

"She found America!" – Hungarian proverb

Hungarians have a saying for someone who became successful one way or another: "He found America!"

This happened to me:

One drizzly morning as I was driving to work I saw a woman walking along the road. I pulled over to give her a lift and when she realized I was offering her a ride, got in.

In a broken – but quite understandable – English she explained that she had gotten off the bus at the wrong stop and was now lost and needed to find a house (at an address quite near where I picked her up). She explained that she was going for an interview for a house cleaning job – which she already was doing at other homes.

As I drove, I mentioned that I, too, had been a maid, when I came to this country. She looked me over appreciatively, then at the car, smiled and continued: she takes her two kids to school, then takes the bus to work, and if I would like to have a house cleaner, she would surely do a good job for me. Her priest would send a recommendation. Would I like her telephone number?

I barely had a chance to say "yes" when she reached for the pen and note pad I keep at hand in the car and wrote down her name and number, just as we arrived at her "interview" site.

As she got out she thanked me several times, and, still slightly amazed, said, "My name is Maria Guadalupe and this is my cell phone number."

I could hardly suppress praising her out loud: good for you, Maria Guadalupe! This country became great because plucky people like you came here and took a chance to "make it". You will have your own car, your children will get educated and you will work hard. But you will have your chance, like the rest of us who also came as foreigners, to this country. Hurrah for America!!!

Maria made my day on Wednesday, February 20, 2001.

Katalin Voros