

american **SOKOL**



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OCTOBER 1996

AMERICAN SOKOL ORGANIZATION

By Bro. Vladislav Slavik, written for the
ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ETHNIC SPORTS IN THE UNITED STATES

The American Sokol Organization is not a gymnastic club, even if it does offer an excellent gymnastic program; nor is it a sport club, although it embraces a good many sports; promoting improvements of moral values through educational and social activities, it cannot be called a cultural organization; Sokol commemorates many important historical events, but is not a historical society. Rather, the Sokol program is a synopsis of all these human activities blended into a movement building a sound mind in a healthy body. Given such a unique definition, American Sokol Organization is an exact copy of the Czech Sokol Union, which was founded by Miroslav Tyrs and Jindrich Fuegner in Prague in February 1862.

As Professor of Aesthetics at the Charles University in Prague, Miroslav Tyrs believed in the ancient Hellenic ideal of healthy body and enlightened mind. Convinced patriots, Tyrs and Fuegner understood that Czech freedom and independence must be built on moral and physical strength. With several Czech patriots they founded in February 1862 Sokol of Prague (Sokol Prazsky) which, through gymnastics and other sport of those times, refined by cultural activities, revived the spirit of the Czech nation. In order to unify all Sokol units, Tyrs formulated the Sokol idea and designed a perfect terminology of gymnastics which even today describes any movement of human body on any apparatus. Within five years since its inception, there were 68 Sokol units in Czech and other lands, several of them taking deep roots in the United States.

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THOUGHT STARTERS

from Bro. Jerry Milan,
ASO Educational Director

"Love does not dominate.

It cultivates."

From Your Editor...

The most important thing for you to read this month appears on page one of the "Gymnast" section in the center of the publication. I know that my Unit supports the Slet headquarters and as Junior Instructors, both Tom Pajer and myself have already taken steps to insure that our Junior class will be able to "travel" to the Slet, even though it's being held in our own backyard. The Slet is a vital part of the structure of our class this entire year. Our kids are already excited and anxious to participate in many Slet activities. I hope your gym is as privileged. Sokol Berwyn-Slavsky definitely will "SEE YOU IN CHICAGO AT THE LISLE HILTON HOTEL!"

NA ZDARI!

Sls. Patricia Satek
46 Northgate Road
Riverside, IL 60546-1639

CALENDAR of EVENTS

NOVEMBER

2 100th Anniversary of Sokol
New York's Sokol Hall
2 Board of Governors Meeting
3 Central District Annual
Meeting
5 ELECTION DAY - *Vote!*
9 Sokol Berwyn-Slavsky Junior
Rake-A-Thon
10 Sokol Minnesota Pancake
Breakfast & Bake Sale
16 Sokol Tabor Spaghetti Dinner
22-24 Milwaukee Holiday Folk Fair

DECEMBER

1 Sokol Detroit Czech
Christmas Dinner Party
7 Central District Rhythmic
Competition
7 Sokol Berwyn-Slavsky St.
Nick's Dance
14 Central District Boys'/Men's
Competition
14 Sokol Stickney Spaghetti
Dinner

XIX AMERICAN SOKOL SLET
Catch the Spirit!
June 25-29, 1997
Chicago, Illinois Area

A.S.O. FAX: 708-795-0539

OUR SOKOL CREDO

*To build a healthy and beautiful human body,
To cultivate a harmonious and total person,
To develop firm character, a well-rounded disposition and
A love of truth and justice;
To produce strong, lovely and honorable people,
That is the goal of a Sokol education.*

1997 XIX ASO SLET SOUVENIRS ARE NOW AVAILABLE!

We are now offering souvenirs for the upcoming 1997 XIX ASO Slet for sale by mail order through the ASO Office. These items feature the "Catch the Spirit" Slet logo and make excellent gifts for the holidays. Complete the order form below and mail to the ASO Office, 6424 W. Cermak Road, Berwyn, IL 60402. You will be billed for the cost of the items, plus UPS shipping charges. Show your Sokol spirit! ORDER TODAY!

Item	Size	Cost	Quantity
Slet Pins		\$3.00 Each	_____
Slet Patches		\$3.00 Each	_____
Slet T-Shirts	Adult S, M, L, XL	\$10.00 Each	_____
Slet T-Shirts	Adult XXL, XXXL	\$11.00 Each	_____
Slet Sweatshirts	Adult S, M, L, XL	\$15.00 Each	_____
Slet Sweatshirts	Adult XXL, XXXL	\$16.00 Each	_____
Coaches Shirt	Adult M, L, XL	\$15.00 Each	_____
Coaches Shirt	Adult XXL, XXXL	\$16.00 Each	_____

Name: _____

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Send order to:
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GREAT HOLIDAY GIFTS!
ORDER TODAY!

OLYMPICS WERE NOT JUST PLEASURE FOR SOKOL GREATER CLEVELAND MEMBER, SIS. ALICE KHOL

From an article by Joseph Koziol, Jr. in the Chagrin Valley Times and Sokol Times newspaper, Cleveland, OH, 9/5/96.

For Alice Khol, a pair of old worn shoes best tells the tale of the Olympic spirit.

Those shoes belonged to athletes who traveled from Bosnia to Atlanta this summer to participate in the handball competition of the Olympics. Playing in tattered shoes and plain uniforms and in an emotional and courageous display, Ms. Khol said, the Bosnian team took the gold medal in their event.

It is that spirit of pure competition, without the glamour and hype, that represents the true meaning of the games, Ms. Khol said. "It does stand for all the good values, the values you hope it exists for. It's what real sport is like, because it's not what you see on Sunday afternoon."

The Atlanta games were Ms. Khol's first venture to the Olympics. But what she saw there convinced her that they won't be the last, she said. "I'm already saving my pennies for Sydney (Australia)," she said of the next site of the summer games in four years.

Although Ms. Khol found time in Atlanta to act as spectator to some of the world's best athletes, her presence was not strictly for pleasure.

The Associate Athletic Director for Cleveland State University served

on the game management team for the women's volleyball competition. The role was intended to aid her in organizing the Division I NCAA Women's Collegiate Volleyball Championship this December at CSU.

"Competition management simply means troubleshooting all the areas necessary for pulling off the volleyball competition," she said.

That meant overseeing a staff of 400, managing the field of play, providing for translators, making sure vans/buses got the athletes to and from the arena and providing food and beverages for all.

"The education I got was more critical than making sure the net was at the correct height," she said.

Her job was made more complicated because it involved extremely tight security measures to protect the athletes and the integrity of the games.

Beverages had to be sealed when they were served to athletes, she said. Tamper-proof methods were necessary to prevent accusations that may arise if an athlete tested positive for drugs. With the precautions, she said, no athlete could blame drugs on beverages served at the games and no team would be denied its medal through foul play.

"There were other things, as well,

you wouldn't even think comes into play in preparing for the volleyball matches," Ms. Khol said.

The first day of training for managing the games involved handling athlete's defections to the United States, she said.

The management team also was versed in handling bomb threats and how to orderly clear an arena with 25,000 people. The bomb that did explode at Olympic Park took away some of the glimmer the United States had shown in hosting the world's largest party, she said.

The Omni, where the volleyball competition was held, was the closest facility for competition to where the bomb had gone off, she said. But at no time did anyone feel threatened or fearful that their lives were in danger, Ms. Khol said.

She said the management team reviewed its security procedures and tightened them. That essentially meant that courtesies previously extended to friends and family were discontinued and only those with proper background checks and credentials were permitted in the facilities.

A note from Sis. Jane Wise, Sokol Greater Cleveland, who submitted this article: Alice has been a member of Sokol Greater Cleveland her whole life and has been involved in the volleyball competitions at our ASO Slets and also at the Sokol USA and Sokol Canada Slets.



**XIX
AMERICAN
SOKOL
SLET**

**June 25-29,
1997**

CONGRATULATIONS

to our President,

Sis. Norma Zabka

who was inducted into the

U.S.A. Gymnastics Hall of Fame

BOSTON, JUNE 29, 1996!

*The Membership of
Sokol New York*

IT'S SOKOL USA, A MOVEMENT FOUNDED ON MASS MOVEMENT

This article, by Tanya Barrientos, Staff Writer, appeared in the Philadelphia Inquirer on Monday, July 8, the day after the Sokol USA 100th Anniversary Slet in Philadelphia.

"Sokol is a way of life," say devotees. Still, it's had a hard history.

There's something that might seem decidedly undemocratic about Sokol USA.

After all, it's an organization devoted to bringing together huge groups of people to perform synchronized calisthenics. An, quite frankly, when 1,200 people stand on a field dressed in tight exercise uniforms, bending and stretching and kicking and swooping en masse, it looks downright totalitarian. But that

image is about as wrong as it can be.

Sokol USA, which performed yesterday at Drexel University, is about as American as aerobics and as patriotic as "Yankee Doodle Dandy" (which happens to be the music for one of the group's routines).

It's just that Sokol also happens to have its roots firmly planted in a 164-year-old Czech tradition.

"If you've ever seen the opening or closing ceremonies of the Olympics, that's what our calisthenics looks like" said Chris Yatchyshyn, one of the organizers of the 1996 Sokol festival in Philadelphia, held (in July) as part

of the Welcome America! festivities.

Sokol, which means "falcon" in Czech, was founded in 1862 by a philosopher named Miroslav Tyrs as a patriotic way to keep people fit and ready to defend democratic ideals. In fact, the organization is all about democracy, said Beatrice Walko, president of Sokol USA.

Its European followers were persecuted by the Nazis in World War II (5,000 of them were put to death); the organization itself was outlawed by the Communists when they took over Czechoslovakia in 1948 because it was considered subversive to the ideals of Marx and Lenin. (Many devotees,

Continued on Page 7.



American Sokol Organization

6424 West Cermak Road
Berwyn, Illinois 60402
(708) 795-6671 Fax (708) 795-0539

XIX A.S.O. SLET 6/25-29/97
INDIVIDUAL/GROUP RESERVATION FORM
For Accomodations at SLET HEADQUARTERS, Lisle Hilton Hotel

NAME _____ SOKOL UNIT _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ STATE _____

ZIP _____ PHONE # () _____

ARRIVAL DATE _____ DEPARTURE DATE _____

TYPE OF ROOM _____ SINGLE _____ DBL _____ TRIPLE _____ QUAD (check One)

COST PER NIGHT, INCL. TAX PER ROOM \$ 80.66 X _____ NIGHTS _____ TOTAL

ROOM WITH 1 _____ 2 _____

3 _____ 4 _____

REQUEST: Handicapped _____ Non-Smoking _____ Smoking _____

ALL ROOMS MUST BE GUARANTEED FOR ONE (1) NIGHT \$ 80.66 BY:

CREDIT CARD # _____ CARD TYPE _____

CHECK MADE OUT TO LISLE/NAPERVILLE HILTON AND SEND TO A.S.O. OFFICE
6424 W. Cermak Rd., Berwyn, IL 60402 c/o Slet Reservations.

ROOMS WILL BE HELD UNTIL JUNE 4, 1997 - IF NOT CANCELLED WILL BE CHARGED
FOR ONE (1) NIGHT. ALL RESERVATIONS MUST BE SENT TO THE A.S.O. NOT TO
TO THE HOTEL, WITH ONE (1) NIGHT PAYMENT PER ROOM.....

John M. Satek
XIX A.S.O. Slet

June Pros
XIX A.S.O. SLET

Housing Chairman



AMERICAN SOKOL ORGANIZATION

GYMNAST



Editor: Chuck Kalat -- 2401 Bluebonnet Dr., Richardson, Texas 75082

Experience the 1997 Slet

The National Board of Instructors, the Slet Committee, and the National Executive Board want to encourage all participants and attendees of the 1997 American Sokol Slet to truly "Experience the Slet" by arranging their lodging at the Slet headquarters hotel, the Lisle Hilton. The headquarters hotel will be the site of the historical/educational display, banquet, awards dance, and souvenir sales. We feel that the Slet Experience is more than competing in a large gymnastic meet, volleyball tournament, or other competition. The Slet Experience includes being around and meeting people with similar and different interests from other parts of the country, cultivating new friendships, and renewing old acquaintances. People will find that the memory of personal experiences tend to last longer than competitive ones. The tears that flow as the buses pull out after a Slet remind us how powerful new friendships can become in only a few short days. Friendships that last for years and sometimes even a lifetime. All too often we get wrapped up in our own little world and fail to realize that there are other Sokol folks out there with different lifestyles, ideas, and goals; but with the common Sokol element that can bring us all closer together and enrich all of our lives. This type of experience is what makes us grow as people not just as competitors. Those of you that have been to courses or clinics know that one of the major outcomes, and in fact goals, of that event is the friendships made and bonding that occurs between heretofore strangers. Even within our own areas and districts, how many of our juniors and seniors know their counterparts in other units -- all too few. The units in the local area of the Slet, the units of the Chicago area, should also consider "travelling" and staying at the headquarters hotel. After all, it's not the hours and hours spent on the bus that make people want to travel, it's the experience once they arrive, the opportunity to meet and mingle with all the other Sokol people from all over the country. Sokol provides the common thread in all of our lives around which new friendships can easily be built. Staying at "outside" hotels may cause you to miss this most important part of a National Slet.

SEE YOU IN CHICAGO AT THE LISLE HILTON HOTEL!

Lisle Hilton Hotel reservation material and information will be distributed to District Directors at the October Directors Conference and will appear in an upcoming issue of the *American Sokol* publication.

"Catch the Spirit"

ACHIEVEMENT BY PROXY

The celebration over the success of the U.S. Women's Gymnastics Team at the Olympics was tempered by a concern for the physical and psychological health of the young athletes. The combination of difficult training programs, demanding coaches, and pressure from parents often results in over training, injuries, and emotional damage. For every Keri Strug, there are thousands of little girls who gave just as much time and effort without achieving a fraction of her success.

Tennis moms, Little League dads, pushy parents, and ambitious coaches are a fact of life in every competitive activity. These people are trying to experience success through the accomplishments of their children or students, who may be willing participants. In its extreme form, this phenomenon has been called "achievement by proxy" and is different from the healthy encouragement and support given to children by conscientious parents and coaches. Feeling good about your children's athletic achievement is normal. Trying to get that feeling by putting your child in an unhealthy situation is not.

CROSSING THE LINE

Where do you draw the line between those two behaviors? What are the symptoms of achievement by proxy? Psychiatrists describe a continuum of parental behavior. The continuum begins with pride and support for their children's athletic achievements. Simply helping a child achieve at a high level is not a form of abuse. That support increases to sacrifice in the second stage. Parents may take a second or third job, move closer to a gym or training facility, or send their children to "sports hatcheries" for year-round training.

Level three is characterized by the complete loss of the child as an individual. There is increasing pressure for the child to perform, even if injured or ambivalent about participation. He or she becomes an instrument of adult goals. Normal peer relationships vanish. The hallmark characteristic of the fourth stage is strong parental encouragement of a potentially dangerous endeavor for the purpose of gaining recognition or financial reward. Panel members in a New England Journal of Medicine article suggest that, at this level, achievement by proxy becomes a form of child abuse. The parents appear to be perfect and are closely involved with every aspect

of their child's life, but their motives are self-serving and present a danger to the physical and emotional health of the child.

Those who say, "My child enjoys this commitment to training," may be neglecting their responsibility to provide a balanced life. Children who say, "This is my decision," shouldn't be allowed by their parents to make that decision.

However, it is more reasonable to assume that there is a temptation for all parents and coaches to push their children too hard at times. Sports psychologists were asked to comment on appropriate and inappropriate examples of parental involvement.

SITUATIONS

Parents who try to override the advice presented by a professional, are a cause for concern. For example, a young athlete is injured and needs to be examined by a physician. The parents insist that their child is okay or tough and needs to be in there. That's a problem.

Potential difficulties may also be seen when participation in sports causes conflict within a family. Billy's mother thinks he needs to get some sleep or to do homework, but his Dad wants him to practice or play. Another example is when the parent assumes a second role in the life of the child by becoming a coach, agent, or manager. That places both the athlete and the child in conflict.

Sport psychologists may approach the problem of achievement by proxy with a list of questions (examples below) that parents and coaches should ask themselves. "This should be an on-going process, they warn, "not a one time thing. All of us who work with children and sports should periodically check in with ourselves on these kinds of issues. Just because we have the right answer now does not mean we'll have it at some other point in time."

- ◆ What is my background or agenda in this sport?
- ◆ What are the child's physical limitations?
- ◆ What are the potential physical or emotional risks?
- ◆ Are the financial requirements unreasonable?
- ◆ Does this affect other important aspects of life?
- ◆ Is this child emotionally ready?
- ◆ What do our friends say about my involvement?
- ◆ Do my emotions get out of control?
- ◆ How does this affect the rest of my family?

APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

One sports psychologist suggests what the appropriate roles of parents are in regard to their children's athletic participation. "Parents should encourage their children to become involved, they should support them, and they should be present to show that support. They can soothe feelings when children are disappointed and should reinforce the notion that sports are supposed to be fun."

"Parents have to step back and understand what motivates their children to achieve. It is not normal for children to voluntarily want five or six hours a day of supervised instruction in a gym. It is up to the parents to see that their kids' lives are balanced. They should have other hobbies, friends outside of their sport, and responsibilities around the house. Research shows that adults who have several roles are more satisfied with their lives. This role complexity should also apply to children and adolescents."

BE PREPARED

Organized sport for children is a positive and important part of their development. Educate yourself. There are books and programs for parents on sports and on how to manage athletes.

"Most young people play because they want to have fun, to be with their friends, to learn skills, and to be part of the excitement of sport," says Jim Kestner, Development Director for the American Sport Education Program. "But parents may have a completely different agenda for their kids. If they do, those differences should be acknowledged and addressed."

"Children who improve their skills and have fun early in their experience are on the path for a lifestyle of health and fitness," states Kestner. "Those who have unpleasant experiences early may never regain their enthusiasm to participate as adults."

Penn State Sports Medicine Newsletter,
October, 1996.

Girls Who Play Sports

According to the Women's Sports Foundation, girls who play sports are:

- ◆ 92% less likely to do drugs
- ◆ 80% less likely to have unwanted pregnancies
- ◆ 40-60% less likely to get breast cancer as adults
- ◆ less likely to be depressed
- ◆ three times more likely to stay in school
- ◆ more likely to leave abusive relationships
- ◆ more likely to feel good about their bodies

PRESIDENT'S CHALLENGE IS ON for 1996-97 School Year

The 1996-97 President's Challenge program is underway. Materials for the upcoming school year will be mailed in September to more than 160,000 educators, as well as recreation and community leaders.

Backed by the scientific evidence of the Surgeon General's Report, this year's material emphasizes that physical activity and fitness help students meet the rest of life's challenges.

A colorful poster illustrates the many activities young people can participate in if they are fit. It also shows how the five components of the President's Challenge can help them achieve their goals in life.

New this year is the Health Fitness Award, which measures health criteria to give youngsters an additional means of earning a fitness award. It is designed to motivate youngsters to continue to build their strength, endurance, flexibility, and other performance measures of the President's Challenge.

"The goal of the program is to make everyone a winner by being fit," explained Christine Spain, Presidents Council on Physical Fitness and Sports (PCPFS) director of research, planning and special projects. "The program hasn't been modified since 1985. We wanted to make sure that all young people had goals they could work toward and reach."

A working group of council members and fitness experts is continuing to study ways to strengthen and enhance the President's Challenge program; however, the Council felt it was important to begin to respond within the existing program to some of the concerns expressed by physical educators and other youth leaders, Spain explained. Part of that response is including alternative activities to some of the components, such as partial curl-ups for the curl-ups, right angle push-ups and flexed-arm hang for pull-ups, and the sit and reach for the V-sit reach.

"These options, along with the normative standards of the Health Fitness Award criteria, make the program more accessible, while still encouraging youngsters to pursue an active and fit lifestyle," Spain said. "We want to give everyone a place in the program and to help all children feel good about improving their fitness level." *PCPFS Newsletter*, Summer/Fall, 1996

What Sokol Means to Me

Here are the thoughts of our Sokol young people, who applied for the 1996-97 Merit Award, on What Sokol Means to them:

Tina Necasek - Sokol Greater Cleveland

We all know that "Sokol" is really Czech for the word "falcon," I can remember being quizzed on it during the time I was in "Little Girls' Class." But as I've grown, so has the meaning of "Sokol." I've always gone to Sokol to be among other Czechs or to learn and exercise, but I can also be with my friends at Sokol. In the past fifteen years that I've been attending classes there, I've found life-long friends. Together we've been through good and we've been through bad; laughing, crying, playing, sharing, winning, and losing. There, people will continue to be a big part of my future just as Sokol will. So I feel that Sokol really means heritage, fitness, and most of all, friendship.

Andreanna Moravec - Sokol Chicagoland

Sokol has been a part of my life for fifteen years. I have experienced everything from being a tot to my new position as a senior woman. I intend to always be an avid member of Sokol because I love being a part of it. At Sokol, everyone is a family. There is always fun, friendship, caring, and support. A real team effort is present in Sokol, and that is where one learns respect, and discipline for their fellow team members. Sokol may seem like "just another gymnastics program," but there is so much more to it than that. What one learns in Sokol is kept with them throughout the years. Sokol is an experience that I am proud to have. Being a part of Slet where members mass together and perform as one is an unforgettable experience. Going to a National Slet, and being exposed to the thousands of members of Sokol who are strangers to you, but yet realizing that everyone is still a family, can be a bit overwhelming. A person's ties with Sokol only get stronger as time goes on, I know mine have. I always want to be a part of the unity, and family that Sokol is. I will teach those characteristics that represent Sokol, so that others may benefit from what I have experienced, and see the true meaning of Sokol.

Erika Nakonecznyj - Sokol Ceska Sin

Sokol, over the years, has meant so many different things to me. At the age of six, it meant a new beginning. I enrolled in Sokol Ceska Sin with my best friend. I learned all the basic skills and

was introduced to the Sokol way of life. During that year I performed in my very first competition and exhibition. Over the next few years, I mastered the basic skills and got to compete in more competitions, track meets and perform the Little Girls Calisthenics in Montreal, Canada.

As I graduated to the Junior Girls class, Sokol helped me grow and mature socially, emotionally, as well as physically. It was at this time that I competed in my first national competition in Indianapolis, Indiana. My team came in first place, but it wasn't winning that was so important, but that my hard work had paid off, and we had worked as a team to achieve our goal, an idea instilled in me by Sokol. A few years later, I went to a Sokol Instructors school in Omaha, Nebraska. I learned a lot of new teaching techniques, history and culture of Sokol. I also met so many new friends, some of whom I still keep in touch with. After returning home I could put all my new techniques to use instructing the Kindergarten Class.

Throughout the years, the things I have learned in Sokol are the basis of what it means to me; hard work, discipline, confidence, respect, friendship, and most importantly fun. Sokol has taught me so many useful things that will help me grow and prosper in my future ventures.

Melissa Chamberlain - Sokol Fort Worth

To me, Sokol means welcome. Welcome into our family - a Sokol family. When I was first introduced to Sokol, it was merely a place close to home to practice gymnastics. However, I soon realized how much the members were like one gigantic family all over the world. In this aspect Sokol then became much more than a place to workout.

My Sokol family has helped me make and achieve a great deal of my life's goals. I become inspired to live a long life watching the various age groups compete in everything from gymnastics apparatus to marching and prosthena numbers. The members' inspirations have helped me decide on Physical Therapy as a major so that I can assure my self that I can return the help and inspiration they gave to me.

Now, as a coach for Sokol Ft. Worth, Sokol also means a place to learn and take on new responsibilities as well as teach others to strive to become their best. In the long run, Sokol has been a place where I myself can strive to do my best and help many other people looking for a place full of love and inspiration become all they can in life.

FUTURE SOKOL LEADERS FUND

Purpose: To train and educate young people to assure able administrators, the best of idealistic instructors and educational directors for Sokol Units and Districts.

In Memory of Marjorie Vyskocil, Sokol Town of Lake:

From her Husband, Jerry T. Vyskocil	\$50.00	From Sokol Town of Lake	\$25.00
From Ed & Anne Halik	\$10.00	From Ralph & Vivian Scott	\$25.00
In Memory of Frances "Fanda" Kotras, from Mr. & Mrs. Martin L. Lago		\$50.00	
In Memory of Laddie Zack from Sokol Berwyn-Slavsky		\$5.00	

IT'S SOKOL USA, A MOVEMENT FOUNDED ON MASS MOVEMENT (Continued)

however, practiced in secret and some were thrown in prison when they were caught.)

"In the United States, Sokol was kept alive and it allowed immigrants to create a community where they felt welcome," said Walko, whose parents emigrated from Slovakia and introduced her to Sokol as soon as she could walk.

Sokol gymnasiums eventually became ethnic recreational centers for Americans of Czech and Slovak heritage, offering families everything from exercise classes to folk dancing to a seat at the gyms' in-house taverns.

"We say that Sokol is a way of life," Walko said, as she struggled to come up with another fraternal organization to use for comparison. It's like the Elks or Moose, she said, because of the instant fraternity. But they don't exercise together, do they?

Yatchyshyn jumped in to help. "It's a lot like being part of a marching band," she said. Maybe that's why in addition to performing a Slet (the word means flock and describes the mass performance), the group also marched in the July 4th parade on the Parkway (in Philadelphia).

About 400 men, women and children dressed in leotards and tight exercise tunics kept time to Czechoslovakian chants and cadences. Women in long skirts waved red handkerchiefs in synchronization and young people performed tumbling exercises along the parade route. Some of the oldest Sokol members in their 80's, marched holding placards that said: "Sokol of the Free World."

"What's so great is that our shows tell a story in a way," said Phillip Podhrasky, who came from Dallas to march and exercise in the Philadelphia Slet. "We perform to music that traces the roots of Sokol,

and the music tells the history of the Czech Republic and then moves right into modern times," he said.

Sokol has had a slow resurgence in the Czech and Slovak Republics since the fall of Communism. That is because an entire generation was unfamiliar with Sokol, confusing it with Spartakiada, which is what the Communists introduced to take its place, said Slovakian journalist Gustav Murin.

Walko estimated that in the United States there are more than 40,000 members of Sokol organizations, which have become more like competitive gymnastic clubs. Still, the traditional slets are the heart and soul of Sokol and every four years, thousands of Sokol members gather for one afternoon of bending and stretching together.

"Yes, sometimes people think we are strange," said Walko, "but to us, this is family."

AMERICAN SOKOL ORGANIZATION *(Continued)*

The American Sokol Organization dates its beginning to St. Louis, where the early Czech immigrants founded Sokol in February 1865. Chicago followed in 1866 and two units were organized in New York in 1867. By 1878 there were 13 Sokol units which formed the National Sokol Union, in 1917 renamed American Sokol Organization. The first unit for women and girls was organized in Cleveland in 1880. With additional immigrant waves, Sokol broadened its base and cultivated a wider Sokol program. By 1937, American Sokol registered almost 20,000 adults and just as many children and juniors. All across America there were 86 Sokol units divided into six districts. The seat of the organization is in Berwyn, IL, the metropolis of Czech life in America. The 1995 Convention elected Bro. Fred Kala as president, Bro. David Harlan as Director of Men and Sis. Jan Kalat as Director of Women.

The convention, held every five years, is the highest structural body. The eleven-member Board of Governors oversees the Executive Committee that administers the daily business of the organization. Of the six sub-committees, the Board of Instructors plays the most important role. It is in charge of all gymnastic and sport activities, conducts Sokol courses and prepares national Slets (5-day Sokol festivals which in four-year intervals include gymnastic and sport competitions, ending with Sunday's presentation of calisthenics of all classes

performed outdoors by several thousand of Sokols). to enable the units effective cooperation, there are six regional districts, administered by officers from local units. The official publication, "American Sokol," published since 1879, devotes most of its space to gymnastics and other Sokol activities. Despite a lifestyle that prefers professionalism, American Sokol Organization rests on volunteers. Its 6,000 adults and as many children and juniors, underpin 34 active units with gymnastic, sport or educational programs and 26 units without such activities, yet members keep paying dues to benefit Sokol youth. To be a Sokol is a lifetime commitment.

Over the years, Tyr's followers improved his Sokol program to such a high methodical level that there is nothing better to build a child's body and instill moral values. With warm-up exercises, through work on three apparatus, followed by resistives and games to sow seeds of teamwork and fair play, cooling off with part of mass calisthenics and ending with occasional song or marching, a child is given a matchless avenue for meaningful development. Sokols train their own instructors in Sokol courses. The students are taught the basic principles of a gym class, given instruction in demonstrating routines, spotting, judging, leadership, understanding of calisthenics, progression of elements and knowledge of other sports. Evening classes deal with social activities and lectures on

Sokol in general. Self-discipline is considered the most important characteristic of any Sokol leader.

Although the American Sokol Organization is primarily concerned with activities of American youth and registers any child or accepts any adult of good character, it has developed a number of outstanding champions. As loyal supporter of USA Gymnastics, it was the pillar of the Gymnastic Section of the AAU. Many national meets were held in Sokol halls. Besides the three Sokols who represented the United States winning medals at Olympic Games (Bro. Frank Kriz, Bro. Jim Hartung and Sis. Laddie Bakanic), Bro. Rudolf Novak of Sokol Cedar Rapids was a member of the U.S. Gymnastic Team in 1924 in Paris. Bro. Edward Knourek, Sokol Chicago, competed at the same Olympiad in Pole Vault. The following Sokols were also members of Olympic Gymnastic Teams: Bro. Paul Fina, Sokol Chicago in 1940; Bro. Jim Hartung and Bro. Phil Cahoy, Sokol South Omaha in 1980. Bro. Tom Hintnaus made the Olympic Team in 1980 in Pole Vault.

Among the national gymnastic AAU Champions, Bro. Antonin Jahoda won the Vault in 1902 and the Parallel Bars in 1903. Bro. Anton Klar won Parallel Bars in 1910, Bro. Josef Gregor won the Vault in 1908 and 1911, Bro. William Heisler won the Vault in 1909 and 1910, Bro. Frank Jirasek won the Parallel Bars in 1909 and 1910, Bro. Rudolf

Continued on Page 9.

AMERICAN SOKOL ORGANIZATION *(Continued)*

Hradecky won the Vault in 1928, 1936, 1944, 1946 and 1947 and Bro. Charlie Skoch won the Junior Championship in 1930. Bro. Walter Boskovic of Sokol Chicago, who lost his left leg while still a child, won the AAU Championship on Rings in 1941. Similarly, Bros. Paul Fina, Henry Smile, Stanley Barrack, Charles Verve, Tony Hlinka and Sis. Jarmila Krisenecky and Popsi Popisil won many medals at the AAU Championships. In 1941, Sokol Team won first place at the AAU National Championship. In addition, there were several members of the Czech Olympic Team who came to the United States to instruct Sokol classes, among them Bro. Jarka Jelinek, Josef Kos and Frank Prihoda; they all stayed permanently. In 1948, the American Sokol was enriched by the presence of Sis. Marie Provaznikova, (1890-1991) Chair of the International Gymnastic Federation and Director of Czech Sokol.

Among the women pioneers of gymnastics, no one stands higher than Sis. Mildred Prchal, (1895-1983), the first Director of Women of any Sokol. The "mother" of Rhythmic Gymnastics, Sis. Prchal proved that women are fully capable of conducting their gymnastic affairs. Influenced by her studies with Augustin Ocenasek in Prague and Prof. d'Allesandi in Paris in 1920, she brought in many innovations that led to great

improvements in American gymnastics. Later, she served as President of Modern Rhythmics and on the U.S. Olympic Committee. Her student, Prof. Norma Zabka, besides being an international judge, served as Vice Chair of Rhythmics, USA Gymnastics. Among the men administrators, Bro. Paul Fina and Bro Jerry Hardy played important roles in AAU Gymnastics, followed by Bro. Jerry Milan who represents Sokol in the USA Gymnastics. Bro. Jerry Hardy, as AAU Administrator, served on the Olympic Committee. He also judged on many international gymnastic meets.

The Honor Roll in USA Gymnastics is sprinkled with several American Sokols, a testimony to the unending Sokol efforts to improve the life of American youth. During WWI over one thousand Sokols enlisted in the Czechoslovak Legions contributing heavily to the rebirth of a Czechoslovak independent state. During WWII, Sokol men's classes ceased to exist, as all young men served in the U.S. Armed Forces. Sokols never failed to discharge their moral responsibility. Even if the ethnicity seems to fade, the Sokol idea is still a moving force imbedded deeply in thousands of American hearts. The United States Government recognized the noble efforts of all Sokols when, commemorating Sokol's Centennial in the United States, issued on February 15, 1965 a Sokol postage stamp.

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This year's Western District Slet was hosted by Sokol South Omaha on June 7, 8, 9, 1996. Competition in

both Rhythmics and Artistic Gymnastics, a social evening at Sokol Park for all competitors and Unit members, an awards ceremony and dance, and, of course, a Sunday Slet program, provided all units of the Western District a very busy Sokol weekend.



Pictured L to R:
Phil Cahoy, Jolene Dalton, Bozena Drozda, Joe Masek.

A highlight of the Slet was the presentation of District Director pins to past directors of the Western District. Receiving these awards were Bozena Drozda 1962-1980, Jolene Dalton 1981-1986, Phil Cahoy 1977-1982, Joseph Masek 1983. These individuals were very dedicated to their position as Director of Men or Women of the District and are most deserving of these awards.

Congratulations and a Sokol "Zdar!" to these very energetic Directors of the Western District.

~Vojmir & Sandra Benak
Western District Directors

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