

american **SOKOL**



Volume CXXI, Number V

JUNE 1999

GUEST SPEAKER

Bro. Vladislav Slavik, President, Eastern District, American Sokol Organization

SOKOL FUTURE

Answering the call in the May '99 Directors' Newsletter and also adding to the ongoing discussion within the Eastern District I will attempt to join those who, quite properly, are seeking to advance the Sokol cause into the next century. I would much rather read about Sokol Future, especially if such a writing were prepared by younger Sokols. Sokol Future belongs to our young members, therefore it is for them to articulate means and ways which will carry our organization through the difficult times facing us not only today, but mainly in the coming years. The only reason I am submitting a position paper is that it is difficult to turn my face away from a life-time of Sokol involvement.

Here, in the Eastern District, we have analyzed our present situation, stressed some points, put it on paper and sent it to other districts or anybody sharing our worries about the future. Caught in a dilemma beyond our power to tackle alone, we have asked the Executive Board to put Sokol future on the agenda of the April convention. We believe that all units should consider the problems facing us so that their delegates will be ready to participate in general discussions and perhaps even come up with some solutions. In terms of activities, our units are so diverse that we don't expect, and don't want, all units to adhere strictly to a plan created by a national body. Yet, some kind of policy layout or a general outline ought to be formulated that would cover most of our activities and guide us toward the future. For better or worse, somehow our Sokol world has changed. The closer we converge upon the next millennium, the faster our world is changing. The days of Sokol libraries, singing, drama, or educational circles disappeared long ago, even if they were an effective source of creative achievement. Television replaced the sense of togetherness. . Our unit meetings, not so long ago a welcome change in daily life, attended by most members, are becoming a mere gathering of officers, if that. We do admire our past, our glorious Slets and wonder why our labor, as sincere and diligent as that of our predecessors, brings such an indigent Sokol harvest. Given such an unsatisfactory self-analysis, let us ask ourselves whether there is a Sokol future. Yes, there is! Quite often without realizing it, we possess several important assets, on which we can build our future.

SOKOL CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

We can be proud of our children's program, which if properly conducted, has no rival; it is almost flawless. Parents of our children and knowledgeable people agree that Sokol classes are the best way to give children a sound mind in a healthy body. All we have to do is to insist on the quality of our instructors and demand of them a total adherence to the outline of our classes. We seem to have sufficient number of girls, while the attendance of boys' classes needs improvement. We may be lacking boys' instructors and leaders, although the pressure of other sports is felt more on the boys than the girls.

Continued on Page 8.

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A.S.O. Executive Board meets every 4th
Tuesday (except July/August), 7:30 P.M.

A.S.O. Board of Instructors meets every 2nd
Wednesday (except July/August), 7:30 P.M.

From Your Editor...

You would think that it being the end of the Sokol year I could begin to relax and actually get this magazine out on time. The exact opposite proves to be true. I seem to be pulled in seventeen directions at once, the end of the year turning out to be even more hectic than the beginning or the middle. Hey, it's the Sokol way. That's why we love it, right!?? Take lots of pictures at the Cleveland Slet and send them to me!! Enjoy your summer.

NA ZDAR!

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

CALENDAR of EVENTS

JULY

4 Sokol Detroit Family Picnic
4-17 Sokol USA Instructors'
School at Sokol Woodlands
10-11 Sokol Detroit Ethnic Festival
11 Sokol Ceska Sin Cesky Den
17 Sokol Ceska Sin Golf Outing
19-8/3 ASO Instructors' School at
Sokol South Omaha

AUGUST

1 Sokol Ceska Sin Picnic
7 Sokol Ceska Sin Bike Hike
13-20 D.A. Sokol Camping
Program/School at Sokol
Woodlands
28 Sokol Detroit Summer Fest
Beach Party at Sokol Camp

**XIII ALL-SOKOL SLET
JUNE 26-JULY 2, 2000
PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC**

THOUGHT STARTERS

from Bro. Jerry Milan, A.S.O. Educational Director

"Differences challenge assumptions."

~ ANNE WILSON SCHAEF

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.

CENTRAL DISTRICT T.N.T. TEAM

Bro. Tom Pajer, Sokol Berwyn-Slavsky, has asked and answered the question "How can we promote the Sokol Organization to the community in a new and exciting way?" He has organized and recruited the Central District TNT (Traveling 'n Tumbling) Team. The team consists of 13 members from various units in the Central District: **Sokol Berwyn-Slavsky:** Tom Pajer, Janet Lutha, Jeff Marchluk, Mario Mongello, Kandi Ondrovic, Angelica Puchala; **Sokol Tabor,** Sash Dumanovic, Julia Hickey, Ted Polasek; **Sokol Naperville:** Joe Kucera; **Sokol Chicagoland:** Karyn Domzalski, Katie Stahulak; **Sokol Stickney:** Paul Koc.

Throughout the year, the team makes appearances at exhibitions, ethnic festivals, parades – anywhere they can set up mats and complete a 4-high pyramid without going through the ceiling (although that has already happened - going through a ceiling, that is).

The team is always looking for opportunities to show off the Sokol ideals. This year, the team has performed in the Houby Parade (Berwyn/Cicero, IL), the Central District Progressions Clinic, a Folk Fest in Naperville (IL), at the Gymnastic Exhibitions of Sokol Ceska Sin (OH), Sokol Berwyn-Slavsky and Sokol Chicagoland and at the Central

District Special Number Competition. Their performance at the Central District Slet was unfortunately rained out, but in mid-June they will perform at a Czech Festival in Phillips, WI.

Are you interested in becoming a member of the team? Do you have an idea for a future performance venue? Would you like to make a donation for traveling expenses? Call Tom Pajer at 630-833-6916. The Central District TNT Team is a great way to show off the Sokol program to many different groups of people!



Certificate received by American Sokol Organization from Ceska Obec Sokolska

MEMBER **IN** SIGHT

*By Sis. Joan Curran
ASO Membership Chairman*

Sometimes, we can hardly wait to "go home" after being at the gym. But in a short time, we're back again, doing the same thing. After all, it is a place where we are challenged to make ourselves into a better person by learning a new drill, exercising, playing a game or being with our friends. It is a place to go to make you feel good and where you are comfortable, just like at home. Sokol – your home away from home!

NA ZDAR!

THE CZECH CONNECTION

The movie "Shakespeare In Love" received seven Oscars, including Best Picture and Best Screenplay. The screenplay was co-written by Tom Stoppard and Marc Norman. Tom Stoppard was born in the Moravian city of Zlin. His family emigrated to Britain when he was a child.

~ Submitted by Bro. Paul Lebloch



BRO. CYRILL (SID) POKLADNIK OF SOKOL ZIZKA, DALLAS, HONORED



*Left to Right, Bro. Cyril (Sid) Pokladnik, Sis. Justine Pokladnik,
Bro. Larry Laznovsky, President, Southern District ASO*

Bro. Sid. Pokladnik, a 50-year member of Sokol Zizka, Dallas, was selected as 1998 SPJST Fraternalist of the Year. He is a respected leader of the Czechs in Texas and has done much to promote and preserve Czech Heritage and Culture. He is known throughout the United States for his fraternal work. In Texas, he has been a force which was successful in promoting the relationships between Sokol and the fraternal organizations in the state.

A strong supporter of Sokol activities in the Southern District, he and the Dallas Czech Concert Orchestra, which he led, provided the musical accompaniment of most of the Southern District Slets. He led the orchestra in its musical accompaniment at the

1967 ASO mid-Slet held in Dallas and the 1981 ASO Slet in Fort Worth. He also provided accompaniment for many of the activities of the units of the District.

In appreciation for their support of Sokol activities, Bro. Sid and his wife, Sis. Justine, were recognized by the Southern District Executive Board in 1997. Officers of the Southern District, unit executive board delegates and members, Sis. Janet Kalat - ASO Director of Women and Bro. Chuck Kalat - ASO Executive Board member were present.

Thanks Bro. Sid and Sis. Justine for your years of dedicated support! Na Zdar!

*~ Submitted by Sis. Sylvia Laznovsky,
Southern District Educational Director*

INTRO SOUNDS FOR POLKA'S LAST WALTZ

From the Chicago Tribune, Friday, February 12, 1999

Letter from Omaha: A shrinking fan base takes its toll on the music a once-thriving Czech community high-stepped to for years, Tribune correspondent Stevenson Swanson writes.

OMAHA - The Saturday night polka parties at the Sokol Auditorium in Omaha's old Bohemian neighborhood are scheduled to last until 11 p.m., but by 10 p.m. on a recent polka night, the ballroom was practically empty.

Some 100 people had showed up to dance to a trio led by local musician Mark Vyhlidal, but a couple of hours of lively music and fast-stepping was enough for them. That's understandable, considering that the average age of the crowd was about 70, said Gary Masek, president of Sokol Omaha, which owns the 73-year-old auditorium.

By 10 p.m., "it's past their bedtime," said Masek, speaking from the comparatively youthful vantage point of 51. Still, he reflected, a couple of days after the dance, a turnout that breaks into three figures is pretty good these days.

"Old people are the ones who come," he said philosophically, leaning back in a chair in his office nest to the dance floor. "And the polka dancers are dying out."

For decades, polka nights at the

two-story brick social hall were a mainstay of the large Bohemian population that settled in Omaha in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. But now, like ethnic enclaves across the country, the neighborhood south of the business district is no longer so tightly knit. The descendants of the Czech immigrants who came to Omaha to work in the city's once-sprawling stockyards and other industries have scattered to the suburbs.

As they move out, they leave the polka behind.

"The younger generation didn't follow the music," said Sokol Omaha Vice-President Bob Barnhart, 58, an avid polka fan who notes that none of his three children have followed in his footsteps.

Swing has made a roaring comeback among young people, but not polka. Here's the reason in a nutshell: The Gap features a Louis Prima recording of "Jump, Jive and Wail" in a popular television commercial for its clothing; it will never show young folks flapping their khakis to "The Beer Barrel Polka."

"It's a real energetic music," Barnhart said in defense of the hopping, high-stepping dance, which was once popular among many Central European immigrant groups. "It's a happy, lively music. And you dance a s

couples. A lot of (men) met their wives polka dancing."

In its heyday as the focal point of the Bohemian community, the strip of restaurants, bars and social halls along 13th Street south of downtown Omaha was one big polka party on Saturday nights. Omaha residents of a certain age recall fondly the dances at the old Prague Hotel or at Vocelka's or Chops, both long-gone restaurants.

On dance nights, whole families would descend on the Sokol building. Masek, a retired firefighter, recalls playing on the dance floor with other youngsters when bands took their breaks.

"We all met down here and we stayed best friends," said Mildred Krejci, 79, who started coming to dances in the 1930's. "There weren't so many activities in schools then, and the (Bohemian) people all lived in this area."

But by the mid-1980's, many families had moved away, to be replaced by more recent arrivals, such as Mexican immigrants. And among the descendants of the original Czech immigrants, the sense of being part of a community started to break down.

Now, there is only one Bohemian restaurant left in the old neighborhood, and the families that moved to the new homes

Continued on Page 6.

FUTURE SOKOL LEADERS FUND

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

In Memory of Jerry Skala and Tulio Convalli from Anna Basta	\$25.00
In Memory of Al Cecka from Jerry Pech	\$10.00
In Memory of Charles Ruzicka from Anton Smunt	\$25.00
In Memory of George Salaba from Sokol Town of Lake	\$25.00
In Memory of Charles Ruzicka from Jerry Pech	\$20.00

GENERAL FUND

In Memory of Retired Senator Roman Hruska from Roy & Vlasta Zitny	\$15.00
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MEMORIAM 🍷 Sis. Adeline Lankas and Bro. Charles Ruzicka

Sokol Town of Lake has recently lost two loyal members. In October 1998, Sis. Adeline Lankas died at the age of 94. A Town of Lake member for 77 years, she served her unit faithfully in many capacities. She will be remembered for the many female leading roles she performed at both the CSPS Hall and at Sokol Camp. Another heartfelt loss was the death of Bro. Charles Ruzicka in January 1999 at the age of 93. He was always a staunch supporter of Sokol during his 76-year membership and a real booster for the Town of Lake unit. These two members leave a huge void in our ranks.

~ Submitted by Sis. Mildred Mentzer

POLKA (continued)

with big yards in Omaha's suburban areas have other things to do than come back for polka night.

These days, the youngest people in the wooden-floored ballroom on polka nights tend to be the musicians, who may play rock or jazz other nights of the week and play polka music on the side to pick up extra cash. But, Barnhart noted, he can't think of any musicians in their 20's who play polka.

The capacious ballroom, with an American flag on one side of the stage and a Czech Republic flag on the other, can hold more than 1,000 hoofers. It still draws

crowds of that size - but only when Masek and Barnhart bring in rock bands.

Those crowds are far different from polka patrons. Masek pointed to the ornate crystal chandelier that hangs over the dance floor, a recent replacement for the original chandelier.

"The last one was broken in a rock concert when someone tried to swing from it," Masek said with a smile.

Given its importance in local polka history, it's no surprise that the Sokol Auditorium is the home of the Nebraska Polka Hall of Fame, which honors musicians

and bandleaders. Since bandleader Jim Hovorka became the first inductee in 1972, 81 names have been posted on the large wooden board in the Sokol ballroom that constitutes the "hall."

Two or three musicians are added each year, but the board has plenty of empty space. It seems unlikely that it will ever be filled.

"It gets to a point where you don't want to wear yourself out dancing," said Krejci. "It's getting to be a lost cause, I think."

~ Stevenson Swanson is a national correspondent in the Tribune's New York bureau.



AMERICAN SOKOL ORGANIZATION

GYMNAST

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



THE FUTURE OF SOKOL

Over the last several months, there have been a number of calls for the Sokol Leadership and Sokol Membership to start to consider how to make Sokol a viable institution in the new millennium. Units districts and individuals have begun this process in preparation for the American Sokol Organization National Convention in April, 2000. From the article below, however, it becomes painfully obvious that this type of activity is not and should not be something new, but rather a continuous ongoing activity throughout the life of Sokol. Though we may start by talking, the future will be determined by our actions.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF OUR SOKOL PROGRAM

by Edwin J. Halik, Sr. - April, 1986

"Originally, I was thinking of the Sokol Program at the gymnasium or Board of Instructors level, as an alternative for what I have been calling "Instant Teachers Courses" (one week or week-end courses), but there are problems at the Administrative level as well, so why not talk about them too!

I propose that the Central District of the American Sokol Organization and its affiliated Units, whether gymnastically active or not, hold meetings, call them conferences, workshops, consultations, seminars or just plain meeting, but no matter what we call them let's have them, at the various levels of activity, be it administrative, Board of Instructors, teaching levels, educational, cultural, social or other levels, to discuss and to plan our future course of action.

We have many problems administratively such as building maintenance and rehabilitation, rentals, new or proposed building programs, re-activation, insurance problems, fund raising and membership (new or old) to mention a few. There are educational, cultural and social programs to be talked about and also, how about P.R. (Public Relations)!

At the Board of Instructors level, there's a lot to be discussed, i.e. Types of programs to be offered, reclassification of classes, especially at the First Class level which has too wide an age span (6-9years) agewise or comprehensionwise. How about skill groups, specialty sports training, fitness, conditioning, aerobics, apparatus, acrobatics and tumbling, dance in basic and advanced forms, exhibition calisthenics, special number calisthenics and others such as recreational activities. **You name it, let's discuss it.**

Instructors and leaders should meet at the various class levels (eventually all class levels to meet together) to discuss, compare and evaluate methods, practices and opinions on Sokol theory, class handling, class organization, teachable teaching materials in marching, calisthenics, apparatus and games, apparatus to be or not to be used, spotting, assisting, guarding, difficulty of exercises, planning and preparing a program and/or schedule, knowledge and use of basic and advanced skills, talks to the class (historical, cultural or topical) in a short simple form (make it narrative or anecdotal), improvisations and innovations, composition of calisthenics and special numbers, selection of music, composition of apparatus, tumbling, floor and rhythmic routines at proper skill levels of the participants, knowledge of Sokol terminology and its basic use for program planning, i.e. marching, calisthenics, exercises with hand implements, track and field, apparatus exercises, combative and resistive exercises, pyramids, the use of descriptive and other terminology and last but not least, how to use the tape recorder and amplifier system if available. It has been suggested that class assistants should be included in these sessions."

In Search of the Sweet Spot(s)

Every athlete who uses a piece of equipment to strike a ball or puck knows about the sweet spot. It is that one point of contact on a softball or baseball bat, hockey stick, golf club, or tennis racket that feels perfect.

Three Features

The perfect sweet spot is characterized by three features. The first is maximum speed or power when the object is struck. A baseball explodes off of the bat of Mark McGuire or a tennis ball leaves the face of Pete Sampras' racket at a speed of over 100 miles per hour. Experienced observers can even recognize a sweet spot sound -- a distinctive "crack" in baseball, a "whack" in golf, a "pock" in racket sports.

The second feature of the perfect sweet spot is minimum vibration. Upon impact, every piece of equipment vibrates briefly as it changes shape then returns to normal. The less the vibration, the more likely that you have made contact with a second sweet spot that is even narrower than the point of power and speed.

But there is one more sweet spot characteristic. Scientists call it the 'center of percussion' and it is the point of contact that causes the least amount of shock to your hands and arms. Unlike vibration that continues until the bat has regained its shape, this shock comes from the single impact of a piece of equipment hitting an object --- like a tire on your car when you hit a pothole in the road. When you hit an object solidly without feeling the shock, you've made a triple play, a sweet spot within a second spot within a third.

Science vs Marketing

Designing sports equipment that offers the best opportunity for maximum power with minimal vibration and little or no shock is what drives sporting goods research and development. Every company is trying to make a bigger sweet spot, constantly trying to achieve a sort of nirvana that will make average players perform at a higher level.

But the line between science and marketing becomes blurred when companies start telling you how their equipment attains ultimate sweet spot technology. Some do it with strong, stiff, light-weight materials like titanium and carbon. Others reshape club, stick, and racket heads to make the hitting surfaces and sweet spots bigger without increasing the overall weight (in tennis,

oversized racket heads; in golf, oversized club heads).

Still others maintain or even reduce weight, but redistribute that weight to place the sweet spot in a more favorable hitting position. Research shows that two-thirds of all shots in tennis are hit above the center of the frame and nearer the tip of the racket. So rackets were changed to make the hitting area near the tip bigger and to move the sweet spot in that direction.

A Feeling of Forgiveness

By making the sweet spot larger, the bats, sticks, rackets, and clubs are more forgiving -- a concept that is very popular among recreational athletes who can't afford the practice time or don't have the talent to connect with a relatively small sweet spot on every swing. There is not a lot of evidence that athletes today can hit balls and pucks harder or farther than they did 50 years ago. But with larger sweet spots, modern athletes can hit hard and long more often than in the past. They can also strike a ball off-center and get good pace and distance. Sweet spots on old tennis rackets used to be very small -- about the size of a golf ball. Now, sweet spots are the size of four tennis balls."

Try Before You Buy

The changing technology makes it imperative to experiment with new equipment before buying it. Some companies have set up in-store practice cages and simulated golf courses that make pre-sale practice sessions possible. Consider these pre-purchase suggestions:

- ♦ Ask your friends about equipment, but make sure your friends are similar in size, strength, ability, and preferences. Players have different needs relative to power, control, maneuverability, and even appearance.
- ♦ Try new equipment in the store, if possible.
- ♦ Request loaner rackets, sticks, bats, and clubs. For a deposit, you can take a test run.
- ♦ Use new equipment in game situations before a purchase. Products that feel right in a controlled practice environment may not perform when a greater variety of shots is needed during competition.
- ♦ Don't dismiss a product until you have given it a fair trial or two or three. Give yourself as much time as possible. Every piece of equipment requires an adjustment period, even if the sweet spot is bigger and better than ever.

Georgia Tech Sports Medicine & Performance Newsletter, April, 1999.

GOOD WORKOUT

Key to Getting Fit: Concentrate and Enjoy It

Some people approach exercise like they're taking medicine -- they think about something else and get it over with as quickly as possible. On cardiovascular equipment, they pay more attention to what they're reading than to how they're moving. They hit the showers without cooling down or stretching. They rush through stomach crunches. Other people sacrifice good form as they try to lift too much weight, some work out too hard while others don't work hard enough, and many people drink less water than they need.

These are some of the most common workout mistakes, according to fitness professionals and the American Council on Exercise (ACE).

At best, these mistakes could make the difference between effective and ineffective workouts, and at the worst, they could lead to strain and injury, ACE said when the non-profit fitness organization released results of its survey of 3,000 fitness professionals about the 10 most common workout mistakes.

No. 1 on the list is not stretching enough. Many people don't stretch because they're in a hurry, but the time saved is not worth it due to the risk of injury. Flexible muscles are far less likely to be strained or pulled than tight ones. It's generally recommended to warm up for 5-10 minutes with low-level aerobic activity and then to stretch before exercising. It's also highly recommended to stretch after exercising, too. For a good stretch, hold a position to the point of slight tension. It shouldn't be uncomfortable. You shouldn't bounce because you could strain your muscles.

After an aerobic workout, it's important to take 5-10 minutes to cool down by gradually decreasing your heart rate. Finish by stretching major muscle groups used in your exercise.

Some people decrease the effectiveness of their workouts by failing to pay close attention or to challenge themselves. A lot of people don't use a machine to their advantage. They get stuck into plateaus and get bored. They'll pick up a magazine, throw it on the Stairmaster and get engrossed in their reading. They don't challenge themselves and don't experience exercise as something pleasurable. They don't even want to be there."

Other people mistakenly believe that more of any exercise is good, and the faster the better. If most people would slow down and concentrate, they would work their muscles more effectively. A common example of this is people who rapidly do a high number of stomach crunches -- they're using momentum, not muscle. Instead of doing 100 crunches really fast, it would be much more effective to do 20 at a much slower pace.

Fitness professionals said people make mistakes because they're not concentrating on their form. For example, people extend their knees over their toes when they do lunges. But this puts too much pressure on the kneecap. You shouldn't lean forward when you do a lunge. It should be more of an up and down motion and the knee should be over the ankle.

Some people work out too intensely. The problem is your body doesn't have time to break down fat and use it for energy if you work at too high a heart rate. A simple way to reach a good intensity level is to think in terms of "rate of perceived exertion." "You should be working somewhat hard to hard -- you want to be a little short of breath. You still should be able to carry on a conversation, but it's a little difficult. If you can't talk, you're up too high.

An even more fundamental workout mistake is going through the motions without trying to enjoy the process. "People who are maintaining the exercise habit are those who have learned to enjoy it."

Here is the list of the 10 most frequent workout mistakes:

- ♦ Not stretching enough
- ♦ Lifting too much weight
- ♦ Not warming up prior to aerobic activity
- ♦ Not cooling down after any type of workout
- ♦ Exercising too intensely
- ♦ Not drinking enough water
- ♦ Leaning heavily on the stair-stepper
- ♦ Not exercising intensely enough
- ♦ Jerking while lifting weights
- ♦ Consuming energy bars and sports drinks during moderate workouts

Deborah White, Scripps Howard News Service, "In Sync", Plano Star Courier, February 26, 1999

Alternative Exercise: Rubber Cords

Rubber bands, tubes, and cords are not the resistance exercise equipment of choice among serious lifters, but they are commonly and effectively used by athletes rehabilitating from injuries, by senior exercisers, and by travelers. They are available at drug stores in various lengths, widths, and colors that correspond to the amount of resistance they provide.

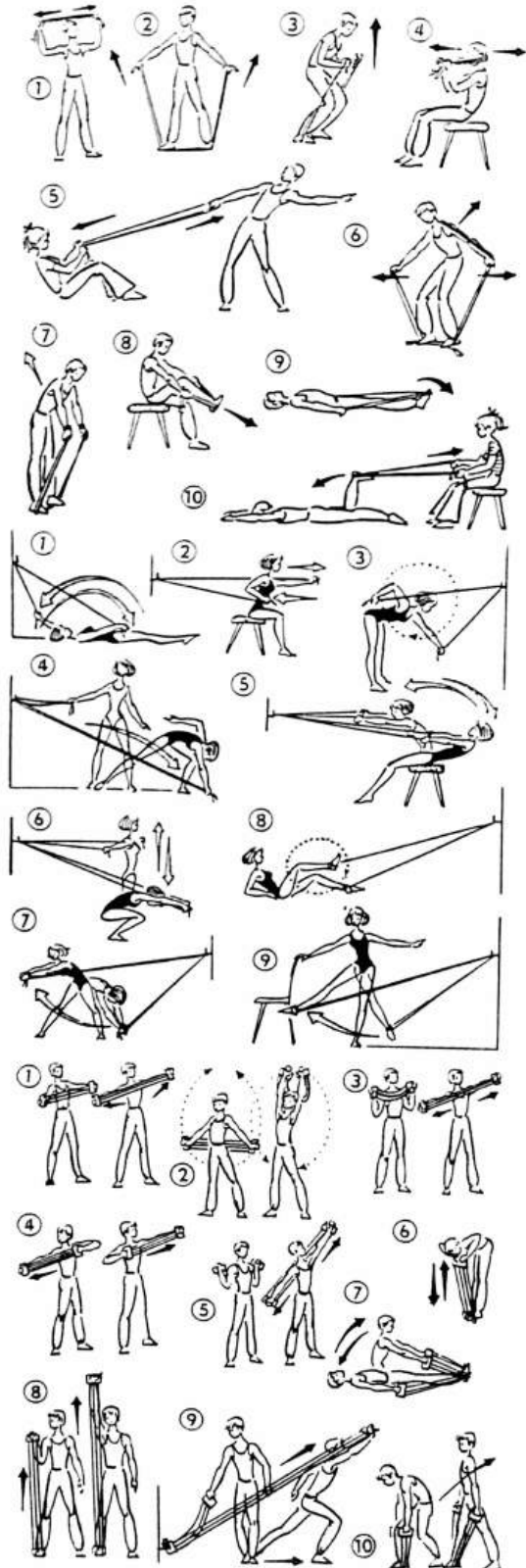
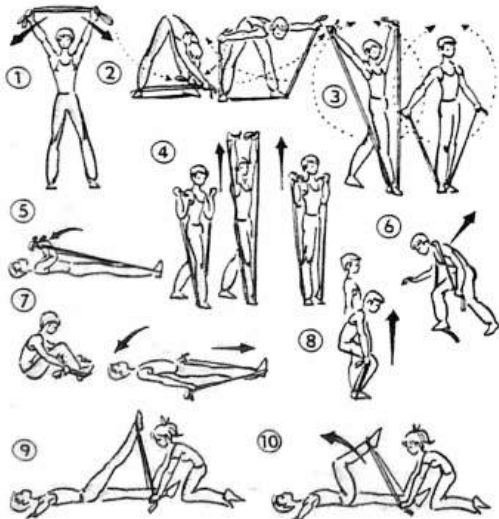
Advantages

"Some people are simply reluctant to use free weights or machines," says Editorial Board member Thomas Baechle, co-author of *Strength Training*, "but they don't seem to mind working out with elastic bands. The advantages of rubber cords include low cost, safety, versatility, and the little amount space that they occupy when traveling. We recommend rolls because they can be cut to any length that is needed."

Disadvantages

"The main disadvantage is that the amount of resistance and progress using cords are difficult to measure," Baechle adds. "Another limitation is the lack of uniform resistance throughout the range of movement. There is less resistance at the start and increased resistance at the end of an exercise. This is not consistent with sport-specific resistance achieved using free weights or machines."

The number of exercises using rubber or elastic bands is limited only by your imagination. However you exercise, make sure that the cord is attached to an immovable object or that you are standing on part of the cord to keep it from moving. *Georgia Tech Sports Medicine & Performance Newsletter*, February, 1999.



Diagrams from *Gymnastika pro kazdy den*, 1980, by Bohumil Kos and Jiri Stepnicka. Illustrations by Draha Horakova.

REFLECTIONS

REFLECTIONS

In the tiny Iowa town where I grew up, the local library had two books on gymnastics. One by Knutson and another by Zwarg. I checked them out many times and, as I recall, read them cover to cover – I was 14 at the time. The Zwarg text primarily featured apparatus moves arranged progressively. The Knutson book featured boys around my age – gangly and skinny – doing a multitude of stretching and static hanging moves; principally developmental, bodybuilding moves which really piqued my interest. Every lad who is thin and underdeveloped really hungers and thirsts for strength, more development and greater cosmetic enhancement. I'm sure this also applies to the girls. Because in my day many physical educators were so indifferent to the maturation process (are they any different today?) and one's peers can be so cruel and malicious, it's not unusual that today such emphasis exists on 1001 different regimens, programs, exercises, etc. Everyone who was too thin, too fat, too clumsy, too timid, is now reaching for the stars by purchasing a Bowflex, a Stairmaster, a total gym, a Dynabike, a Universal Supercircuit, and practicing Yoga, martial arts, Tai Chi, meditation – the list is endless.

It seems to me that young people who set out to practice gymnastics today have a different focus. Perhaps we were closer to Tyrs' aims and objectives, i.e., telocvik (body culture) a term which was synonymous with health and physical development. The cvicky (moves) were the means to an end, not an end in themselves as they are today (correct me if I'm wrong). We must not forget that gymnasts were the body builders of that time. Case in point – while rummaging through the archives of old Sokol photos, I found an early studio photo (around 1900) of several Sokol men who proclaimed themselves "the best built men in Cedar Rapids." There they stood, clad only in their pasek (pants), stomachs drawn in, arms slightly flexed, posed in a typical "drustvo" (team) pose. So,

since the beginning of time, men and women have taken pride in their bodies and used various vehicles to display them. For old Sokols, it was Slets and exhibitions (with an occasional studio session). The current generation employs other means.

We also need to remember and become aware of our historical physical education origins. The nucleus which was to become Sokol did not come to Tyrs by divine revelation. He was influenced by Fredrich Jahn (1778-1853), the founder of the Turner movement, who in turn was influenced by Johann Basedow (1723-1790) and Johan Guts Muth (1759-1839), credited with being the forerunners of modern physical education. These teachings were the primary vehicle for mass instruction and development in its time. As with all systems, nothing is perfect, and some critics denounced Jahn's approach. Pehr Ling (1776-1839) the founder of Swedish gymnastics felt Jahn's system led to "complicated movements and did not lend itself to accurate recognition of causes and effects of movement upon the organism" and "hoped to see gymnastics improve the weak as well as the strong." In other words, Swedish gymnastics tend to be more therapeutic and corrective than ours. When we look around our respective gyms and see the stall bars, vaulting box, horizontal ladders, ropes and climbing poles, we need to be reminded these are Ling's inventions and in some circles are referred to as "Swedish apparatus." (Gymnastics & Tumbling, U.S. Naval Institute)

It appears to me that gymnastics has lost sight of or has evolved from its original bodybuilding intent. Telocvik – body culture or body building – whatever term you prefer, seems to have become the domain of the world of free weights and weight machines, and it is true they seem to have more to offer. But while hypertrophy is faster and more dramatic, it's also incomplete, more fleeting and less functional. The muscles and subsequently the human form lacks the classic functional beauty and grace of gymnastically trained bodies. Contemporary gymnastics has metamorphosed into an activity where the physical education aspect seems to have

Continued on Page 10.

Sokol Future *(continued)*

ORGANIZATION

Our wide net of units connected through the districts to the national organization is a tremendous asset which enables us to share information, exchange of advice, at times sharing of skilled and knowledgeable instructors or coaches, and most importantly, hold common affairs which keep us together. Our by-laws, applying to all units, similar structure within units, districts and the national office, refined over the years, simplifying administrative procedures, make it relatively easy to direct, control and run our activities. Unfortunately, here too, quite often, we the officers, fail to pass on correspondence, information or reports which should be shared by others. At times, we do not follow up reports and programs that must be guided to their full realization.

PUBLICATION

Our monthly publication, American Sokol, as any magazine, is informing several thousand of people at once. It is a valuable help to officers and instructors. It is a means of dissemination of Sokol activity, information, be it gymnastics, sports or otherwise, and a tribune of various voices and opinions on our past or future. Directors' Newsletter is a supplement periodical intended to help our instructors/coaches. Many units publish occasional newsletters keeping their members abreast of

current Sokol activity. If our membership used all three publications to their fullest potential, American Sokol would need no discussion about its future. Nevertheless, the press, as the influential fourth power, is of great importance, especially if there is to be a worthy future.

DEDICATED MEMBERS

Not many organizations similar to ours can pride themselves with so many members who have spent their life time working for American Sokol Organization. Of some 55 or 60 units financial reports sent to Berwyn each quarter, there may be two or three that are not sent on time, usually for a reason. That's some average! How many officers fail to attend meetings? Of the 5,500 members how many intentionally avoid paying their dues, even if a good many of them are no longer fit to gym? Many Americans, protracted in the murky sea of professionalism, are wondering what makes us, the Sokols, to be so devoted to the cause of a vision that demands volunteer work, lot of free time and own money to boot.

There must be many more assets that underpin our Sokol movement. Yet, it is difficult to understand that an organization, or organizations, so well endowed, should worry about their future. While we acknowledge some positive factors making it possible to be here over 134 years, we must

concede that at times all our assets are not fully utilized. Additionally, let us admit that there are some liabilities casting a large shadow over all of us.

GYMNASTICS

Over the years gymnastics, our main activity, was surpassed by many other sports. Gymnastics is a difficult sport. It requires not only talent but also hard work, up-to-date apparatus and a qualified coach. While we do have a few coaches who for the love of young people and gymnastics develop excellent gymnasts, gymnastics of national level is beyond us. Today's public wants sport heroes -- professionalism took over. But our program is not to produce champions, even if in the past we did give America several Olympians. Physical fitness of all, be it talented or awkward, skinny or heavy, young or old, is what we striving for. Let us realize that gymnastics alone, without any other Sokol activity will change us into gym clubs which will not suffice for most young people.

SPORTS

At certain age, most children who appreciate our Sokol classes, do realize that gymnastics is not their sport. If there is no other sport or no other activity that would interest them, they leave us. If the unit has no room, no instructor or no desire to get involved in any other physical fitness activities, then there is no future. All vibrant and pro-gressing organizations of

Continued on Page 9.

Sokol Future *(continued)*

World Sokol Federation recognize that sports, any sport, is not an enemy of gymnastics but rather a parallel activity molding a character and improving health of any individual. In all of these organizations the children's Sokol classes have a top priority, just like in American Sokol Organization. Statistically, only about 22% of juniors and seniors are involved in gymnastics, aerobics, rhythmic, folklore dancing or Loyal Guard. All the rest are doing some type of sports, of which we should embrace -- hiking, camping, cross country fun run, indoor table tennis, chess etc. All sports including gymnastics are intertwined, so that one can participate in several sports. Being Sokols, sport members realize that gymnastics is the crown jewel of any Sokol organization and understand that a Slet is a culmination of Sokol ideals. All sports are part of the All Sokol Slet in Prague, but since there are so many, their top competition or tournaments must be scheduled two or three weeks before the Slet. European sportsmen do not have to do calisthenics.

SLET CALISTHENICS deserves a special paragraph.

Traditionally, especially here in America, one has to participate in Slet calisthenics if he/she wants to be part of Slet sport tournaments. Since people in

general are quite inventive, many 20 or 30-year-old Sokols are doing the calisthenics of the Loyal Guard as they are the easiest to learn. Too many of our coaches just simply do not teach calisthenics. God knows how the teachers of recent past were able to teach calisthenics just by counting the measures and how we learned, and learned better than today and in greater numbers, much longer compositions, having heard the music only once or twice before the Slet or exhibition. What separates us from other physical fitness organizations is calisthenics; a desire to join in a festive spirit of a true brotherhood. Therefore, to keep that spirit going, the National Board of Instructors ought to examine the question of calisthenics in regard to common abuses or whether we must force those who want to participate in Slet tournaments to learn calisthenics against their will. Also, since we now have a class of Loyal Guard, isn't it better to combine younger seniors with juniors? Finally, we are right in accepting apparatus routines from the best sources. Shouldn't we do the same thing with calisthenics?

AGE FACTOR IN UNITS

It is no secret that most of our officers are of retirement age, proving that Once Sokol, Always a Sokol. Without such members there would hardly be any Sokol.

Yet, innovation is needed, in which we are not alone. Churches, Boys or Girls Scouts, American Legions, just to name a few, face the same dilemma. Standing and executive committees, sprinkled with new people, new officers, bring in new ideas. Units functioning the best depend on older officers, for they contribute their experiences, and also on younger officers who offer enthusiasm with fresh vision. In Sokol there is always much to do and never enough help. Younger members ought to be reminded of our Sokol Oath, which says:

"I shall do everything within my power to strengthen the Sokol Organization by participating in its activities"

As we move deeper into the American life style, we do know full well, that only few new officers will be of Czech extraction. But we are American Sokol, ready to select and elect those who will serve us the best, regardless of the origin, religion or political views as long as they adhere to Sokol principles.

NEW MEMBERS

As time goes by, departed members are replaced by new ones. We are a selective organization, we choose new members. But once we accept a new member we must insist that such new member be ready to live by our Oath and by-laws. No member should be accepted who

Continued on Page 10.

Sokol Future *(continued)*

is not able to help the organization in any activity or work. It is understandable that if an active Sokol moves away, it is just about impossible for her/him to help; similarly aging members. New members, however, are in a different category. They must be an asset through which the units will advance. Just to accept members for paying dues is unfair to other members. Besides, the unit dues, \$7 or \$12 into the unit treasury, is actually a minuscule amount. More than quantity we need quality. Remember the original Free Masons? A few hundred of them had moved the whole world.

UNIT MEETINGS

As officers, we must understand that no member, especially a new or young one, will come to the

meeting listening to a report of changing a light bulb or a discussion whether a bathroom should be painted in blue or pink. The usual monthly meeting should dispose of all reports and other agenda in a reasonable time, followed by some worthwhile educational or social activity.

PROMOTION

If there is one element that is really missing, is a Sokol promotion. We do elect Public Relations officers, we want to be known in our communities, yet the results are quite meager. At times it seems that we do not want anybody to come in and "play on our sand." Public relations officers of our units must resemble public relations officers of corporations. Such

officers are a very important component of the corporation, knowledgeable of writing to local papers, even announcements on radio, preparing news statements, leaflets, etc.

Briefly, a partial answer to our ills is:

We do possess the tools to be an integral part of the new trends leading to a third millennium. But we cannot live of our glorious past, which obviously holds us captive to the old assumptions. Mostly we must not be afraid of sports, upgrade instructors corps, develop new ranks of officers, enrich monthly meetings and with rigorous promotion face Sokol Future.

Reflections *(continued)*

been sacrificed upon the altar of competition and display – difficulty at all costs.

I don't know what impact all this will ultimately have on Sokol. How do we serve and keep our youth who clamor for sports, games, martial arts, etc., yet also desire higher level competitive gymnastics and special numbers? (Nov./Dec. American Sokol). Where do you find the staff, expertise and time to address the needs of our mid-life

and older members? Some of my early mentors alleged Sokol was a lifetime journey. Starting with tots class, progressing through youth, reaching the peak physical years and then gently declining until once again fundamental and special needs moves were practiced. We may be relegated to pursue the middle of the road; continue to serve the youth of our area with a solid physical education program being mindful we may not be able to compete with gymnastics clubs who are

working only with the physically talented or the local health clubs, martial arts studios, etc. Remaining ever mindful of the fact that even though an individual may not continue with the regular gym workouts, enough of the discipline becomes inculcated into his/her being toward useful, healthful citizenship – and lastly, I feel this was also Tyrs' aim.

Na Zdar!

*From Noviny Sokol Cedar Rapids
By Dick Petrzalek*

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