



## Taneční Mládež Dancers Celebrate 20 Years

By Louise Wessinger



*Taneční Mládež in Washington, D.C., in 2002 to dance for the dedication of the Masaryk Statue, and at the Czech and Slovak Embassies. Louise Wessinger, leader and founder of Taneční Mládež, is on the far right.*

Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota has set aside May 14, 15, and 16, 2010, to honor the 200+ children who have danced with Taneční Mládež (Youth Dancers) since its start in 1990. The public is invited to attend the grand concert celebrating this milestone on Sunday, May 16, at 2 p.m. at the historic CSPS Hall. A free-will offering will be collected at the door. The program will feature performances by all three of the current youth performing groups, and guest performers will include the Sokol Senior Singers and the Saint Paul Czech and Slovak Folk Dancers. A reunion t-shirt will be available with our Sokol Minnesota emblem on the front and "Taneční Mládež Alumni" on the back, in navy with white lettering (adult sizes S, M, L, X-L. Cost: \$10).

When Taneční Mládež began in 1990, its sole purpose was participation in the Festival of Nations. After that first performance, the group was asked to dance at the Czech and Slovak Festival in Highland Park. Then things just began to grow as most children do, at an astonishing rate! The largest group to dance at Festival of Nations was in 1999 when we had 48 dancers on the floor with the numbers being almost even, boys to girls. I can remember hearing the audience gasp when the kids came onto the floor. The dance group was an impressive site!

As we performed at more events, we grew in the number of dancers involved. A few have danced for one season; most for at least three or four years, and there are also a surprising number who are in the group for over 10 years. Most of the dancers left the group after 8th grade, but in 2005 some of the dancers wanted to keep dancing through their high school years.

The Taneční Teens was begun with high school and middle school aged dancers. James Metcalf, who is the sole senior in this year's teen group, has danced since he was four years old. 2010 is his fourteenth year in the group! Forming the Taneční Teens was also instrumental in getting a special time for teen groups in the Festival of Nations program.

In addition to performing for Sokol events, the children's group has had many wonderful experiences dancing for Czech and Slovak dignitaries, including former Czech President Vaclav Havel, when he was in the Twin Cities in April of 1999.



*Jim Metcalf, now 18, has been dancing with Taneční Mládež since he was 4 years old, as seen here with folk dancing director Louise Wessinger in 1996.*

### Upcoming Events

**Slovo**

**Deadline:**  
May 1

**Festival of Nations:**  
April 30 -  
May 2

**West End Video History Project:**  
May 12, 7 p.m.

**Taneční Mládež Celebration:**  
May 16, 2 p.m.

**Membership meeting:**  
May 21, 7 p.m.  
with singing at  
6:30 p.m.

**Sokol Singers:**  
Tuesdays,  
11 a.m.

**Prostna:**  
1st & 3rd  
Mondays,  
6 p.m.

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Past issues of *Slovo*  
and Sokol Minnesota's  
calendar of events are  
available online at  
[www.sokolmn.org](http://www.sokolmn.org)

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**President Komentář/President's Note**

*By Joe Landsberger*

Pozdrav bratři a sestry/Greetings brothers and sisters

What will Sokol Minnesota be like in ten years?

As I write, our delegates are preparing for the 2010 XIX American Sokol Organization (ASO) Convention. Perhaps you also read ASO Executive Director, Greg Harris' lengthy letter in the March 2010 ASO newsletter. There are only 32 Sokol units with about 4,000 members left in the United States. Often other units cite how Sokol Minnesota is bucking the trend of units dissolving and losing members.

Our strength lies in our foundation of cultural programming, as well as the dedicated volunteers who bring the programming about. However, as members age, move, and the cultural/familial lineage dilutes, what critical mass will support both our programming and our 123-year-old hall? Where will we get the millions of dollars to upgrade our heating and air conditioning systems, our elevator with its "smell," our remodeling to bring our building into the 21st century, especially as regards to accessibility? Can we continue to rely on outside foundations and governments to fund what is necessary? Often foundations specifically do not fund capital, or building-related projects.

On March 15 I attended a West 7th Street neighborhood and organization "visioning" meeting. About 60 representatives of non-profits, organizations, and neighbors gathered to discuss what the West End will look like in ten years, and what challenges lie ahead. It was a very good meeting, and two issues stood out: services to seniors and programming for youth.

These two issues offer relevance to Sokol Minnesota, much as it has in our 128-year history. In my opinion, helping to serve these Saint Paul/West End populations will be one key to relevance for Sokol Minnesota's future. We have already begun to explore expanding into "core fitness" programming. Examples of our neighborhood outreach already exist: we "share" our garage sale leftovers with St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church down West 7th Street, and thanks to Marlene Hinshaw's recuperation, the senior singers performed at Shaller Family Campus' Shalom Care facility. On occasion we have also offered meeting space for various neighborhood organizations and functions.

Another opportunity relates to a query by a member who asked me why we don't do more with other cultural/immigrant groups? The annual Irish "céilidh" is a wonderful family-friendly event that fills our hall with dancers each March 17. Why don't we promote and advertise this, and even learn how they manage their success when our dances lack for attendance? There are similar German, Finnish, Hungarian, Scandinavian events that take place in our hall—yet they are invisible to our membership. What are the possibilities? And what can they gain from us besides a beautiful venue for their events? Can we share in our interests in genealogy, cooking (and eating!), and cultural preservation and dissemination? These are a few ideas that merit exploration: what are yours?

Nazdar

## Czech Surnames and Their Meaning – Part II

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By Ginger Simek, President, Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International - [www.cgsi.org](http://www.cgsi.org)

The origin of some Czech surnames reflected their social status in relationship to land ownership. Someone who owned a large piece of land was referred to as a Sedlák and if they had a smaller piece of land, a Sedláček. Láník was the Moravian name. The names Chalupa, Chalupník, or Chalupka derived from those who may have owned a small house but only a very small amount of land. This category also includes Zahradník or Zahrádko which are derived from “zahrada,” meaning garden. The names Svobodník or Svoboda reflected their free status as opposed to being a serf, or in service to a larger landowner. Dvořák has a similar meaning, with Dvořáček being the diminutive form.

Related social status names include Rychtář or Rychta, meaning “judge” or “sheriff,” Biskup coming from “bishop,” Hrabe coming from the word meaning “count,” or Šafař referring to the administrator of a landlord’s holdings. Vojak and Vojacek mean “soldier,” again with Vojacek being the diminutive form. Soldát and Soldán also mean “soldier” and Kaprálík and Kapralík mean “corporal.”

Surnames also originated from the names of occupations or the tools involved in what people did to make a living. Familiar names such as Kovář, Kolář, Kadlec, and Rybář come from smith (referring to a blacksmith), cart wright or cart builder, weaver, and fisherman. A tailor could have the name Jehlička, coming from the word for “needle.” A baker could have the name Rohlíček coming from the word for “roll,” Moučka coming from the word “flour,” or Buchta coming from the word “cake.” Knedlík of course refers to the Czech word meaning “dumpling.”

Part I appeared in the April issue of *Slovo*. Part III will appear in an upcoming issue. Information for this article was taken from the book, *Naše Příjmení*, by Dobrava Moldanová, Agentura Pankrác s.r.o., 2004, and the website <http://zlimpkk.tripod.com/Genealogy/czechsurnames.html>. The book is part of the C.G.S.I. library collection and is in Czech language.

### Taneční Mládež Dancers Celebrate 20 years - Continued

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Taneční Mládež has danced at many school events and community festivals. Some of the trips include Bechyně and New Prague, Minnesota; Protivin, Cedar Rapids, and Ely, Iowa; Omaha, Nebraska; and Chicago, Illinois. The most exciting trip was to Washington, D.C., to dance for the dedication of the Masaryk Statue and at the Czech and Slovak Embassies. A favorite performance was at the Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International Conference in Bloomington, Minnesota in 1997 - our first standing ovation!

To list thank-yous, I'd worry I'd forget people! Let me say, you know who you are. I have been blessed by the support and encouragement the group has received over the years. Our true legacy is the young people who have been part of this group and the wonderful adults they have become. One of our former dancers, Megan Cahill, and her boyfriend, Jason Brozovich, have become members of the Saint Paul Czech and Slovak Dancers! I hope this will be a sign of more to come. Please call Louise if you'd like more information: 651-452-6240.

### Publications Committee

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The *Slovo* is published by Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota, a non-profit organization, 383 Michigan Street, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102. The deadline for the June/July 2010 issue is May 1. Cinnamon Whaley, copy editor; Julie Tomáška, layout editor; J. H. Fonkert and Marit Lee Kucera, interim managing editors; Joyce Tesarek, photographer; Sharon Wyberg, production manager; Ken Wyberg, business manager.

The *Slovo* Publications Committee welcomes submissions. Send suggestions, articles, and pictures digitally to: [slovo@sokolmn.org](mailto:slovo@sokolmn.org). For problems with subscriptions, e-mail [slovo@sokolmn.org](mailto:slovo@sokolmn.org) or call 651-290-0542. Sokol Minnesota members receive the *Slovo* with their membership. *Slovo* gift subscriptions and non-membership renewals are \$12; send to:

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# An Olympic Reminiscence

By Wally Schovanec, Jr.



My dad, Rudy Schovenec, Sr., had been a Sokol and enrolled me in it at six years of age; it was one of the most loving things he ever did for me! This picture of me and my brother Rudy (last row on the left) was taken by Joe Pavlicek at the 1944 National Slet held at Soldiers Field in Chicago, Illinois. I was given the job of carrying the sign which read "Northern Section of ASO, Saint Paul, Minn." (American Sokol Organization). As you know, the Olympics is similarly organized with an entry march - copycats! With Rudy in the back row are Miroslav "Mir" Verner, Billy Pikal, and just ahead of Bill is Frank Verner. Frank is Mir's

father and our Sokol leader and one of the finest men I have ever known! The four women in the front row are Anca (Bessie) O'Neil, Georgiana Dolejsi, Marion Swoboda, and Irene Manning. *Editor's note: Irene was not Czech or Slovak but participated in Sokol programs in her youth and as an adult. She was not allowed to join until Sokol abolished the Czech/Slovak ancestry rule in the 1950s.*

Getting back to my years in Sokol, in the cold months Brother Verner (Sr.) and Mir used to pick me up Thursday evenings and we went to the CSPS hall. Otherwise we walked the two miles or so. We would drill for about two hours, put on our street clothes, and go home. We didn't shower because there was no shower. We did calisthenics, apparatus work, tumbling, and other activities, all under the watchful eye of Bratr Verner. If we had worked hard and done well we would hear the welcome word "volno" (or was it "volný"?) which meant "free," signaling that we could do what we wished on the apparatus, floor mats, etc. I loved the tumbling and the rings which still hang from the ceiling.

I feel I owe my good health over my 82 years that God has given me to the early training and physical exercise I was blessed with in Sokol. Mir will attest to the fact that I was a "čert" (devil) in Sokol too, as well as in Czech school on Saturdays. I've reminisced enough and I'll close with the Sokol way of dismissal, "Zdar, nazdar: rozchod."

## Sokol Says "Thank You" to Donors

Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota thanks members and friends who have made contributions to support our programs and our historic C.S.P.S. Hall. All donations are credited to the general fund, unless otherwise noted.

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## Bez práce nejsou koláče (Without work, there are no koláče)

By Tony Kadlec - Sokol member and Czechoslovak Genealogy Society International (C.G.S.I.) - Corresponding Secretary



Verá Petrová and Judy Kadlec in exchanging tips on how to grow poppy seed, in Verá's garden, Velké Tresné, Czech Republic.

During my family's August 2008 trip back to our home village of Velké Tresné, Czech Republic, we found the practice of growing poppy seed to be very much alive and well, from small garden patches to large fields scattered throughout the Czech-Moravian Highlands (Vysočina). My mother, Judy Kadlec, has subsequently revived the practice of growing and harvesting poppy seeds in her gardens at the Kadlec farm, near Swan Lake, in McLeod County, Minnesota.

### How to Grow Poppies

Poppies are otherwise known as papaver poppies. *Papaver somniferum var. album* is the species of plant from which opium poppy seeds are extracted. If you enjoy gardening and you like this poppy, you can grow poppies either indoors or outdoors. Poppies prefer freezing climates and are frost tolerant. In fact,

poppy seeds can be planted in late fall, just before the first frosts of winter, and the seeds will germinate in the spring. If you didn't plant your poppy seeds last fall, now is the perfect time for you to order your seeds for planting in late April, before the frost leaves the ground.

Here is a good online source for purchasing your first batch of poppy seeds for planting: <http://www.opiumpoppyseeds.com>. At this website you can order seeds for as little as \$24 up to \$69 for larger quantities, price includes shipping and handling.

To sow your poppy seeds, spread them on the ground and cover them with a thin layer of soil. Germination usually takes between nine and sixteen days to occur. The seeds do best when the soil temperature is cool, between 60-65 degrees Fahrenheit, or when the air temperature is not above 55 degrees Fahrenheit. Seeds will not grow if the climate is too warm. If you live in a more temperate climate, poppies will not germinate unless you place the seeds in the refrigerator so the germination process can occur.

Poppies prefer full sun to partial shade. They will grow well in many types of soils and tolerate dry spells. Final spacing of plants should be eight to eighteen inches, depending upon variety. The plants will grow two to two-and-a-half feet tall. Poppies look superb planted together in big beds. Poppies will grow quickly and will bloom in early to mid summer. Fertilize them once a month to promote steady growth. Mulching around the plants will help to keep weeds down and make the bed more attractive.

To grow poppies you need to be patient and positive during the time it takes to germinate; the reward will be very satisfactory. Once the poppies are about one inch tall, the thin poppy seedlings accelerate their growth. Poppies are annual, which means that a poppy grows, flourishes, fruits in the same season, and then it dies.

From an article originally published in the March 4, 2010, edition of the *Silver Lake Leader*, in the Czech farming community of Silver Lake, Minnesota. Information cited from the following websites: <http://www.poppies.ws/articles/grow-opium-poppies.html> and <http://www.gardenersnet.com/flower/poppy.htm>.

## Membership Report

By Norm Petrik, Membership Director

Sokol Minnesota accepted two new members at the March 26 membership meeting.

**Al and Catherine Zdrzil** express interest in cooking, language classes, and various events including music, dinners, festivals, and films.

Welcome to Sokol Minnesota. Membership meetings are held the 4th Friday of each month at 7 p.m. Join us on May 21 at our next meeting.

## May Education Notes

Language classes will be concluding this month and taking a break over the summer. Watch for the Slovo for “brush-up” classes, classes geared toward specific interests, for example cooking, and the start of 2010-2011 sessions. Remember, each language level has three sequential sessions a year. If you are interested in classes, plan to start in the fall.

In June, the Education Committee will have a brainstorming session. Input is always welcomed. If you have a suggestion or want to volunteer your talents please contact the committee at [education@sokolmn.org](mailto:education@sokolmn.org)

The April membership meeting kicked-off Sokol’s year long Family Histories Project. Next fall, Brother Chuck Draheim will start collecting stories to be shared. Write down your family lore, antidotes, and stories that you hear when visiting with relatives this summer.

Don’t forget the singing sessions before the May 21 membership meeting. Sister Georgiana Dolejsi will lead everyone in Sokol, Slovak, and Czech songs. If you don’t know Czech or Slovak, don’t worry, she teaches pronunciation and meanings for the songs before we sing. The March singing saw 15 people gather at 6:30 p.m. Come join us in May. We will take the summer off and resume singing before the September membership meeting.

## Spring Breakfast with Bake and Craft Sales

The Spring Breakfast on March 28 served 140 guests eager for French toast and all-you-can-eat pancakes. The Bake Sale sold 72 dozen koláče, Easter bread, lamb cakes, apple turnovers, cupcakes, cookies, and gift baskets. Crafters filled ten tables with an array of hand-made creations. Sokol Minnesota made almost \$1,500.



Above: Serve ‘em up! The second-shift kitchen crew and servers included Lois Meihak, Ed Hamernik, Dennis Cahill, Teresa Pojar, Cinnamon Whaley, Roger Meihak, and Jean Hall. Early morning crew included Kathy Jorgenson, Arlene Hamernik, Richard and Sylvia Gutmann, Megan Cahill, Jason Brozovich, Mary Jo and Jim Chlebecek, Sharon Liska, and Chuck Draheim.

## Genealogy Classes a Big Hit!

In March, Brother Jay Fonkert taught a two-session class on beginning genealogy to thirteen eager, budding family researchers. Ginger Simek from the Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International was a guest instructor during the second session, specializing in tracing information in the Slovak and Czech Republics.



Pictured are: (seated left to right) students/Sokol members Leah Sticha and Cindy Choosta Fortune; (standing left to right) Sokol member/instructor Jay Fonkert and guest instructor Ginger Simek.

Below: Spring Fashions! Wearing rabbit ears and the Mad Hatters bonnet are Mary Jo Clebecek, Doreen McKenney, and Sharon Liska.



## Becoming a Sokol Gymnastic Instructor

*Contributed by Sokol MN Board of Instructors*



*Brittany Ruscheinsky, assistant Sokol Minnesota gymnastic instructor, works on the beam with Kate Cunningham, who has been a Sokol gymnast for two years. Brittany has been with our program for ten years, as a gymnast and as a coach.*

Have you ever wondered how Sokol Minnesota selects its gymnastics instructors? By and large we recruit from within our gymnastics classes and occasionally hire instructors that have had gymnastics experience in other programs. Instructors are not necessarily the most athletically talented gymnasts in the classes but they must have solid basic and intermediate skills for demonstration purposes.

Instructors look for current students who demonstrate leadership qualities. These qualities include a respectful attitude, good work ethic, interest in gymnastics, some gymnastics ability, dependability, and initiative. It is not uncommon to identify some of these traits in the youngest of the gymnasts. All of our current instructors have been in Sokol classes since they were in pre or elementary school. As young gymnasts they stood out among their peer group – they were more mature, focused, self-initiators.

Sokol is as much about character development as it is physical fitness. Therefore, we send our instructors to American Sokol (AS) Instructor School. The two-week AS course is held annually during the summer, at a host Sokol unit within the United States. AS courses are open to males and females beginning at 13 years of age, with no upper age limit and there are sequential courses from beginner to expert. Sokol Minnesota pays the course fees and travel expenses for the student and in exchange, we ask that a student who has successfully completed the AS

course teach for us for at least 2 years. Instructors are paid hourly for classes, and expenses only when traveling to coach at a competition.

Prior to sending a gymnast to an AS course, we often provide them supervised opportunities to assist in classes with leading warm ups, demonstrating skills, and light spotting for a year or more. This gives everyone a chance to see if teaching might be a good fit. Our current instructors are a reflection of this process. We are very proud of them and appreciate their hard work and dedication.

## Flavors of Slovakia Dinner

*By Janette Pafko*

Under the cooking leadership of Doreen McKenney, an excellent Slovak dinner was prepared on March 14 and served to 169 individuals and families. We thank the many volunteers who, without their service, a dinner cannot be scheduled. The dinner was co-chaired by Mary Cahill, Doreen McKenney, Jeanette Pafko, and Joyce Tesarek. We have many families that join us every year for our dinner and we are very thankful for that. The Sokol unit was able to gain \$1,700 in profits. The Czech pork dinner is our next scheduled dinner on October 24. Watch for future press releases on this.



*Left: Slovak Dinner Co-Chairs: Front: Joyce Tesarek, Back: Doreen McKenney, Mary Cahill, Jeanette Pafko. Right: Our volunteers have a great time with their Sokol brothers and sisters, and are always appreciated! [Left to right] Danny Jacobson, Ted Schieffer, George Chlebecek, Will Jech, Jim Chlebecek.*

## Dětský koutek / Children's Corner

Contributed by Joe Landsberger and Hana Matousek

From Sokol's archives, this series of fables are from the children's book *Svět Zvírat* published in Prague in 1919 as a children's book by B. Koci, illustrated by L. Lada, with accompanying verses by Petr Kricka.



### Zákazník z laciného kraje

“Jsou-li pak čerstvá, panímámo?  
A zač je prodáváte?  
Nu, jeden mandel bych si vzala,  
jest-li mi posečkáte“  
“Půjdu – povídám – nakupovat,  
A tu máš, jak tak spěchám,  
svou peněženku, představte si,  
Si slavně doma nechám.  
Což, nevadí! Jsme staří známí!  
A když jsem v tom, tož, medle,  
vezmu si hnedle celou kopu!  
Nač pak zas chodit vedle?“

### Cheap Customer

Say, are the eggs fresh, madam?  
And how much are you selling  
them for?  
W-e-e-ll, I could take half a  
dozen, if you could wait just a  
little for the payment?  
I said to myself - lets go  
shopping, and leaving the house  
in a hurry I left my purse behind!  
But, I say - we do know each  
other well, do we not?  
So - why don't I take the whole  
dozen then - It saves me a trip to  
the neighbors?!

## Song of the Month

Contributed by Georgiana Dolejsi

Catch the English translation for The Prune Song in our June/July issue. This song was taken from the book: *Czechoslovak Wit and Wisdom*.

**Švestková Alej**  
Valčíková Píseň The Prune Song Arr. by Joseph P. Eisnic

*C f* *Dm* *G7* *C*

*C p* *C*

1. Za na - ší ves - ní - ci Na hlav - ní sil - ní - ci  
2. Za na - ší ves - ní - ci Na hlav - ní sil - ní - ci  
3. Za na - ší ves - ní - ci Na hlav - ní sil - ní - ci

*G7* *C*

Bo - sen - ský ros - tou švest - ky, Ba - jo!  
Švest - ky jsou ja - ko pės - tí, Ba - jo!  
Švest - ky jsou o - že - sa - ný Ba - jo!

*C* *C*

s An - čou jsme hli - da - li švest - ky jsme jí - da - li  
An - ča nic ne - že - kla o - de mně u - tek - ta  
Ša - ty mám v al - ma - fe a s ji - nou na fa - fe

*G7* *C*

bej - va - lo to moc hez - ký,  
teď ne - mám žad ne štěs - tí,  
má - me to po - de - psa - ný,

*F mf* *C*

Vždy - ky jsme se - dě - li ve - dle se - be,  
An - du - la s ji - ným teď švest - ky hli - dá,  
Snad až se o - že - ním za - po - me - nu,

Czechoslovak Wit and Wisdom

*G7* *C f*

Na hvěz - dy ču - ce - li a na ne - be,  
Už na - še po - vid - la ne - u - hli - dá,  
Pak ti žo An - du - lo při - po - me - nu,

*C p* *C*

A teď - ko sám a sám na všec - ko vzpo - mí - nám  
Dřív ta - dy hvěz - dič - ky ví - da - li vě - cič - ky  
Co jsi to pro - ved - la že - jsi mně pod - ved - ta

*G7* *C* *C2*

chtěl bych být bliz - ko te - be  
o tom se ne - po - ví - dá  
švest - ky teď ne - maj ce - nu.

*F p* *F*

Chorus: V tej na ší a - le - jí

*F* *Bb* *F* *C7*

Švest - ky se vá - le - jí

*C7* *C7*

Já dnes - ka ne - hli - dám, Já dnes - ka ne - hli - dám.

*1 F* *Bb* *F* *Bdim, F*

o - či mně pá - le - jí

*2 F* *C7* *F*

o - či mně pá - le - jí



## Bohemian-Slovak Cultural Camp? Czech it Out!

By Judy Woodward - This article first appeared in the February 10, 2010 issue of the Villager Newspaper, St. Paul.



Contestants in the Miss Poppy Seed Contest got to meet the reigning Miss Czech Slovak Minnesota during a previous cultural day camp at the historic C.S.P.S. Hall, 383 Michigan St. This year the camp for children ages 7-14 will be held on June 14-18.

called Sokol MN Cultural Day Camp. For one week, from June 14 to 18, the historic Czech-Slovak Protective Society [C.S.P.S.] Hall on Saint Paul's West Seventh Street will be transformed into a little haven of traditional culture as about 40 campers, aged seven to 14, will be immersed in the language, food, games, music, crafts, legends, costumes and history of the Eastern European lands that many of their ancestors left over a century ago.

For many, the camp is an intergenerational affair. All instructors are volunteers, and the children are encouraged to bring along older relatives as resource persons. "We're teaching the Czech and Slovak ethnic skills that we learned [as children]," says Wessinger, "This is one of the best ways to pass on a culture." Wessinger also runs a Czech and Slovak children's folk dance group, the Taneční Mládež [Dancing Youth], which performs at Saint Paul's Festival of Nations and regularly entertains visiting Czech and Slovak dignitaries. "She adds, "When you learn your own culture, you get interested in other cultures of the world."

The camp's cultural lessons are tailored to the children's own sense of fun. For glamour-struck little girls, for example, there's the ever-popular Miss Poppy Seed Contest, which draws its name from the old saying, "You can't tell a Czech unless there are poppy seeds in her teeth." Poppy seeds are a staple of Czech baking, and for the contest, each girl must use them in a recipe. In approved beauty pageant fashion, each contestant also displays her "talent" and answers questions about Czech culture. "It's a 'beauty contest' where every girl gets a title," explains Wessinger.



Boys make a model of one of the castles that dot the Czech landscape.

Boys, on the other hand, may be more attracted to the chance to learn about the hundreds of castles that dot the Czech landscape. They can reproduce the castles in Lego blocks, or maybe change gears and make one of the long, decorated leather belts that play a big part in Slovak men's folk costumes. "One of the boys' favorite activities is to go 'exploring' down in the basement of the 135-year-old C.S.P.S. Hall," notes Wessinger.

Another activity that all campers can agree on is eating. Czech cuisine is famous, and there are daily cooking sessions for delicious dishes from kolachy pastries to goulash to the renowned *svestkove knedliky* or plum dumplings. And you don't have to be Czech or Slovak to enjoy them.

Wessinger says that every year there are a few campers with no Central European ancestry at all. "Sometimes they want to come, because they have friends who have done the camp," she says, "They're very welcome."

When Louise Wessinger's Bohemian-American father was a young man, he and his wife participated in an international reunion of the Czech and Slovak cultural and athletic organization called the Sokol. The place was Prague and the time was August 1938. Just weeks, that is, before the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia. At the final ceremony that summer of 1938, the native Czech units of the organization pressed their precious Sokol flags—symbols of a movement that had existed for almost a hundred years—into the hands of the departing Americans. Keep them safe for better times, the Americans were told, preserve what it means to be Czech.

Wessinger, 62, grew up in Highland Park listening to her father's story. In her own way, she and her friend Judy Aubrecht are still preserving the Czech spirit today. For the last fourteen years, they've run a summer camp



Learning gymnastics is another popular activity at the camp.

## Bohemian-Slovak Cultural Camp - Continued

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"The kids come back year after year," says Wessinger. "The one rule is that they have to try everything. They may come with a certain craft in mind, but they go home with friends and memories."

One former camper enjoyed her experience so much that she is now living in the Czech Republic where she teaches English as a Second Language in Prague. Kate Aubrecht, 25, is the daughter of the camp's co-director. She says, "I received a great gift of the appreciation of the Czech culture from participating in Sokol Minnesota as a young person." Aubrecht relishes the opportunity to share her English skills and her religious faith with the people of her ancestral homeland. "I am thrilled to have the opportunity to be here in Prague...because I have the chance to give back something to the Czech people." Aubrecht credits her camp experience with helping her adjust to Czech life. "I have been happily surprised to learn that many of the Czech-American customs and traditions that we experienced at camp are actually authentic...such as the tradition of celebrating Svatý Mikuláš [ St. Nicholas] Day at the beginning of December and eating carp fish for Christmas Eve. The familiarity with some of the customs and traditions has helped me to feel more comfortable here and to connect with my students this year."

Camper Frances Verner, 12, of Highland Park, says that she's been going to Sokol Camp "since I was really small. I like being able to interact with my culture with a modern twist." For Frances, that means discovering a personal history of family and interlocking relationships that extend back generations. "One of my friends at camp [and I learned] that our great-grandparents were friends...Meeting people at camp is like finding the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. You might be related to them."

Frances is also a fan of the *svestkove knedliky*, whose Czech name rolls off her tongue with a flourish. Maybe that's because learning the language is her favorite part of camp. So what does "Sokol" mean? "That's one of the first things you find out," says Frances. "A sokol is a falcon."

Come June, the Sokol will soar again for a dedicated group of volunteer teachers and their students. Wessinger's father would be pleased.

For more information on the 14th annual Czech and Slovak Cultural Day Camp, go to the Sokol of Minnesota website at [www.sokolmn.org](http://www.sokolmn.org)

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## Living in the Past or Living With the Past?

By Josef A. Mestenhauser



Josef Mestenhauser

*Professor Mestenhauser will be presented the Teaching Learning and Scholarship award for Innovative Research and Scholarship in Internationalization in Kansas City, Kansas on June 1. For more information please go to <http://ihec-djc.blogspot.com/2010/03/nafsa-tls-award-for-innovative-research.html>.*

Recently I received two publications that gave me the shock of Déjà vu. One was a historical document from the village of Lidice produced by the "Lidice Memorial", authored by distinguished historian Eduard Stehlik, and financially supported by the Czech-German Future Fund. Its three sections documented life in the past, during the destruction, and the present reconstruction of Lidice. The second book is a personal diary/autobiography of one of the last surviving "children" of Lidice who escaped being murdered by one day. Had she been born one day earlier, she would have been 18, and thus executed along with the other 380 citizens in the city. Both books are truly outstanding examples of painstaking historical research conducted with the utmost of objectivity and care for documentation, yet they both fill the emotional vacuum caused by the unprecedented brutality of the Nazi regime. I lived through this period and the reprisals that followed for many months after the assassination of Heydrich (Deputy Protector of Bohemia and Moravia under the Nazi regime during 1941 and 1942) that claimed still thousands more victims; in fact everybody was a victim who lived through it because we all feared for our lives, in the hands of the random and arbitrary raids conducted by GASTAPO. Even 70 years later after reading these books my stomach tightened, my heart beat faster, and my emotions overflowed.

There was an additional interview on this topic that hit me at about the same time. It came from an unexpected source, the President of the coalition of several Sudeten German organizations. These are organizations comprised of people who have been expelled from what was then Czechoslovakia on the basis of the so-called "Benes decrees," which permitted massive collective punishment against the German population of the former Czechoslovakia and their property and possessions.

*Continued on next page*

The “odsun” (removal) of the three million Germans formerly of Czechoslovak citizenship, who all became German citizens, was brutal, unprecedented for a country that claims its humanistic heritage, and contrary to the agreement of the Allies that the removal be done humanly, and with compensation for confiscated property. Many of us have suffered a collective amnesia when we encountered stories about the Czech atrocities committed against these Germans, but by now the gruesome history is well known and documented. This part of the history of Czechoslovakia has become one of the darkest periods, despite the fact that the worst crimes against humanity were directed by the Soviets and the communist party – both of whom counted on giving the property of the Germans in exchange for future votes.

Nevertheless, the interview that Ms. Erika Steinbach, the President of an umbrella organization of several Sudeten German groups for “Radiozurnal” on the Czech radio on March 11, did not contribute to the possibility that attention will be directed to future peaceful relations. Instead, her statements only added to the tension. She insisted that the Czechs did not really suffer under the Nazi occupation, that Hitler dealt with the Czechs the same way he handled Germans, that the main difference was between the Germans and the Poles, and that Lidice was simply a punishment for the assassination of the “Reichsprotektor Heydrich.” The inability of the Czechs to extend a sincere apology to the Germans for more than 40 years (President Havel did so almost immediately after he became the President) and the arrogance of Ms. Steinbach, who is member of the German Parliament, set us back from the road to the future.

I have advocated for some time, a moratorium on guilt and revenge but public statements of this kind make it difficult to come to terms with the past and focus on the future in which we will live for the rest of our lives. While it was true that many people did become collaborators with the Nazi regime, among whom were many workers in the war industry, who worked long hours for the Nazi war effort in exchange of additional food rations, and who gladly joined the communist party after 1945, the majority of people did suffer enormously. The balance of the six years of occupation is a matter of history; the country was plundered of its total animal stock, of its agricultural produce, of its economy that was converted to war industry, of its loss of the entire leadership generation of intelligentsia that contributed to the communist takeover, of its subservience to the “superior” German people, of its loss of one the most productive one third of the country, and indeed of the loss of loyalties of the largest majority of the Sudeten German populations toward the republic.

The question is, must we constantly recall these injustices, and how far back in history must we go to nurture the hostilities and prejudices – or can we develop a new sense of understanding of the past with which we will agree to live, but not to live in it? Now after I said this, I wonder how far I am willing to go to extend this same kind of reasoning to the communist rule, in the face of the same kind of arrogance about the damage they have caused all of us in the past.

## Moravian does Italian

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Dolce is the new restaurant in Hudson that Sokol Minnesota members need to check out. Recently opened by Radmila Matousek-Rasmussen and her husband Mike, Dolce is located at 106 Buckeye Street, near the Hudson Marina and City Park. Rad’s mother is our own Sokol culinary expert Hana Matousek, who has been baking for the new restaurant. Both Hana and Rad are Moravian born.

Dolce (pronounced dole-chay) is a casual Italian eatery and wine bar with astonishing views of the St. Croix River. Hours are 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., closed Tuesdays. 715-381-1200 - or - [www.dolcehudson.com](http://www.dolcehudson.com)



### Sokol Camp Booya Picnic 80th Anniversary Shirts

August 15, 2010, marks the 80th anniversary of the Sokol Camp Booya Picnic. To help everyone get into the spirit of the day Picnic Chair Ray Vanyo is offering the opportunity to purchase souvenir tee shirts for \$15 each, pullover hooded sweatshirts for \$50 each, and zipper-front hooded sweatshirts for \$55 each. Note cards are also available for \$2 each.

The artwork on the cards features scenes from Sokol Camp originally drawn in the 1950s by Ferd Ubel, grandfather of Louise Wessinger. To purchase shirts or cards, contact Ray at: 651-222-6448 or [rayrayvanyo@msn.com](mailto:rayrayvanyo@msn.com). Order now and show your Sokol Camp pride all summer long!

### 50 Years ~ 50 Dances Commemorative T-shirts Now on Sale

The Saint Paul Czech and Slovak Folk Dancers will be celebrating their 50th anniversary in 2012.

As a fundraiser, the group is offering commemorative tee shirts for sale for \$15 each. The shirts, designed by dance group member Teresa Pojar, feature either a wreath traditionally worn by women, or a ribbon rosette traditionally worn by men. All shirts are blue with white lettering.

You may arrange to purchase shirts by contacting Jean at: 651-426-2826 or [education@sokolmn.org](mailto:education@sokolmn.org).



### Sokol Members involved with West End Video History Project

Middle school students in Saint Paul Neighborhood Network's (SPNN, Cable TV) Youth Television (YTV) project have interviewed residents in the Saint Paul's West End, including members of Sokol Minnesota, to produce a documentary on Saint Paul's West 7th neighborhoods. Sokol President Joe Landsberger, the consulting historian, was the subject of the first test piece: historic reflections on Czech/Slovak organizations and their CSPA Hall. This three-minute video can be seen online at <http://spnnyouth.blip.tv/file/3358501/>

In their final project, the students interviewed Sokol Member Marlene Hinshaw, Sokol volunteer JoAnna Craighead, neighborhood historian Gary Brueggemann, as well as the amazing staff at the Mississippi National River & Recreation Area. They have filmed the Mississippi River and High Bridge, West 7th neighborhood housing, and Irvine Park, as well as the Schmidt Brewery. Sokol Minnesota will sponsor the premier showing of this documentary at the CSPA Hall, 383 Michigan at 7 p.m. Wednesday, May 12. There will be a question-and-answer period with the youth and their mentors. Refreshments will be served.

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