

A. With ten percent luck and 90 percent philosophy, strategy and due diligent in 24 hours I profited little over \$100 thousand. This was my record but for you to see at the stock market with this achievement I am standing somewhere at the end of the line. Lots of people profits millions of dollars a day.

R. Yes, but I am sure those people didn't start at the same level as you did.

A. We don't know that.

R. The following question maybe hard but if someone read your book, they will see a certain picture about your personal life and the reader may think they have some dreams, ideas that they will try to accomplish. What would you advise these people, what do they need for achieving their goals and to succeed?

A. Everything that surround us and what we see in our daily life like TV, computer, lamp, a car, book, a watch, different cloth and jewelry ...before these things get discovered and become real, someone dreamed about them. I believe everybody should dream and they should hold on to their dreams

persistently and not get discouraged by anything or anyone. That is how you could reach your dreams and become successful.

R. If someone looks at you... you don't give the impression of a millionaire. You don't wear jewelry and clothes that show off your richness.

A. Handsome is as handsome does.

R. But this is important for a lots of people.

A. The real power is coming from inside. But of course when I go to a business meeting I put on my best tie and suit. I am still the same person as I was before I got rich and most of the time I feel comfortable in jeans and t-shirt.

R. ... and this will stay the same?

A. It does. Forever.

R. Attila...Thank you for visiting us and show your life by sharing your thoughts and philosophy.

A. Thank you for inviting me.