

President Komentář/President's Note

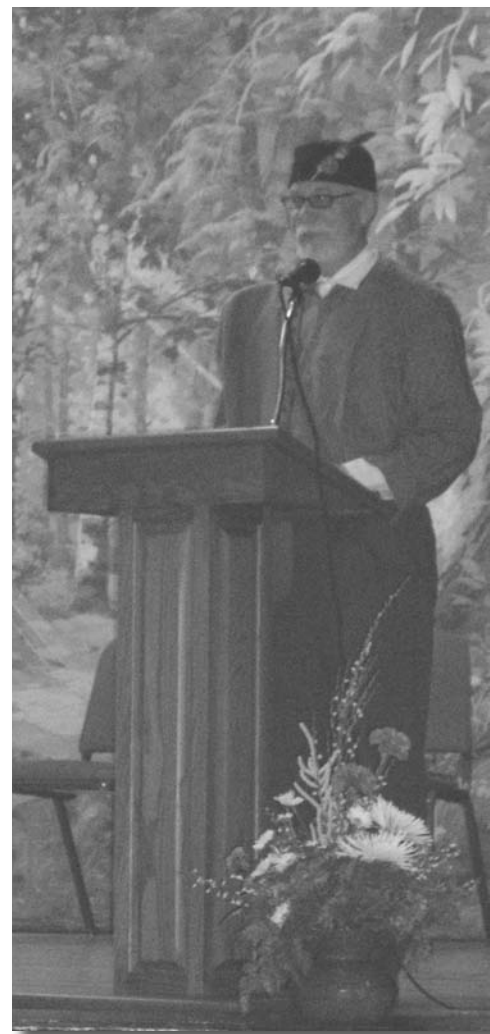
By Joe Landsberger

Pozdrav bratři a sestry/Greetings brothers and sisters!

What an incredible 125th anniversary of Sokol celebration we had! What marvelous people who made it so! It reads like the Sokol directory, so let us attach each name once to a function but remember and appreciate that many did double and triple duty!

- Our archiving and sorting committee of Joan Sedlacek, Louise Wessinger, and Jeanette Pafko—For weeks they reviewed and sorted the archives, and emptied and organized the third level offices (a benefit for years to come). Displays of our past hadn't been seen in years, and a conservation effort is now underway!
- The “facilities crew” of Dan Washick, Charlie Brown and son on welding, and Ken Wyberg and Lloyd Krochak on plumbing, and Scott Hinshaw on electrical matters—A couple long-vexing problems being resolved
- Our marvelous cooks and elegant servers of Phyllis Vosejпка, Marlene Hinshaw, Hana Matousek, and the teen Tanecni Mladez dance group—We could tell our guests were happy because there were few treats and no beer left at the end!
- Our publicity and publications crew of Marit Kucera, Jay Fonkert, Teresa Pojar, Jim Robasse, and Sharon Wyberg—We had more than 200 in attendance, many people new to Sokol or re-discovering our programs and facilities. Special mention goes to our proactive neighborhood educational campaign, as well as to WCCO, MPR, Radio Prague, the Community Reporter (newspaper of the West End), and the Highland Villager for their features on our 125th anniversary.
- Our set-up and cleaning crew of Paula Vukonich, Ann Penaz and Andrew Hine – One neighbor said he couldn't believe how well the stair carpeting was cleaned; other guests remarked how the woodwork glowed and how impressive our meeting room looked.

continued on page 2.



Narrator Joe Landsberger provided an historic perspective.

Upcoming Events

May 1-3
Festival of Nations

May 17,
Literary Ventures

June 12 & 13
Culture Camp

June 16-18
Culture Camp

Sokol Minnesota Receives Award

The St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission and the St. Paul Chapter of the American Institute of Architects has awarded Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota its 2008 Organizational Award for Community Education for enhancing and celebrating St. Paul's cultural resources. This 18th annual award will be presented to Sokol's Board of Directors at St. Paul's City Hall on May 13. The Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) was created by City ordinance in 1976 to protect and promote the heritage of the City of Saint Paul and became a Certified Local Government (CLG) in 1985. The thirteen-member citizen board is charged with protecting the City's historic resources. The Commission consists of thirteen members who are residents of Saint Paul appointed by the Mayor with the advice and consent of the City Council. One of the members is a representative of the Ramsey County Historical Society, and at least three of the members are registered architects.

Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota 2008 Board of Directors

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continued from cover

- Our many neighborhood businesses who offered donations or discounts, including Vine Park Brewing, Liquor Barrel, Jandrich Floral, Nedved's Flowers, Grand Hill Gallery, and others who supported us with program ads – Their support confirmed our pride in our role in the neighborhood.
- Our announcer, Denis Novak; stage and display manager, Chuck Draheim; ticket-takers Jean Werner and Steve Shimer, and membership table coordinator, Nancy Imbrone – The program went off without a hitch! And the audience responded with laughter, shouted "bravos," and rose with standing ovations.
- Our pianist Frank Trnka, who played for our first reception, and our Sokol Senior Singers and their pianist Georgiana Dolejsi, who serenaded us at the concluding reception – What joy and ambience they added to the occasion.
- Our performers: The Lex-Ham Low Brass Ensemble, Lex-Ham Community Theater, Senator Sandy Pappas, Patrick Dewane, Don Haselbauer, Karin Wolverton via the Minnesota Opera, and Elisabeth Beiber who, sang folk songs with the audience joining in – it was truly a star-studded affair!
- All those who wore their Kroje, including, among others, our greeters James and Mary Jo Chlebecek - what color they added to a festive occasion. Also to Miroslav and Shirley Verner for contributing Franitsek Verner's uniform to me as emcee!
- Our bar service helpers, Ed Hamernik and neighbors Anne Gilmore and Charles Marabella – Like we said, there was no beer left.
- Our Finance Committee, including its chair, Joyce Tesarek, and our treasurer, Tom Aubrecht, for keeping on top of the ins (deposits!) and outs (payments) for the event.
- Our clean-up crew of Jeff Martinka, Jan Knudtson, Norm Petrik – where would we be without a clean-up crew?
- Our many guests, including Czech artist visitors, Jan Vičar and Kristýna Pojerová – we were especially pleased to share pride in our heritage with them.

We are blessed, not only by these, but also the many others who selflessly "work" with joy and continue making history and camaraderie. Let us also not forget those who contribute throughout the year. This event reflects the many organizers and workers that make for a vibrant community, and reflects a marvelous 125 years of Sokol programming.

Nazdar, Joe Landsberger



Louise Wessinger wore her formal kroj and bore the American flag to initiate the festivities.



Phyllis Vosejka organized the food service with Marlene Hinshaw (not pictured) and served most elegantly.



A full house at the C.S.P.S. Hall for the Sokol 125 Celebration

Sokol
125



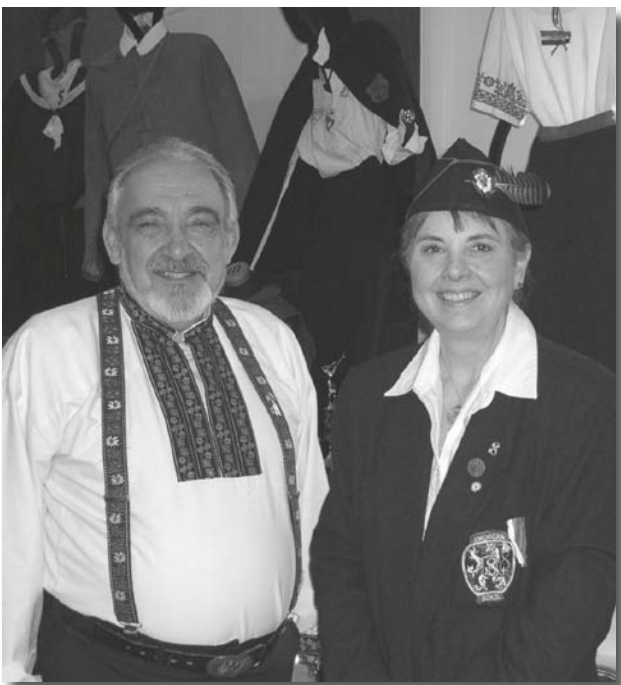
Ken Wyberg and others view the historic displays



Don Andrlle was in the audience.



The crowd featured many old friends, as well as new ones. Sokol members Ken McCormick and Bob Vanyo (in kroj) discuss the festivities.



Announcer Denis Novak and Archivist Joan Sedlacek proudly stood before the display of 125 years of Sokol memorabilia



Pianist Georgiana Dolejsi and the Sokol Senior Singers serenaded while the crowd of 200 enjoyed samplings from our Sokol cooks at the conclusion of the festivities.



Sokol's youth gymnasts held their year-end celebration and exhibition for appreciative family and friends April 15. It was a chance to gain some confidence before a live audience in preparation for Western District competition in Omaha April 19.

Festival of Nations Volunteers Needed

Please join us to welcome visitors to our café and culture exhibit. Call Mary Cahill at 651-738-9470 or Joyce Tesarek at 612-822-6147 or Jean Hall at 763-753-4104. Festival of Nations runs Thursday through Sunday, May 1-4. School children join us on Thursday and Friday. If you don't have Kroj (a Czech or Slovak costume) we will outfit you! If you have pictures of Czech and Slovak architecture for the Culture Exhibit, call Jill Bastyr at 651-457-8999.



Festival of Nations Dance Schedule, May 2-3-4

Lipa Slovak Dancers

Main Stage: Friday, 6 p.m.;
Saturday, 2:15 p.m.
Café: Friday, 6:15 p.m.;
Saturday, 6:15 p.m.

Taneční Mladez Dancers/Teens

Main Stage: Saturday, 11 a.m.
and 11:30 a.m.; Teens, 1:30 p.m.

St. Paul Czech and Slovak Dancers

Main Stage: Saturday, 4 p.m. and 6 p.m.;
Sunday, 12 noon.
Café: Saturday, 7:15 p.m.

Membership Report

By Norm Petrik, Membership Director

At the February 22 Sokol Membership meeting one new member was accepted: Matthew Carlson from St. Paul expressed interest in language, and is taking a beginning Czech class. He hopes to use this knowledge for travel to the Czech Republic. He is a student at the University of Minnesota. Welcome Matthew, and we hope to see you at Sokol meetings and other events!

Sokol offers Introductory Slovak & Czech Classes

Sokol will offer four introductory classes each in Slovak and Czech classes in August in the air-conditioned first floor of the CSPS Hall. These classes will focus on pronunciation and basic phrases, and will not use text books. Slovak classes will be on Thursdays from 7-8:30 p.m. The day for the Czech class is yet to be decided. The class fee will be \$35 for Sokol members and \$40 for non-members.

Call Louise Wessinger at 651-452-6240 for further information or to express interest in the classes.

Around Sokol

By Marlene Hinshaw



Ahoj! Last month, I greeted you by saying “it’s spring!” I was wrong!

Snowbirds Al and Libby Imbrone found that out Friday evening, April 11. They arrived at the Twin Cities airport during our latest blizzard. Al said it was 85 degrees when they left Florida. Oh, stop! Welcome back you two tanned and fit people.

Sokol’s 125-year celebration April 6 was simply wonderful. We had a capacity crowd. President Joe Landsberger was the perfect emcee. The entire program was excellent. Opera singer Karin Wolverson’s voice was thrilling to behold, as she sang from Dvorak’s *Rusalka*. Without amplification it enveloped you with its quality and strength. It gave me goose bumps!

How nice to hear our own Don Haselbauer playing accordion at the celebration. He and wife Catie will be dancing with the St. Paul Czech & Slovak Dancers at the Festival of Nations May 1-4.

For me, being involved in the preparations for Sokol’s 125th was a walk down memory lane. I grew up in the Czech neighborhood of St. Paul. I didn’t think much about it until I started looking at the old photos at the hall. Although I didn’t know most of the people in the photos, the names were very familiar. I’ve heard those names all my life.

My mother Marie (age one) and her brother Jaroslav came to St. Paul with their parents, Marie and Joseph Skarda, from Mlaka, Czechoslovakia. They settled in the West Seventh, area near Alaska and Otto Avenues. Grandpa Skarda eventually built a big house there for his expanding family.

I remember the grape arbor at my grandparents’ home. It was about a 12 x 12 ft. square, crisscrossed with wire on which grape vines grew. In summer, it became a lovely translucent green room. On weekends, my grandparents and their friends would gather there to visit and drink grandma’s homemade beer. Grandpa would bring out his button accordion and they would sing Czech songs.

I have many memories of shopping with my mom on West Seventh Street. Mom would speak Czech with the shop owners and other customers. Getting my school shoes at Mosner’s was a big event. Mr. Mosner, so dignified, also repaired shoes. His shop was interesting. It smelled of leather and glue. A big leather belt would be running. It made a strange noise when he pressed shoes against it. Repaired shoes were returned polished, and just like new.

Mom used to send me for meat to Lunak’s Butcher Shop (West 7th near Victoria). I didn’t like this chore. I was little and the meat counter was high. I could only look through the heavy plate glass of the counter and hope Mr. Lunak would see me. He often waited on others who chatted with him over the counter top. It seemed

like hours before anyone noticed me. Mr. Lunak was a short, small, and thin. He wore round glasses that were very dirty. Perhaps that’s why he didn’t see me. He wore a snap brimmed hat and a leather apron. He would go into the cooler and bring out a quarter or half a cow or pig over his shoulder (bigger than he was) and threw it onto the butcher block. He would then set to work with knives and saw. He worked very hard.

Once, I remember being there when a big golden dog came in with a note attached to its collar. The clerks read the note, wrapped up some meat and, to our amazement, put the meat in the dog’s mouth, opened the door and off went the dog home. The clerks informed the curious customers (including me) that the dog was a regular customer and always brought the meat home intact. I thought that was really cute, except the dog got waited on before me!

April 11 and 12 was our annual garage sale. The nasty weather helped keep folks indoors & may have helped sales (figures not in yet).

Saturday, I found Jill Bastyr on the first floor of the hall, working on the culture booth for the Festival of Nations. The theme this year is Arts and Architecture. Surrounded by lumber and large pieces of foam, she and Doreen McKenney were excitedly figuring out how to build towers common in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. This is no easy task because of constraints as to size, height, weight, etc. and the whole thing has to be portable. I’m excited to see what these creative ladies come up with.

Libby Imbrone and I volunteered again this year to work the first day of the festival. That’s when kids are bussed in from all over the state. It’s an interesting mix of kids. Some are only interested in the opposite sex, some are completing assignments given by teachers, and some are genuine scholars. We try to engage and challenge them all. Some of the kids are sweet and downright precious. We find it rewarding.

It is with sadness that I report the death of long time member, Vlasta Hanover. Val died peacefully, Saturday, April 12. I believe she was 97. Vlasta was a dear person who enriched the lives of those who knew her. I loved her positive spirit. She loved music (Czech & Slovak Sokol MN Singers) and dancing. She was an avid reader. I’ll miss our conversations.

Dennis Cahill’s father Edmond Cahill passed away between Slovo editions. We extend our belated sympathy to Dennis, Mary and daughters. Edmond was a barber. He owned the West End Barber Shop on West 7th Street.

Joyce Sladek’s condition has worsened. She’s no longer able to be at home. She would still enjoy hearing from you. Please send mail to c/o Martin Luther Manor, 1401 E. 100th St. Bloomington, MN 55420.

Editor's Note: Paula Pojar Vukonich's account of her family's 2007 heritage trip to the Czech Republic is rich in detail and vivid descriptions of life outside Prague. Her story will appear in installments over the next three issues of Slovo.

Backroads of Bohemia

Story and photos by Paula Pojar Vukonich

In 1920, when my great grandfather Václav Plojhar was in his seventies, he was asked to write a brief autobiography for a book by Josef A. Dvorak titled "History of the Czechs in the State of South Dakota."

Václav's story began by describing his family's journey to America. In 1854 they left their home in the village of Dobřejovice, Bohemia, and traveled on the Vltava River to Prague. There, Václav wrote, "We said goodbye forever to our beautiful country." As an old man, nearly seventy years later, he still remembered that sad farewell. For them it was forever – neither he, nor any of the next two generations, ever returned.

In October 2007, three of Václav Plojhar's descendants – my sister, brother and I – returned to his birthplace more than 150 years after his departure. This is the story of Václav's "beautiful country" as we found it on the back roads of Bohemia.

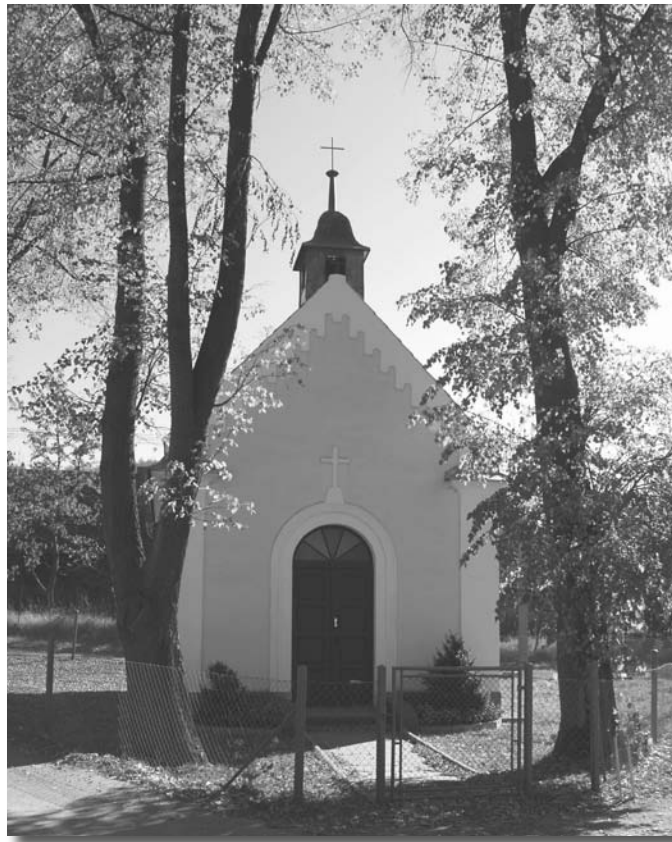
The trip was part of a ten day heritage tour to the Czech Republic to explore the land of our beginnings. Over a period of several years we had researched our family histories, and planned to visit the birthplace of every relative we could trace. A Prague-based personal ancestral tours and history firm (P.A.T.H Finders Intl. – www.pathfinders.cz/) assisted us with the final research, provided a guide/interpreter/driver, planned the route, made reservations for lodging and called ahead to arrange for special visits and reunions.

We traveled to twelve ancestral villages and found that most of the family homes were still standing, intact and lived in, with the same house number, and in one case, members of the same family, after hundreds of years.

While our plane descended over the Czech Republic, I took advantage of the clear morning to study the geography of the land. I noticed several cinder cone shaped hills, a sign of past volcanic activity. One large hill had a structure on top. I found out later it was Mt. Říp, where according to legend, the first Czechs settled. The structure on Mt. Říp is the rotunda of Saint George built in 1126. We passed over a big city with large industrial complexes. It was Plzen which has a large brewery and a larger Skoda factory. Plzen is on the Berounka River, as is the town of Beroun. I observed some mining operations around the Beroun area, and was told later they were silver and tin mines.

Tom, our guide and interpreter, picked us up at the Prague airport and we set out immediately, driving past Beroun and Plzen, making our first

stop at Klatovy, the largest town near our paternal grandfather's birthplace. Surrounded by the Šumava Mountains of the Bohemian Forest, Klatovy was founded in 1260 on an important trade route. The medieval city was fortified with moats and a wall for protection. Portions of this ancient wall still stand in parts of the city. A large school had murals painted on the exterior walls depicting the history of Klatovy. Class was in session as we studied the murals, amusing the children with our tourist antics. There was a small park next to the school with a very old round two-story stone tower in the middle of it, and across the street was "At the White Unicorn" Pharmacy, protected as an historic site because of its



Chapel in Sobětice

original Baroque equipment.

A short distance south of Klatovy, we came to our grandfather's birthplace, a very small village called Sobětice. He was born in house no. 25 which has been nicely restored. Many other houses in the area are being renovated and used as chalupas, weekend or summer cottages for the city residents.

The village has a tiny chapel, freshly painted a pale yellow. Most villages have these miniature chapels (only 9x12 ft. or 8x10 ft. in size) that are used for daily prayers, personal devotions or novenas, etc.

Church services are not held in them. One larger church will serve several small villages. The church for this area was in Chlistov, where my grandfather was baptized in 1888. Several old tombstones were set into the stucco walls of the church. Our guide told us there had been a cemetery in the churchyard that fell into disrepair, and most of the tombstones were deteriorated. The remaining stones were put in place in the church walls, and a new cemetery was established nearby.

In Srstice we found the gamekeeper's cottage on the outskirts of the village, the home of our great grandfather. The gamekeeper was like a game warden who worked for the wealthy landowner. He was not a popular person because punishments for poaching were severe. Also in Srstice, we saw a maypole in a field and a stork's nest on top of a smokestack.

This village showed some of the neglect and deterioration brought about by long years under Communism. Buildings are rarely torn down; they are carefully repaired and restored. The cottages are built of stone or brick and then stucco is applied over the entire exterior-usually white or tan, but some houses were colorful in muted or pastel shades of blue, yellow, rust and even lavender. Years ago, roofs on these cottages used to be thatched, but now red tile adds a cheerful warmth to the countryside. Most of the structures are very old, often several centuries. They have sheltered many generations; strong and enduring, much like the people.

The next stop was Úloh. Our records showed a Pojar ancestor lived in house no. 11 in 1692. When we found house no. 11, the name plate in front said Pojarova. Our guide asked the neighbor lady about the owners of the house, and she said it was a week-end home. She became very excited upon learning we were Americans and began to lead us through village knocking on all the doors (only fifteen families lived in this tiny village). We thought she was looking for more information, but apparently she was alerting the residents of our arrival. These small towns have many dogs, mostly large guard dogs in fenced yards. This makes for a very noisy stroll through a deceptively sleepy hamlet.

Úloh is in the Šumava Mountains that border the southwestern edge of the country. It is a peaceful, scenic area with rolling mountains thickly covered with pine forests flowing into gentle green valleys. The forests are carefully maintained with routine thinning and removal of dead wood. Several times we saw cars parked along the edge of the woods. Our guide told us they were mushroom pickers, and jokingly added that Czechs are born knowing how to gather mushrooms. Mushrooming is hugely popular in the Czech Republic. It is a favorite family outing, and apparently it is unlawful to deny mushroomers access to the woods for picking (on public lands, I presume).



House no 11 in Úloh



Nameplate with Pojar name

to be continued



Congratulations!

Sokol Minnesota's own Emilie McMillan won the talent competition at the Miss Czech-Slovak Minnesota pageant in April in Montgomery, Minnesota. She performed two Bohemian dances with boundless pep and energy. Although Emilie is only 15, she has a lot of stage presence because of her involvement in her Mom's Ponypals and Grammie Goose's Animal Tales business. Her folk-dress is a beautiful Moravian kroj that her Mother discovered at, of all places, a yard sale!

Emilie is a long-time member of the Taneční Mladez dancers and the Taneční Teens. She has also has been a camper at Sokol Minnesota's Culture Camp for many years. She is often accompanied to Sokol activities by her "Grandma Jo," who traces her Moravian background through the Sodomka family.

Travel Commentary: Changing times?

By Mark Bigaouette

Slovakia and the Czech Republic have come a long way since the Velvet Revolution in November of 1989.

Today Slovakia makes more cars per-person than any country in the world. They have built many miles of new superhighways, new schools, housing, and public building. They have gone to a flat tax, and made many changes to their medical and educational systems.

The Czech Republic has also changed a great deal. I just read about a study done about the 15 most affluent cities in the European Union. London is number one. Only one former communist city in all of Europe made the list. I was shocked to see it was Prague.

Vienna was ahead of Prague, but Berlin did not made the list. Some of this is due to the astounding drop in value of our US dollar. In the early 1990's you could get 38 Czech crowns to one US dollar – today it's barely 15 Czech crowns to one US dollar. I was a bit awed this morning when looking for some hotel rooms in Prague for May. For average mid-range hotels, the price has climbed to \$200 per night. (excluding breakfast).

Many sales people and clerks in Prague are no longer natives. To me, this is quite an incentive to spend as much time as possible outside expensive Prague and visit the wonderful Czech and Slovak countryside!

I expect we will be seeing many more native Czech's and Slovaks coming here to visit America, where prices are cheap, and the natives are friendly and nice.

What would you put in a Museum of Communism?

By Jay Fonkert

Imagine my surprise when I turned a corner in Prague and saw a poster advertising a Museum of Communism. What would you put in a museum of Communism, anyway?

Alas, it was the last day of our 2006 trip to the Czech Republic, so I didn't get a chance to find out for myself. As I went through my trip photos recently, I was again reminded of this odd museum, and decided to find out more about it.

The museum is located at Na Prikope 10, smack at the foot of Vaclavske Namesti. You can visit the Museum's web site at www.muzeumkomunismu.cz According to the web site, the museum focuses on the Communist regime from 1948 through its collapse in 1989. The museum's theme is: "Communism – the Dream, the Reality, and the Nightmare." Exhibits include an interrogation room and a school room, as well as exhibits dealing with factories, sports, the arts, the army, the media and other aspects of daily life under Communism.

In apparent attempt to maintain a degree of neutrality, the Museum's web site says the museum is "in no way intended by the organizers to be a filter for contemporary political issues in the Czech Republic."

Wouldn't you know? The museum is located next to an archetypical emblem of capitalism – a McDonald's Restaurant – and next to a casino! And, the founder of the museum is an American entrepreneur known in Prague as "The Bagel King." In a 2001 interview, Radio Prague credits Glenn Spicker with introducing bagels to Prague. At that time, he operated "Bohemia Bagels" at two locations in the city.

Why open a Musuem of Communism? Says Spicker, for the same reason he opened his bagel shops: no one else had done it. Spicker and his Czech accomplice, film-maker Jan Kaplan, scoured bookshops and antique shops across the city for artifacts.

He expected flak for opening the museum, because as an American, he had not lived through Communism. He told Radio Prague, "The reaction has been fantastic. Most people really accept it, really think it's a good idea."

The street poster advertising the museum sports a sort of cartoonish bear holding a rifle. It makes the point! I wish I had seen it sooner and been able to check out this unusual museum.

And I am now wondering, is there a Museum of Democracy anywhere? Hopefully not, because we usually only put old, out-of-date things in museums.

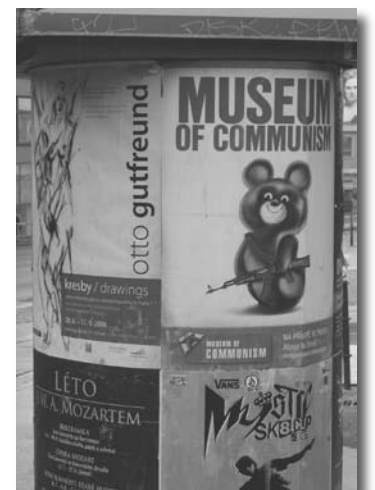


photo by Jay Fonkert

Sokol Minnesota Thanks Generous Donors

By Jean Hall, Corresponding Secretary

Sokol extends appreciative thanks to those who recently made donations.

General Fund

Gerald Mjaskek \$100.00
Romelle Vanek
Patricia Wolessky
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Miro & Shirley Verner (Sibrinky)

In Memory of Edmond Cahill

Dennis & Mary Cahill
Marlene & Kent Hinshaw
Georgiana Dolejsi (general fund)
Tom & Judy Aubrecht
(gym program)
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Barb & Jay Fonkert
(gym program)
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(gym program)

In Honor of Sokol Minnesota's 125th Anniversary

Irene Louise Seashore

In Honor of Frank Loss's 90th Birthday

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In Honor of Georgiana Dolejsi's 90th Birthday

Beverly Clancy (\$100)
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Thank You!

Phyllis Vosejпка
Al & Libby Imbrone
Ivan & Mary Krizan
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Louise & Charles Wessinger
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Donations help Sokol Minnesota preserve the historic C.S.P.S. Hall and support programs serving members and the community. Please send donations directly to the Sokol Treasurer: Tom Aubrecht, 2106 Berkeley, St. Paul, MN 55105. The treasurer will notify the Correspondence Secretary, who will acknowledge your donation. Thank you.

Song of the Month

Submitted by Georgiana Dolejsi



Pampelišky (Dandelions)

(Pionýrák)

Moderato

1. Ho-ra skry - vá slun-ce pod klo-bouk, z obla- ků do
pam-pe- li-šek fouk. Jak zla-té, kví- tí jas- né hvěz-dy
jsou, snad až k to - bě mo-je dra-há do-lét - nou.

. Z oblaků až k tobě doletí,
podle nich budeš mít tři děti.
Ty budou krásné tak, jako jsi ty,
dobrou noc, má drahá, tak už spi.

4. Tichá píseň nese se nocí,
ostřejch hochů toulavejch srdcí.
Umlkla banja, ztichly kytary,
sbohem buď, mé krásné děvče z Montany.

3. Kouzelná je feka na horách,
po ní plul jsem, jako v mátohách.
Tys byla krásná, první láska má,
mně se zdá, že se na mě z nebe usmíváš.

5. Tam v kolíbce malý hošík spí,
přemýšlím, o čem tak asi sní.
Zdědil mou hůl a tomu toulavou,
půjde tam, kde pampelišky zlaté jsou.



Through summer the Tuesday morning Sokol Clean-Up Crew will meet Tuesday mornings at 10 a.m. to continue work on archiving and documenting Sokol history, as well as develop the third level office space. This project is a continuation of preparations for the 125th Sokol anniversary. Call Joe Landsberger, 651 297 9000 or email jfl@studys.net for more details.

News from the Czech & Slovak Republics

Compiled from *The Prague Post*, Radio Prague, and Slovak Radio International by Jay Fonkert.

Czechs protest Chinese stance on Tibet

(Prague Post, 9 April 2008)

The controversy surrounding the 2008 Summer Olympics has not left the Czech Republic untouched. Just as demonstrators in London, Paris and San Francisco protested China's Tibet policy as the Olympic Torch was relayed through their cities, Czechs have also expressed their disagreements with the Chinese.

In April, Green Party activists draped the Tibetan flag from windows of the Czech Parliament and the Ministry of Education and Environment. The Chinese expressed their displeasure by canceling a China trip of the Czech Deputy Minister of Education and heads of three Czech universities. The cancellation delayed signing of a bilateral student exchange program.

The Chinese Embassy said such a display on government buildings was unprecedented in the European Union, objecting that it implied Czech support for Tibetan independence. Czech Minister of Education, Ondřej Liška (Green Party), expressed confidence the education agreement would eventually be signed.

A public opinion poll in early April found that 80 percent of Czechs oppose a boycott of the Beijing Olympic Games. While many politicians, including Liška, have said that Czech Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek should not attend the Games, the sociologist who conducted the poll said that people prefer to keep sports and politics separate. The Prime Minister said he would leave the decision up to his Cabinet.

Czech Woman conquers North Pole

(Radio Prague, 10 April 2008)

In early April, 34 year-old Miluše Netolická became the first Czech woman to reach the North Pole. A blizzard

and freezing temperatures of minus 40 delayed her team's return journey. A helicopter was expected to pick them up and take them to the Russian Polar station Barneo. The first Czech man to conquer the North Pole was Miroslav Jakeš, who reached it in 1993. He is making plans for a sixth trip to the Pole.

Charles Bridge is 650 years old

Sokol Minnesota is 125 years old. Minnesota is 150. Prague's famed Charles Bridge beats both by a several centuries. The Bridge is in its 650th year. Radio Prague reports that the Charles Bridge is only the second oldest bridge in the Czech Republic, but it is the oldest bridge over the Vltava River.

Actually, the Bridge will be 651 in July. Charles IV helped lay the foundation stone in the early morning of July 9, 1357. The "new" structure replaced the Judith Bridge which had been destroyed by raging floods in 1342.

The bridge has joined Prague's Old Town and Mala Strana (Lesser Quarter) since its completion in 1402. The bridge was originally known as the Stone, or Prague Bridge, becoming known as the Charles Bridge around 1870. The name change is attributed to poet Karel Havlicek Borovsky. Charles Bridge is 515 meters long and is supported by 16 arches.

Move over Japan: Slovakia is leading auto manufacturer

Slovak Radio International, 10 April 2008

Slovakia is shedding its agrarian image. The nation's auto factories produced more than 570,000 vehicles in 2007, making Slovakia the world's leading per capita producer of cars, at 106 cars per thousand residents. The country's three plants set an annual production record. Kia, Peugeot and Volkswagen all produce cars in Slovakia.

Czech & Slovak Culture Camp Set for June

The 12th Annual Czech and Slovak Cultural Day Camp will be held at Sokol Minnesota's historic C.S.P.S. Hall June 12 & 13, and June 16-18. The camp is for children ages 7 to 14.

Camp activities include gymnastics, folk art, ethnic sewing, Czech language, crafts, cooking, games and folk tales. Camp runs from 8:50 a.m. to 3 p.m. daily. For an additional fee, arrangements can be made for later pick-ups.

The volunteer adult staff will be assisted by Junior Leaders. Sokol Minnesota has a tradition of supporting educational, cultural, social, and athletic activities. Because schools are ending at different times and other Sokol obligations we have divided the camp over two weeks.

For further information about camp or to receive a brochure call Louise Wessinger at 651-452-6240 or visit www.sokolmn.org





Dr. Josef Mestenhauser

Sokol: Not just a neighborhood club

By Honorary Czech Consul,
Dr. Josef Mestenhauser

In this country, we tend to value things that are close to our homes and hearts, so it is no wonder that Czech and Slovak

Sokol Minnesota is proud of

its neighborliness and local tradition. An interesting thing happened to me last Friday, as I sat in my office glued to the computer, that made me realize how far-reaching Sokol is, way beyond this neighborhood.

As I worked, somebody peeked at me from the door, appearing reluctant to show more of his face. I invited him – and later his wife – to come in and asked what I can do for him. He wanted to meet “Sokol”, but there was nobody around but me. It turned out that he was a distinguished Japanese professor of history from one of the important colleges in Kobe, Japan. His special interest in history was the Hapsburg Empire, which is how he knew about the Sokol organization.

The first thing he wanted to know was whether this was the “real Sokol,” and when I assured him it was, he expressed some surprise that the organization still exists today and that it did not go out of existence when Czechoslovakia was created.

Then, he told me how he followed the idea of Sokol through his study of the Japanese Navy when it – along with the U.S. Navy – came to the rescue of the Czechoslovak Legion at Vladivostok in 1919, helping to evacuate this group of soldiers via Japan and the United States back to Czechoslovakia. He recounted

The Mystery of the Little Black Vest

By Louise Wessinger

Recently, a bubble-wrapped package arrived in my mailbox. Since I was not expecting any deliveries, I wondered what this could be. I looked at the return address: it was from JoAnn Dostal of Protivin, Iowa. I knew immediately what was in the package!

Almost 10 years ago in August, 1998, the Taneční Mladež Dancers made a three-performance tour of eastern Iowa. Our first stop was Protivin where danced twice at their Czech Festival. The children changed in the basement of the local bank and performed across the street under a huge tent. The parade in Protivin ran longer than expected, so the children’s performances were also later than expected. We had a scheduled 7 p.m. performance at the National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library in Cedar Rapids, we had to rush to get the dancers changed and on the road.

the story of the Sokol flags that these legionnaires brought with them on their long journey (it was called in Czech “anabase”), as well as the Sokol marches and songs they sang. It was through this study that he also became acquainted Tomas G. Masaryk and his works. With great respect, he cited Masaryk’s works in great detail.

I gave him the special 125th Anniversary issue of the *Slovo*, which he took with great interest. He could not attend the April 6 celebration, because he was returning to Japan just the day before. However, he was planning to give a lecture about connections he established here during his visit, as well as his research on the Hapsburgs, and said he would integrate some of our discussions about Sokol.

So, anybody going to Kobe has a friend there who knows Sokol, and before too long, there will be more who will know about the present-day Sokol.

For the past half a century, my field of study has been international education, which is why I am fond of stories like this one. It is a story that strikes at the heart of the global needs for people to not only get along, but to actually know about each other. How many of us know and appreciate the fact that Sokol is an international organization with active branches all around the world? And how much do we know about their activities, the countries in which they work, and why the idea of Sokol “took” in all these countries?

In fact, how many of us even know the real history of our own organization, Sokol. We need to know more and should organize ourselves to study more about others and ourselves in relation to others.

When we got to Cedar Rapids, everyone hurried to their hotel rooms to change into their kroje. One of the Sattler girls, either Mindy or Cassie (neither their Mom Kris nor I remember which) could not find the vest to her kroj. They looked through the luggage and their father, Mitch, searched the car. It was nowhere to be found.

The group went on to perform at the museum and then again the next morning at a Czech church in Ely, Iowa, where Debbie Keller’s brother was pastor. When we got home, I wrote a thank you note to JoAnn Dostal, mentioning that one of our dancers had lost a vest.

This spring, 10 years later, the Czech Heritage Society was clearing out some bookcases and boxes in the basement of the bank in Protivin. And there, behind one of the cases was...you guessed it...the little black vest!



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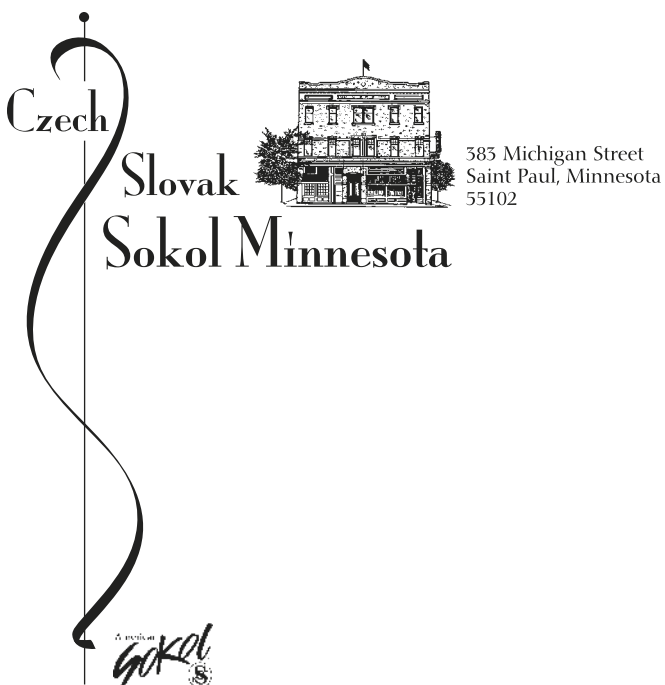
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