

Czech
Slovak
Sokol Minnesota

Providing fitness and community for individuals and families through physical, educational, cultural, and social programs

**UPCOMING EVENTS
February 2015**

March Slovo Deadline
February 1

Sokol Minnesota Singers
will not meet in February

Board of Trustees
February 11, 7 p.m.

Family Night
February 15, 4 p.m.

Board of Directors Retreat
February 14, 9 a.m.

Members' Meeting
Featured Friday
February 27, 7 p.m.

Taste of Slovakia Dinner
March 8, 12:30 p.m.

Pancake Breakfast
March 29, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.



SLOVO

February 2015
vol. 38 no. 2

**American Sokol Celebrates
its 150th Anniversary**

The celebration on February 14 in Saint Louis kicks off Sokol's 150th anniversary. February 14 was the actual date of the first Sokol meeting in Saint Louis in 1865. There will be a national gala celebration in Chicago the second weekend of November.

Sokol Minnesota celebrates with a special Featured Friday Members' Meeting on February 27, 7 p.m., at C.S.P.S. Hall with member Joan Sedlacek displaying her Sokol memorabilia, including old uniforms, and talking about the history of American Sokol and Sokol Minnesota.

The Sokol St. Louis page from the 1995 commemorative book 130th Anniversary of the Sokols in America, from the collection of Joan Sedlacek.



The first SOKOL unit in the United States was founded in St. Louis, Missouri on February 14, 1865. From a meeting of Czech immigrants held in a small hall at 10th and Marion Streets, This organization has grown and expanded across our country. Despite the turmoil of wars, the Great Depression and many social changes, the SOKOL Ideals still remain strong.

SOKOL St. Louis will continue to promote the SOKOL Movement and work with the American SOKOL Organization in its efforts to preserve the legacy of those founders who first met in 1865.

In the Czech Republic and Slovakia, a new spirit of freedom is bringing forth a rebirth of the SOKOL Spirit. The struggle through the years to preserve the ideals of the SOKOL founders should be an inspiration to us for the continuation of our SOKOL Heritage.

Let us work together to build the strength of our organization. We must always strive to make SOKOL even better in future years.

NAZDAR!

SOKOL St. Louis

150th Sokol Anniversary Commemorative Shirts, Pins, and Badges



Cloisonné Pin and Fabric Patches:

1.5" Round Logo Lapel Pin...\$6

2.5" Circle Patch...\$6

3.5"x1.5" Rectangle Patch...\$6

Shirts: These shirt prices include the Sokol logo.

Polo shirt: with collar and short sleeves, Red or Navy, all cotton (Gildan brand) pique knit sport shirt, logo on left side of the three-button placket printed in white with blue on red shirts and white with red on blue shirts.

Men XS-XL....\$18 Men 2XL-3XL...\$20 Ladies S-XL...\$18 Ladies 2XL....\$20

T-shirts: Red or Navy, (Gildan brand) 50-50 cotton/polyester, large logo printed across chest.
Unisex S-XL....\$10 Unisex 2XL-5XL...\$12 Child's XS-L...\$10



We need to order as a Sokol Unit.
(Unfortunately, there will be no returns or exchanges.)

February 27 is the next deadline to order.

Prices do not include shipping.

Anyone interested in purchasing, please contact Mary Cahill: <fitness@sokolmn.org>

**Czech and Slovak
Sokol Minnesota
2015 Board of Directors**

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Past issues of *Slovo* and Sokol Minnesota's calendar of events are available online at www.sokolmn.org

Prezidentův komentář/President's Notes By Judy Aubrecht
Pozdrav bratři a sestry/Greetings Brothers and Sisters

One hundred and fifty years ago in Saint Louis, Missouri, the first U.S. Sokol organization was formed. The Sokol philosophy is to provide fitness and community to individuals and families through physical, educational, cultural, and social programs. This momentous 150th anniversary is a time to reflect and appreciate how Czech and Slovak immigrants around the country have preserved their culture and ethnic customs over the years and how we can continue to appreciate and grow the philosophy of fitness, culture, fun, and education here in Minnesota.

Our Featured Friday Members' Meeting on February 27 at 7:00 p.m. looks back at the 150 years of Sokol in the United States. Our own historian, Sokol Minnesota member Joan Sedlacek, will share her deep interest in the Sokol organization in the United States and how things got started and have changed in Minnesota over 150 years. Joan likes to travel and often stops at other Sokols to do research. While she is visiting a Sokol unit, Joan often talks with members, hears about the history of their organization, and takes photographs of the Sokol buildings. For months Joan has been organizing her presentation, which includes photos that she has taken and a display of Sokol uniforms from years gone by. This will be an enlightening and enjoyable evening. Please plan to attend and to bring along a guest.

There will be many 150th anniversary Sokol celebrations around the United States this year. If you are traveling, you may like to join in an event. On February 14, Sokol Saint Louis has its celebration; some of our members hope to attend. Sokol Baltimore is planning an open house event for its new facility in June. The American Sokol Organization is organizing a finale weekend from November 13 to 15 in Chicago, Illinois. There will be sports activities, a World Sokol Federation meeting, and the unveiling of a new sculpture dedicated to Sokols in America. A Gala Celebration will take place on November 14 at the Women's Athletic Club in downtown Chicago.

Our Sokol Minnesota planning committee oversees major construction projects for our unit. At a recent meeting, we decided to hire a contractor to finish the air conditioning project, with a starting date in late April and ending in mid-June. Because some of the work will take place in the main hall, this schedule works around important activities like our gymnastics program. It also puts our fundraising campaign on a very tight schedule. The \$50,000 matching grant that an anonymous donor donated to the Sokol Minnesota Legacy Fund to help finish the air conditioning project needs to be matched by this April. With over \$30,000 already received for the match, we have just three months to raise over \$20,000. Many supporters have already made donations to keep the air conditioning project moving forward. If you are still thinking about your donation, please consider making a contribution to Sokol Minnesota's Legacy Fund soon. With your help, we can raise the final money needed to meet the matching grant and complete the air conditioning project in time for the heat of the summer. *Nazdar!*

Honorary Consuls, plus Sokol Minnesota Committee Chairs (not seated on the BOD)

Honorary Slovak Consul: Donald Pafko Honorary Czech Consul Nominee: Marit Lee Kucera

Past Honorary Czech Consuls: Josef Mestenhauer and Robert Vanasek

Sunshine Committee: open

Gift Shop: Doreen McKenney

Housekeeping: Robert J. (Jake) Jacobson

Kitchen Coordinator: open

Website: Craig Johnson, Joe Landsberger

Volunteer Coordinator: open

Taneční Mládež and Teen Folk Dancers: Louise Wessinger

Hall Contacts: Chuck Draheim, Ed Hamernik, Joe Landsberger

Slovo newsletter: Marit Lee Kucera, Christy Banks, Deb Ziskovsky, Mary Kucera

E-Addresses: President: president@sokolmn.org | Board of Directors: board@sokolmn.org

Education/Language Programs: education@sokolmn.org | Events: events@sokolmn.org |

Czech/Slovak Festival: festival@sokolmn.org | Finance/Fund Raising/Legacy Fund:

finance@sokolmn.org | Fitness Programming: fitness@sokolmn.org | Folk Dancing:

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Social Media: socialmedia@sokolmn.org | Treasurer: treasurer@sokolmn.org |

Board of Trustees: trustees@sokolmn.org | Webmaster: webmaster@sokolmn.org

Sokol Membership Holiday Party

Nearly 40 Sokol Minnesota members greeted the New Year on a chilly January 4 for the annual Sokol membership party. The Sunday afternoon fête included fine piano music played by Don Haselbauer, friendship, and good food with a lasagna dinner that included salad, hot buttered bread, wine and Czech beer, plus appetizers and desserts provided by members.

Photo right: After the meal, several members gathered around the piano to sing favorite carols: (L-R) Ed Hamernik, Bob Kostichka, Norm Petrik, Louise Wessinger, Chuck Draheim, Lloyd Krocak, Hana Matousek, Judy Aubrecht, Tom Aubrecht, and Kate Aubrecht with Don Haselbauer on piano.



Sokol Minnesota Annual Memberships

Renewals: Individual \$50; Couple \$90.

Senior \$40 (over age 65); Senior couple \$80.

New memberships: Individual \$55; Couple \$95.

This includes a one-time \$5 registration fee with our national organization, American Sokol Organization. Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota's annual membership runs from January 1 to December 31. Dues are reduced for members joining after June 30.

Membership applications: <www.sokolmn.org> or by request from Norm Petrik (612-822-6147). Please send your completed membership application and check to

Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota, Attn: Membership
383 Michigan Street, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102

PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE: The *Slovo* is published ten times per year by Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota, a non-profit organization, 383 Michigan Street, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102. Sokol Minnesota members receive the *Slovo* with their membership.

The *Slovo* Advisory Committee welcomes submissions. Send news, articles, and pictures digitally to <slovo@sokolmn.org>.

The deadline for the March 2015 issue is February 1.

Member Volunteer *Slovo* staff: Christy Banks, copy editor; M. L. Kucera, managing editor; Mary Kucera, production assistant; Deb Ziskovsky, labels; Joyce Tesarek, photographer; Doreen McKenney, ad designer; Mary Cahill, mailing production; Joan Sedlacek, mailing; with Jean Draheim, Arlene Hamernik, Norm Petrik, and Jitka Sebek, advisors. Photographs for this issue provided by Tamara J. Amon-Stodola, Andrej Gadzo, Martina Gurgel, Jyni Koschak, M.L. Kucera, Silvia Magana, Sue Martin, Don Paiko, Romana Pulkrabek, Marketa and Matt Resong, Jitka Sebek, Joyce Tesarek, and Deb Ziskovsky. Photo collages by Martina Gurgel.

Bottom photo: President Judy Aubrecht (center), with help from her daughter Kate (left), went the presidential extra mile and gave door prizes to several lucky members, including new member Chuck Kundschieer (right).

Volunteers for the event: Judy Aubrecht, Jean Draheim, Arlene Hamernik, Ed Hamernik, Katie Haselbauer, Don Haselbauer, Jyni Koschak, Norm Petrik, Joan Sedlacek, Joyce Tesarek, and Shirley Verner. *Thank you!*

This February 2015 issue of *Slovo* will be archived on the Sokol Minnesota website after February 28.

Slovo accepts business card-size ads (3.5"x2"), paid in advance: one-time insertion \$25; 3 consecutive issues: \$65; 10 consecutive issues: \$175. Ad reservation deadline is 6 weeks before publication (February 15 for April issue), with ad and payment due by copy deadline (March 1 for April issue).

Slovo gift subscriptions and non-member renewals are \$15/year (10 issues). (Rate is good through February 2016.) Please include name, address, phone number, and email address with your new/renewing non-member subscription.

Make your check to: Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota.

Send to: Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota *Slovo* Subscriptions, 383 Michigan Street, Saint Paul, MN 55102.

Extra copies of *Slovo* are \$2 each, plus postage, while supply lasts.

Please contact us for a **change of address**, for problems with *Slovo* subscriptions, if you missed an issue, or received notice of payment due when a payment has already been made.

If you are temporarily out of town for an extended stay, the post office will not forward your *Slovo* because we use bulk mail. If you wish to have this newsletter suspended during this time or if you wish to have it sent to your out-of-town residence, please let us know. After one returned issue, we hold all future issues until you notify us. We pay 49¢ for each returned issue.

Email us: <slovo@sokolmn.org>, phone us: 651-290-0542, or write us: Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota, 383 Michigan Street, Saint Paul, MN 55102. *Thank you!*

Two Stories of Prague. Rainer Maria Rilke.
Hanover and London: University Press of New
England, English translation 1994, 151 pp.
Available in bookstores and libraries.

Illuminating Prague in the 1890s By Gwen Willems, Ph.D.

First published in 1899, these two lengthy short stories are early works of the renowned poet Rainer Maria Rilke, who was born and raised in Czechoslovakia. Rilke describes and analyzes the division between the powerful German minority and the increasingly nationalistic Czechs in Prague in the late 1890s.

In "King Bohush," a story inspired by a real-life murder, Prague artists and writers exchange intellectual ideas and perspectives on nationalism at the National Café, now known as the Slavia. The brooding revolutionary Czech character Rezek in "King Bohush" also appears in the second story. "The Siblings" examines Rezek's effects on a naïve brother and sister who recently moved from the small town of Krumlov to Prague. Although much of "The Siblings" is unrealistic, I find it a less cumbersome, much more compelling, easier to read, and a better-plotted story in this English translation.

Both stories reflect tensions between ethnic Germans living in Prague and the Czech-speaking majority and their respective perceptions of national identity. At the time, Prague had about 350,000 inhabitants, ten percent of whom were German and most of the rest were Czech. According to the book's translator Angela Esterhammer, the majority of German inhabitants belonged to the city's commercial and professional establishment, owning a disproportionate amount of property and managing many factories, while most service industry employees, domestic servants, and factory workers were Czech. A German-speaking resident of Prague, Rilke's empathy for the Czech nationalists is clear.

In tone, the stories contain a fair share of mystery, melancholy, and morbid psychology. Rilke soon considered this book "something I would not have written *this way today*." Although the stories may be flawed early works in his career (he was in his early 20s), they still appeal to scholars of German literature looking for insights into Rilke's development as a writer and to readers who want to know more about daily life in Prague at a time of rising nationalism.

In these early prose pieces, Rilke is already excelling at the lyrical description that served him well as a poet.

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FLAVORS of SLOVAKIA DINNER

**Sunday
March 8**

**Reserved Seating
12:30 p.m.**

**\$16.00 adults
\$8.00 child under 9**

Dinner includes:
Cabbage roll; dilled green beans; pickled beets; pierogi;
halušky (dumplings, cabbage, and bacon); caraway rye bread;
dessert; and coffee.

The cash bar has plenty of wine and good beer on tap.

Pre-paid reservations are required by March 1

Call: 763 - 571- 6091 for reservations.

LIMITED SEATING

Prepaid takeout is also available by reservation.

PUBLIC WELCOME

Hosted by Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota

www.sokolmn.org

C.S.P.S. Hall 383 Michigan Street, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102

In "The Siblings," he describes the family's homesickness: "They no longer yearned for the past; instead they dreamed, in the hot rooms behind thickly curtained windows, of the light, breezy village summer, to which the cool woods are so near a neighbor. Of the bright country lanes over which the young fruit trees spread their shadows, touchingly thin, so that one moves along them as on a ladder, from line to line. Of the heavy, ripe fields that begin to wave so broadly and splendidly toward evening, and of the groves where silent ponds lie in their darkling stillness, deeper than anyone can guess."

Readers fascinated with Prague will enjoy Rilke's use of specific settings and historical tidbits, enhanced by footnotes. Esterhammer also includes an excellent but very long and academic introduction that I suggest reading after the stories.

Gwen is coordinator of the Literary Ventures: Czech and Slovak book discussion group. For more information, go to www.cs-center.org or contact <gwen@cs-center.org>.

Sokol Minnesota Thanks Donors By Arlene Hamernik, Corresponding Secretary

Sokol Minnesota greatly appreciates your donations supporting Sokol programs and the refurbishing of our historic C.S.P.S. Hall. Donations are listed under the following categories: under \$100; \$100-\$499; \$500-\$999; \$1000-\$4999; \$5000+; and undisclosed.

General Fund: under \$100: **Helen Anderson; Mary J. Edel; Joyce Ehmke; John Edward Evan; Darla Kolb; Robert Kostichka** in memory of **John Cicha; Sandy and Jeff Paavola** in memory of **Mary Tesarek; Michaela Makarianova-Wentz.**
\$100 - \$499: **Joan Sedlacek.**

Kitchen Fund: under \$100: **Doreen McKenney** in memory of **Larry Hall.**

Legacy Fund: under \$100: **Dawn Bulera; John Edward Evan; Wayne Robert Kostichka** in memory of **John Cicha; Ed and Arlene Hamernik** in memory of **Glenn Rye; Letty Lie** (Give MN); **A. Rusnacko, Jr.,** in memory of **Chuck and Leona Rusnacko** and **Candace Schmit; Georgiana Sobola; Philothea Sweet; Robert Vanasek; Rose Vesely.**

In memory of **Wayne Hawkinson: George Chlebecek, Jim and Mary Jo Chlebecek, Richard and Sandra Saliny.**
\$100 - \$499: **Petr Bachan; Geraldine Dooley; Stephen Ernest; Pamela Langworthy; Tom Pallo** in memory of **Gloria Pallo; RAD C LEV NO 10; Richard Sargent; Michael Sebek** (Give MN); **Joan Sedlacek; Darlene Sitko; Dan Washick; West 7th Business Association.**
\$500 - \$999: **Saint Paul Czech and Slovak Folk Dancers.**
\$1000 - \$4999: **Jim and Mary Jo Chlebecek; Ed and Arlene Hamernik; Gary and Mary Ann Novak; Czech and Slovak School Twin Cities.**
\$5000+: **Don and Katie Haselbauer; Joan Sedlacek; Anonymous** (\$50,000).

In Kind Donations: **Czech and Slovak School Twin Cities** donated material for making Christmas straw and clay ornaments, *perníky* (gingerbread cookies), *vánočka* (Christmas bread), and *makovka* (poppy seed cake).

December 2014 Donation Totals: General Fund: \$295
Legacy Fund: \$70,457.08 Kitchen Fund: \$25

We're Almost There! By Joyce Tesarek, chair of Board of Budget and Finance Committee

Chill the Hall

Help Air-Condition the Historic C.S.P.S. Hall!

Only \$29,632 needed to finish the project!

\$209,628 raised so far, from donations and a grant!

Work Completed

- Architectural study/drawings
- Roof reinforced
- AC unit purchased
- AC unit installed on roof

Completion of our central air conditioning project is in sight. We are so close now, with the roof reinforced and the unit purchased and installed on the roof. We have met all the requirements of the building's status on the National Register of Historic Sites. To date, we have raised and spent \$129,260. What remains is to complete ductwork, pour a concrete slab, mount a condenser, and install wiring.

Contractor final bids (including subcontracted electrical work) are \$110,000. Additional work, which Sokol's Board of Trustees must still address, includes adding a stairway to the roof and a roof railing.

A very generous anonymous donor has come forward with a challenge

grant of \$50,000 for this project. Since the challenge grant was proposed in November, \$30,368 has already been received. This leaves \$19,632 remaining to match the grant and a total of \$29,632 to finish the installation.

Can you help finish the match? We have almost 300 members. If each member would donate \$65, we would have the needed funds. All donations are tax deductible.

You can send a check made out to: Sokol Minnesota Legacy Fund or you can donate at our website at <SokolMN.org>. Transfer stock and/or inquire at <finance@sokolmn.org> or call Joyce at 612-822-6147.

C.S.P.S. LEGACY FUND

\$50,000 Challenge Grant

We ask for your support of renovations to C.S.P.S. Hall as we celebrate the Hall's 128th year in 2015. Help us match the \$50,000 Challenge Grant.

Contact Joyce Tesarek: 612-822-6147
or <finance@sokolmn.org>
to discuss your tax-deductible donation. *Thank you!*

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

To help Restore, Renovate, and Refurbish the C.S.P.S. Hall, I make a tax deductible donation of \$ _____

I would like my gift designated: in memory or in honor of: _____

Make checks payable to **Sokol MN.**
Write **Legacy Fund** in the memo line.
Mail to **C.S.P.S. Hall Legacy Fund**
383 Michigan Street, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102
Or donate online **www.sokolmn.org** *Thank You!*



2015 Czech Heritage Junior Royalty Crowned

By Deb Ziskovsky

Four Ambassadors and two Little Sisters were chosen during the Coronation on Sunday, December 7, 2014, as part of the Fifth Annual European Christmas Event at the Park Ballroom in New Prague. The new Ambassadors are siblings Kailey and Korey Mach, children of Charlie and Vicki Mach of Le Center; Julieann Will, daughter of Constance and Jeff Will of Prior Lake; and Connor Raduenz, son of Tom and Jean Raduenz of Prior Lake. The Little Sisters are Connor's sister, Cyndi, and Eva Johnson, daughter of Luke and Holly Johnson of Lonsdale.

The four ambassadors were chosen out of eight candidates. Before the crowning ceremony the candidates explained that they would like to be ambassadors because they want to learn more about their Czech heritage and to encourage others to embrace their culture. The ambassadors were presented with a sash, crown, and a one-year membership to the Domáci Czech Folk Dancers. After completing their one-year reign, ambassadors receive a monetary gift. The ambassadors will attend local and ethnic festivals and pageants in the southern Minnesota area promoting Czech Heritage.

Special guests at the Coronation included Czech Honorary Consul nominee Marit Lee Kucera and a variety of visiting Royal Courts from local communities. The Junior Royalty program also presents an "Ambassador of the Year" award. This is presented to someone of the community whom the youth can look to as an example of what it means to be an Ambassador. This year it was presented to Heather Novak for her work in preserving and teaching the art of Czech baking and promoting Czech heritage as a past Domáci dancer and mother of a current Czech folk dancer.

Among the 40-plus vendors were the Sokol Minnesota Gift Shop (Doreen McKenney and Danita Larson), as well as several Sokol Minnesota members: Dawn Bulera (handmade soaps), Jean and Chuck Draheim (Czech glass and bead jewelry), Jan Gadzo (*potica* sold by his son Andre), Jean Hall (vintage tea pots), Doreen McKenney (greeting cards), and Louise Wessinger (vintage Czech items). Sokol members working the event included Deb and Arnie Ziskovsky who were in charge of the Junior Royalty and the Domáci Czech Folk Dancers; they were also European Christmas Event committee members along with Bob and Claudia Tuma; Vi Chromy was at the Czech Heritage Club table.

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Membership Updates

By Norm Petrik, Membership Director

At the December 18, 2014, Board of Directors meeting of Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota, Chuck Kundschieer from Chaska, with interests in genealogy, history, dinners, and festivals, was accepted to membership in Sokol Minnesota. Welcome to Sokol Minnesota!

Upcoming Events

Dr. John Palka, *My Slovakia, My Family: One Family's Role in the Birth of a Nation*, Saturday, February 7, Minnesota Genealogical Society, 1185 Concord Street North, South Saint Paul. Registration starts at 12:30 p.m.

True to its title, this book presents much of the history of Slovakia while narrating the story of the author's family, one of the most notable in the country's history. Part genealogy, part historical analysis, and part immigrant story, Palka's narrative covers a span of 300 years. Starting in the era of the craft guilds, the book concludes with the author's personal encounters in the Slovakia of today, a Slovakia that reflects both the culture and its turbulent history. Including ordinary people as well as towering historical figures, this work is a fascinating and superbly documented biography of the Hodža and Pálka families' significant role in Slovak history.

Dr. John Palka, the grandson of pre-World War II Czechoslovak prime minister Milan Hodža, is a retired professor of biology (University of Washington, Seattle) with an academic specialty in neuroscience. A two-time refugee from Slovakia (initially in 1939 from the Nazis and again in 1949 from the communists), Dr. Palka has retained a love for his Slovak homeland and fluency in the Slovak language. Since the fall of communism in 1989, he has visited his family in Slovakia almost every year. These experiences form the foundation of his account of the role that many generations of the family played in the national life of Slovakia.

15th Annual Masopust (Czech Mardi Gras): Sunday, February 15, 1:00 to 5:30 p.m., in the heart of Minnesota Czech Country, American Legion Post #79, 102 Elm Avenue SW, Montgomery. Adults: \$8 (in costume: \$5), kids under 15: free. Polka music, costume contest, silent auction, Domáci Czech Children Folk Dancers, traditional Masopust skit, King Coronation, and Czech food, including pork and dumplings. See page 9 for more Events.



Sokol Minnesota is home to the Czech and Slovak School Twin Cities, based at C.S.P.S. Hall. *Naše škola*, as it is affectionately known by the students and parents, is the place where our children have Czech and Slovak language classes, learn traditional crafts, produce plays, go camping, and also gather for friendship and recreation. Lenka Bragg and Romana Pulkrabek (lower right) teach our grade schoolers (*Školáci*). Karolina Peterson and Olga Splichalova-Espinosa (second row, right) teach pre-schoolers (*Předškoláci*). Jitka Sebek (center picture) includes learning activities at the monthly Family Nights.

Photo collage courtesy of Sokol Member Martina Gurgel, who created it for use on the Facebook page for the Czech and Slovak School Twin Cities.

Part 2 of an ongoing series. Here is the recollection from Ján Gadžo, one of the '48er/'68er/'89er Panelists at our September 26, 2014, Featured Friday Members' Meeting, which celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the Velvet Revolution and the fall of communism (November 17, 1989). We have invited other '48ers/'68ers/'89ers to write their experiences also. If you are a '48er/'68er/'89er and would like to share you experience, you are welcome to send it (600-800 words) to <slovo@sokolmn.org>

My Escape from Communist Czechoslovakia in 1969

By Ján Gadžo

In 1969, I left my home country of Czechoslovakia and didn't return again for twenty-one years.

My name is Ján Gadžo, and I'm originally from Strážske, Slovakia. As far back as I can remember, my family was the subject of persecution by the local communist officials. My parents were proud, hard-working people who ran the largest farm in town. They provided as best they could for me and my siblings, refusing to bow under to the pressure to join the local farm co-op.

My uncles lived in America, and my mother had visited them. She knew what real freedom was, and dismissed Communist attempts to demonize the West. Even with my parents' resolve, after years of pressure, my family was forced to join the co-op when my parents were threatened with the possibility of the family disappearing in a government truck in the night.

My siblings and I were targeted by Party-line staff in school, derided as "American capitalists" and denied school lunches. When quota time for the farm came, we were always forced to give more than our quota. One year, they even swept our grain bin clean, leaving us with nothing.

The catalyst in my decision to escape from my home country was what happened during my Uncle John's visit in August 1964. He was my mother's brother, born in America but with strong ties to his family in Czechoslovakia. During his visit, we hiked to the ruins of a castle overlooking the surrounding towns. As we ate lunch, soldiers appeared and arrested John. They ripped his camera from his hands, claiming that he was a spy. He was released that evening on the condition that he leave the country and never return.

That event galvanized me. I wanted nothing to do with a government that treated people in such a manner.

I had always been a rebellious youth, thumbing my nose at local officials in any way that I thought I could get away with. I was proud of my family and proud of my ties to America.

When I went to a secondary school in another town, I devised my first escape plan. During a break, my friends and I would take bicycle trips around the countryside under the guise of seeing various landmarks, a tradition among students. When the time came, I planned to slip away, cross the border into Austria, and be free. Unfortunately, due to funds falling through, my first attempt failed.

In August of 1968, Czechoslovakia was invaded by Russia and other Warsaw Pact nations. I watched tanks roll through the streets of Strážske and heard confused rumors and reports of the status of the borders. My friend Jozef and I decided to use the confusion to make a second escape attempt.

We planned to take a train near the border, jump off, and then cross. To our dismay, the train was full of soldiers. There was no way we could jump off the train without catching their attention. We got off at a depot near the border and attempted to make our way cross-country. Suddenly, flares went up and men were shouting. We were captured, separated, and interrogated.

I maintained a story about getting lost, but Jozef gave up our real intent. After several days in jail, I was allowed to return home I had been so close to my goal and had failed a second time.

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Ján Gadžo and son Andrej, who was named for his grandfather (in photo).

Months passed, and then my father received word through connections that the authorities were soon going to make their move on me. I had to leave, soon.

I made my preparations over the next couple of months, calling in favors, gathering money, and arranging papers. I knew that this time it had to be done right, and that meant going alone.

On a cold morning in April 1969, I said goodbye to my parents. My father watched me leave from the front walk of the house. It would be more than twenty years before I would see him again.

The first leg of my journey took me on a train to Yugoslavia. I met my contact in Beograd, and he helped me reach out to the local embassies. All the embassies told me the same thing: "We can't help you. You have to make it to Austria or Italy."

Days later, after a close call with being caught in Maribor, Slovenia, I found myself looking down a hill at a barbed wire fence. Austria was on the other side.

Taking a deep breath and leaving my suitcase behind, I ran. I scrambled under the fence, got up, and kept running until I was out of breath. Scared and confused, I walked for miles, wondering if I was lost, until I saw a gas station sign in German. Hands shaking, I touched the sign. It was real; I was in Austria.

I spent the next several months in an Austrian refugee camp, speaking with dozens of embassy officials. There were days where I thought I'd go crazy, locked in a barracks-like room on the third floor. Eventually, my paperwork went through, and I was granted political asylum by the United States government.

On August 17, 1969, I looked out the window of an airplane as it came in for a landing at J.F.K. International Airport. I saw New York. I saw the Statue of Liberty. I'd made it!

For an oral history interview at the National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, go to <http://www.ncsml.org/Oral-History/AllInterviews/20110719/124/Gadzo-J-n.aspx>

The Czech and Slovak Culture Center Events

On **January 31**, Dr. Daniel Freeman speaks on his book *Mozart in Prague* at 10 a.m. in the City Bella conference room, 6600 Lyndale Avenue South, Richfield, Minnesota.

He will also sell and sign discounted copies of his book. The only city in Europe that demonstrated a complete appreciation for the genius of Mozart's music before his premature death in 1791 was Prague. Elsewhere, including Vienna, his music was considered too sophisticated and too extravagant for most listeners to enjoy fully. A famous encapsulation of this complaint is attributed to the Emperor Joseph II: "too many notes." The musical public of Prague, however, was able to benefit from a unique system of music education in the Bohemian lands that created an unusually large proportion of musically literate citizens who were able to comprehend the brilliant effect of the intricacies of Mozart's music. His five visits to Prague between 1787 and 1791 led to the creation of two of his greatest masterpieces, the *Prague Symphony* and the opera *Don Giovanni*, in each case the most difficult examples of their genres written up to that time, both of them were received ecstatically at their first performances. But as much as he was grateful for the adulation he received from the musical public of Prague, there was a great double irony of unrequited love at work. Mozart loved Vienna, but Vienna did not love him. Prague loved Mozart, but Mozart did not love Prague. He never considered moving there permanently and the city simply did not have the musical resources to compete with Vienna for the potential of offering proper outlets for the entire scope of Mozart's talents.

The film *Burning Bush* (2013) screens on **Saturday, February 21**, at 10 a.m. at City Bella, 6600 Lyndale Avenue South, Richfield. A discussion will follow the film. The film was created for HBO by world-renowned Polish director Agnieszka Holland. Based on real characters and events, this drama focuses on the personal sacrifice of a Prague history student, Jan Palach, who set himself on fire in protest against the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1969. Dagmar Burešová, a young female lawyer, became part of his legacy by defending Jan's family in a trial against the communist government, a regime that tried to dishonor Palach's sacrifice, a heroic action for the freedom of Czechoslovakia. The 20th anniversary in 1989 of Palach's death (1969) inspired a new generation of students to start protests that led to the eventual fall of communism in Czechoslovakia, alongside the fall of the Iron Curtain in Europe. Dagmar Burešová, who spent her early career defending persecuted opposition leaders, became the first Minister of Justice in a freed Czechoslovakia.

Bohemian Beer Tour: The National Czech & Slovak Museum's Bohemian Beer Tour to the Czech Republic, is April 24 – May 4. The tour begins with four days in Prague and includes day trips to nearby breweries and visits to local pubs and craft brewers. The tour continues in Western Bohemia in Žatec, touring its brewery and the Hop Museum, as well as the Herold Březnice Brewery in the Březnice

Minnesota Consular Corps Luncheon

By Donald Pafko, Honorary Consul of the Slovak Republic



(L-R) R. David Gair, retired manager of Hennepin County Probation and Parole; Marit Lee Kucera, Honorary Consul Nominee of the Czech Republic; Judge Michael Davis; and Donald Pafko, Honorary Consul of the Slovak Republic.

The monthly luncheon meeting of the Minnesota Consular Corps was held on December 3, 2014, at the Minneapolis Club in downtown Minneapolis. The distinguished speaker for the luncheon was Judge Michael Davis, Chief U.S. District Judge, District of Minnesota. Judge Davis spoke on the commission of judges, of which he is a member, appointed to oversee governmental information-gathering, such as wiretapping. Judge Davis was a very informative and educational speaker and the meeting was well attended by various honorary consuls of Minnesota.

Castle, and the Chodovar Family Brewery. Chodovar is the oldest brewery in Western Bohemia, and interested visitors can try soaking in a beer bath! Another stop on the tour is the medieval village and castle of Loket, where beer is brewed in the vaulted cellars of a 14th century malt house. The tour ends with three days in Pilsen, the "Capital City of Beer," at its famous Liberation Festival, celebrating the 70th anniversary of General Patton's liberation of Pilsen in May 1945. Festival events include a reenactment of the battle for Pilsen and a military camp circa 1945, plus the Convoy of Liberty parade including vintage U.S. military vehicles and uniforms. This celebrated salute to Americans in Europe is an experience not to be missed. Of course, the tour includes the most famous brewery, Pilsner Urquell. Throughout the tour, there will be ample time for independent exploration and shopping. The price of the land tour is \$2,195 per person, double occupancy, and \$2,625 per person, single occupancy. For more information, go to < <http://www.ncsml.org/Content/2015-Bohemian-Beer-Tour.aspx>> Registration deadline is Monday, February 16.

THE MINNEAPOLIS HOLIDAY MARKET was part of Holidazzle Village, located at Peavey Plaza in downtown Minneapolis, from November 28 to December 24. The market was modeled after the traditional German-style open-air Christmas markets. Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota participated on Saturday, December 13, designated as Czech and Slovak Day. There were folk dancers, the giant puppets Jitka and Jarda, and stories about Czech and Slovak holiday traditions.



Thanks to our many volunteers at the Minneapolis Holiday Market. It was a huge success for Sokol Minnesota. We were not allowed to sell anything, but we passed out information about Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota, including our Sokol 2015 Spring Events postcard.

Sokol Minnesota Information Booth: Marketa and Matt Resong and young Matthew, Ed and Arlene Hamernik, and Joan Sedlacek.

Readers: Kate Aubrecht and Colleen Cahill.

Taneční mládež Dancers and Families: Jim and Becky Yanta, Henry, Benedict, Greta, and Bridget; Lenka and Kyle Bragg, Adela, and Petra; Johanna and Joel Paylor; Everett Romana and Sylvia Pulkrabek; Renata Scholtz, Peter and Sofia; Jitka Sebek, Thomas, and Sally; and Alena and Elsa Youngberg.

Taneční Teen Dancers: Andrea Atcheson; Anna and Lenka Hester; Jessica Metcalf; Michelle and Brittany Stepan; Emma and Madeline Stodola; and Mary Yanta.

Puppet Carriers: The Haselbauer Crew, The Stepan Crew, and Alex Cho.

The St. Paul Czech and Slovak Folk Dancers: Tom and Judy Aubrecht, Dawn Bulera and Richard Sargent, Don and Katie Haselbauer, Robert Jacobson and Jyni Koschak, Dave and Sue Martin, Emma Martin and James Metcalf, Teresa Pojar and John Topic, and David Stepan and Louise Wessinger.

Lipa Slovak Folk Dancers: Lynn Barnes, Lara Ciganko, Emily Fiam, Roman Fiam, Paul Knuth, Brenda Maybery, Sylvia Magana, Don Pafko, Baska Schaderova, and David Schader.

CUTLINES FOR PHOTO COLLAGE ON PAGE 10:

Top row: Left: Taneční Teen Dancers. Center: Holiday Market Gateway. Right: Taneční Teen Dancers.

Second row: Left: Jitka and Jarda delighted the crowd. Center: This classic German star is actually the Moravian star, a multi-pointed polyhedron (usually 26 points) that originated at a Moravian boys' school in Saxony, Germany. (The Moravian church was founded by the Czech reformer Jan Hus, in the early 15th century.) Right: Marketa Resong and her son. Marketa's *kroj* is that of a married woman, with a thick blanket around her shoulders. A married woman's *kroj* shows her status that she is "taken."

Third Row: Left: Lipa Slovak Folk Dancers Paul Knuth, Krissy Chepp, Brenda Maybery, Abska Schaderova, Sylvia Magana, Lynn Barnes, Lara Ciganko, Emily Fiam, with Don Pafko (Lipa director) at the microphone on stage. Right: Kate Aubrecht tells about Walnut Boats, one of many Czech Christmas traditions with Becky Yanta and daughter holding the poster.

Bottom row: Left: Colleen Cahill (far right) alternated with Kate Aubrecht to tell about Czech Christmas traditions, including having the house clean and ready: James Yanta and daughter hold the poster. Center: Jitka the puppet waved to fans. Right: St. Paul Czech and Slovak Folk Dancers: (L-R) Jyni Koschak and Jake Jacobson, Louise Wessinger and Dave Stepan, and Don Haselbauer and Katie Haselbauer.

Sokol Minnesota GARAGE






Antiques, collectibles, books, clothing, and domestic treasures.

Thursday, May 14, noon - 7 p.m.
Friday, May 15, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Spring cleaning is right around the corner, so bag up those no longer needed treasures and donate them to our annual sale.

Unfortunately we are unable to take:
 mattresses, bikes, electronics, and large furniture.

Drop off donations
Wednesday, May 13, from 10a.m. - 6p.m.

To arrange for early drop off: 651-290-0542
We need to have everything in boxes with lids that close.
We must be able to stack the boxes.
Our storage space is very limited. No big bags, please.

Hosted by Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota
 Event chairs: Marit Lee Kucera and Doreen McKenney
 383 Michigan Street, Saint Paul, MN 55102 - www.sokolmn.org

Hromnice is February 2

If there was a thunderstorm (thunder = *hrom*), sanctified *Hromnice* candles were lit. Like our Groundhog Day, *Hromnice* was based on the same ancient Celtic tradition.

Hromnice-li jasně, čisté, potrvá déle zima jistě.
Pakli sněží nebo hřímá, jaro jistě v blízkou dlívá.

If *Hromnice* is bright and clear, winter is sure to linger.
 If there is snow or thunder, spring must be near.

Svíti-li slunce na Hromnice, bude zimy o šest neděl více.
 If the sun is shining on *Hromnice*, there will be six more weeks of winter.

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ATTEND AND VOLUNTEER!
Sokol Minnesota 2015 Events

Taste of Slovakia Dinner
March 8, Sunday, 12:30 p.m.
\$16 adults, \$8 children

Reservations by March 1: 763-571-6091

Pancake Breakfast
with Craft and Bake Sales
Sunday, March 29, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Donated bake goods welcome!
Reserve a vendor table: 651-426-2826
Pre-order koláče: 651-290-0542

Collect - Gather - Clean Out!
Support our Sokol Garage Sale: May 14 -15
Drop off: Wednesday, May 13, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Sokol Minnesota on Facebook:
www.facebook.com/sokolminnesota
Check for event updates: www.sokolmn.org



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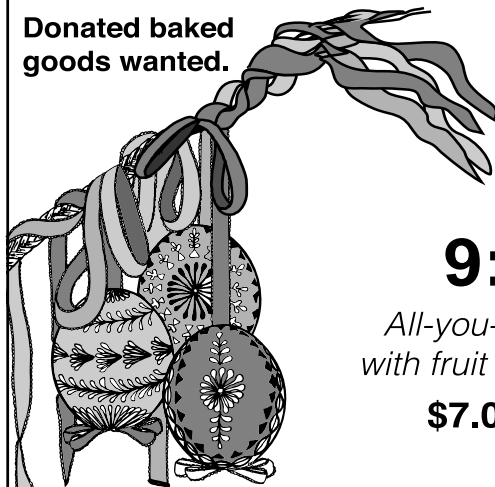
Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota SLOVO February 2015

Spring Breakfast

Craft and Bake Sale

C.S.P.S. Hall, 383 Michigan St., Saint Paul, MN 55102

Donated baked
goods wanted.



www.sokolmn.org

Sunday
March 29

9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

*All-you-can-eat pancakes and French toast
with fruit cup, sausage, juice, milk, and coffee.*

\$7.00 Adult, \$5.00 child under 9
Family of four \$22.00

Variety of exquisite
hand-crafted
items for sale.
Rent vendor table:
651-426-2826.

Delicious baked
items including
koláče for your
Easter table.

Pre-order koláče:
651-290-0542.

Hosted by Czech and Slovak Sokol MN • Public welcome • No reservations needed