



## Strength in the Eye of Sokol

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[www.slet2009.com](http://www.slet2009.com)



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The mission of the American Sokol is to provide fitness and community for individuals and families through physical, educational, cultural and social programs.

### AMERICAN SOKOL

9126 Ogden Avenue  
Brookfield, Illinois  
60513 USA

Phone 708-255-5397  
Fax 708-255-5398  
*(call first)*

[www.American-Sokol.org](http://www.American-Sokol.org)  
[ASO@American-Sokol.org](mailto:ASO@American-Sokol.org)

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\*except in July and August

### To submit information for publication:

email [Editor@American-Sokol.org](mailto:Editor@American-Sokol.org)  
mail Editor, American Sokol  
Nancy Imbrone  
916 Lawnview Ave. NEW  
Shoreview, MN 55126



## Calendar of Events



### February

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 12 | Lincoln's Birthday                              |
| 14 | Sokol Little Ferry 5th Annual Beefsteak         |
| 15 | Sokol Stickney Pancake & French Toast Breakfast |
| 20 | Sokol MN Sibrinky/Mardi Gras Dance              |
| 28 | Sokol Greater Cleveland Winter Exhibition       |

### March

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 5  | Czech Uprising (Květnové povstání českého lidu) |
| 8  | Sokol Chicagoland Exhibition                    |
| 8  | International Women's Day (Mezinárodní den žen) |
| 14 | Sokol Tabor Exhibition                          |
| 14 | Sokol Little Ferry Corned Beef & Cabbage        |
| 20 | Sokol Naperville-Tyrs Exhibition                |
| 21 | Sokol Stickney Exhibition                       |
| 21 | Sokol Little Ferry Pirogi Sale                  |
| 22 | Sokol MN Flavors of Slovakia Dinner             |
| 28 | Sokol San Francisco Dinner & Dance              |
| 28 | Sokol Washington Josefska Party                 |

### April

- |       |  |
|-------|--|
| 4     | Central District Special Number Competition          |
| 5     | Sokol MN Spring Breakfast, Craft & Bake Sale         |
| 16-17 | Sokol MN Garage Sale                                 |
| 17    | Sokol San Francisco Czech Song Singing Party         |
| 18    | Sokol St. Lewis Czech Festival                       |
| 19    | Sokol Little Ferry 113th Annual Gymnastic Exhibition |

## June 23-29, 2009 International Sports & Culture Festival in Fort Worth, Texas

Is your important event missing from this list?  
Send your Events to  
[Editor@American-Sokol.org](mailto:Editor@American-Sokol.org)



# The Sokol Educator

Sis. EllenJeanne Schnabl, Educational Director

NAZDAR! Sisters and Brothers:

The month of February (2 "r's") is an inside time although the days are already lengthening. It's now half-way between the Winter solstice and the Spring equinox.

Certainly, you all know the very important Sokol events which happened in February: the founding of Sokol in 1862 in Prague and the 1st Sokol Unit in St. Louis, in 1865, as well as the commemorative postage stamp honoring the centennial of the Sokols in 1965 with ceremonies held in Washington, D.C.

"If people listened to themselves more often, they would talk less".

In 1878, fifty "subscribers" in New Haven, CT, received their first phone directory. Telephone numbers weren't introduced until the following year.

The WCTU (Women's Christian Temperance Union) was founded in Evanston, IL, by Dr. Frances E. Willard who earned a Master's diploma from the North Western Female College in 1859 -- now it's called Northwestern University.

February is also President's month -- not only Washington and Lincoln's birthdays, but also William H. Harrison, our 9th President and Ronald Reagan, our 40th.

"Recognize that our strength is in our diversity".

Jigsaw puzzles were first made by 18th century mapmakers as an aid in teaching geography. The first ones were hand-cut pieces of wood but did not interlock nor were there any guide pictures.

St. Agnes of Bohemia, daughter of Premysl Otakar I, King of Bohemia and Queen Constance was born in 1211 in Prague. She established a hospital in Prague and the religious order of Crosiers to direct it.

"Let's hope that the young people of Sokol realize and understand the sacrifices their grandparents and forebears made so that they would have our many freedoms."

Then there's the celebration on the eve of Lupercalia, the feast of the pastoral god of Lupercus on February 15. Early Christians renamed the ritual after the saint whose feast fell on February 14th, St. Valentine. Have a Happy Day and remember all your Sweeties.

"Try to understand that there's a world larger than the one you inhabit."

NAZDAR! EllenJeanne Schnabl,  
American Sokol Educational Director



**See you at the Slet!**



# SOKOL STORIES . . .

## What Sokol has meant to the Spanek Family! A brief History:

*Denis Spanek, Spanek Inc., Saratoga, Calif.*

George and Anna Spanek (my Mom and Dad) emigrated from Paris France, to the United States in 1951 and settled in Cicero, Illinois. I was born in Paris in 1946 after the war. My parents immigrated to France from Czechoslovakia in the 20's and lived in Paris all through the 30's, 40's and into the early 50's. My Dad moved to Paris for electronic technology and my Mom to become a chef. They met at Sokol Paris, and were married the same night Lindberg landed - or so I've been told. It must have been an exciting evening! They endured World War and the occupation in France. And from what I've been told the Sokol Czech network had quite an underground of activity through the entire occupation. The Sokol ideals kept them together in tough times.

My Mom and Dad were Sokol Patriots through and through, and they embedded its ideals upon me at a young age. A value system that has held an extraordinary basis for my development through the years. I was raised under the influence of the Sokol principles. I became a Sokol Slavsky member at age seven. I grew from one gym class to another and was junior boy at 13, before my parents moved again (1961) to the San Francisco Bay area in California to open a Restaurant - Chez's Anna.

My Mom and Dad had a chance to continue the development of the Spanek Vertical roaster, and promote it merits upon the local community, which hence has grown worldwide.

I left Cicero when was 13 and I truly missed the Chicago land units, the closeness of the units, the competitions and the friendships I had developed during those years.

The summers at Sokol Town of Lake camp in Willow Springs are memories that I carry through this day. My mom was the head chef at Sokol camp for years, from 1956-60.

Hopefully some of you now at my age (62) remember my parents; they left me quite a legacy. I grew up under a value system built with the Sokol ideals and principles. Invaluable to my development but most importantly also for my kids, in the passed down principles of growth and values in there sportive and mental lives as well.

Besides Sokol values my parents also left me the Spanek Vertical roaster invention that I became the ambassador for over the last 35 years and continue to merchandise worldwide. The product lines have expand into quite a corporate philosophy today, with many different divisions.

"Fine food, finds find wine, art, travel, real estate and fine friends." May I invite anyone that hasn't heard of the Spanek company, and the Vertical roaster products, visit our corporate worlds at [www.spanek.com](http://www.spanek.com)

I caught up to Jean Hruby a couple of months ago, and she told me about the Sokol units now merging together into a new Sokol spirit. I look forward to becoming a T.J. Masaryk outside gym member.

I think it's a fabulous idea, and the networking possibilities are endless and should be promoted, to reconnect old members and gain new friendships and business opportunities as well. The networking is an imperative idea, and will make the American Sokol flourish even more.

The young must grow with the gym principles, and the older generations must continue to pass on the tremendous value of Sokol to the new generations to come. If any of our goods and services at the Spanek Company can help you in any way we look forward to hearing from you.

From cooking the best roast chicken and duck you've ever had to relocating into some real estate on the west coast, visit our worlds.



us forward.

We look forward to hearing from any old friends out there in the American Sokol Network that I have lost touch with over the years and look forward to making new friends as life moves forward.

The Spanek's look forward to supporting the American Sokol networking movement. You can reach me at [denis@spanek.com](mailto:denis@spanek.com); I look forward to promoting our good and services through this Sokol member newsletter channel.

A Big Nazdar to all our Brothers and Sisters,  
Denis Spanek

# Czech debutantes to be presented at annual ball

By Staff reports: Suburban Life Publications La Grange, IL - Mon Dec 29, 2008, 02:31 PM CST  
 Used with permission: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>



The following young ladies will be presented as 2009 debutantes during the Czechoslovak Allied Organizations in Chicago's annual Representative Ball in February: Front row, from left to right: Jane Malina of Berwyn, Brooke Borowiak of Westchester, Alix Wilt of North Riverside and Amanda Velasquez of Cicero. Back row, from left to right: Sandra Tichy of Burr Ridge, Jenna Vondrasek of La Grange Park, Sasha Palmer of Western Springs, Lea Sohrabi of Oswego and Hallie Soulides of Westchester. Andrea Schumacher of Downers Grove is not pictured.

The La Grange-based Czechoslovak Allied Organizations in Chicago will present the 51st Representative Ball on Saturday, Feb. 7, at Drury Lane in Oakbrook Terrace.

The following young ladies will be presented as the 2009 debutantes: Jane Malina of Berwyn, Brooke Borowiak of Westchester, Alix Wilt of North Riverside, Amanda Velasquez of Cicero, Sandra Tichy of Burr Ridge, Jenna Vondrasek of La Grange Park, Sasha Palmer of Western Springs, Lea Sohrabi of Oswego, Hallie Soulides of Westchester and Andrea Schumacher of Downers Grove.

The Representative Ball began more than 50 years ago to preserve the tradition of the grand balls held in the founders' homeland. After the Communist takeover of the Czechoslovak Republic in February 1948, many citizens fled the Red terror and escaped to the West. In the early 1950s, they began to immigrate to America. Many settled in the Chicago metropolitan area. In a new country, they were lacking the cultural association — mainly the traditional dances which were held every year in the larger cities of their homeland.

In the spirit of solidarity, they began to establish various exile organizations. In January of 1959, the Social Club of Czech Americans, Association of Czechoslovak Exiles, Czech Orel (Eagles), Branch of the Woman's National Council in Exile and the Association of Youth as well as others held their first annual Representative Ball. The event was well-attended, and the excellent program gave the inspiration to the organizers to continue the tradition in future years.

At the fifth ball, the tradition of the presenting young ladies — debutantes — to the Czechoslovak American society began. In the last 50 years, more than 200 young women have been presented to Czech and Slovak community in Chicago. The current organizations involved in the Czechoslovak Allied Organizations are the Association of Czechoslovak Exiles, Czech Orel of Chicago Region and the United Moravian Societies.

The evening will begin with cocktails at 6:30 p.m., and dinner will be served at 7 p.m. The presentation of the 2009 debutantes will take place at 8:30 p.m. Following the presentation, the ladies and their escorts will perform a traditional ballroom dance. Music will be provided by the St. Louis-Czech Express Band.

Tickets for the ball are \$80 and include dinner, entertainment and four hours of open bar. Seating is limited. For more information or table reservations, call Mrs. Vlasta Vicenik at (708) 354-0520 or e-mail [representativeball@gmail.com](mailto:representativeball@gmail.com).

*Note from Jean Hruby: Four of the ten Debutantes this year are Sokol members —along with their four escorts from Sokol as well! My daughter, **Jenna Vondrasek** (Sokol Stickney) will be escorted by **Matthew Carlozzi** (Sokol Greater Cleveland); **Hallie Soulides** (Sokol Tabor) will be escorted by **Kenneth Fron** (Sokol Tabor); **Alix Wilt** (Sokol Spirit) will be escorted by **Henry Malina** (Sokol Tabor); **Jane Malina** (Sokol Spirit) will be escorted by **Phil Soulides** (Sokol Tabor)*



## See you at the Slet!



## Vegas Baby Vegas! 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary for Sokol Stickney

*Submitted by: Sis. Christina Curran-Wurst Central District Marketing & Communications Director*

Sokol Stickney celebrated their 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on Saturday, November 1, 2008 at The Oaks Hotel in Burr Ridge, IL. The event was based on a Las Vegas theme. A cocktail hour kicked off the evening, followed by the presentation of flags and playing of the Czech, Slovak and American national anthems. Unit President Bro. Richie Vachata gave a welcome address and toast. A family style dinner was served. Older children and teens were welcome to attend the celebration with a buffet, beverages and dancing in a separate banquet hall.

Throughout the evening, guests had the opportunity to bid on items during a silent auction. There were many great items such as a bean bag/board set, wine basket, tea set, artwork, and spa basket.

The post dinner program included a "History of Sokol Stickney" by Bro. Richard L. Vachata, as well as special recognition to "The 50 Year Club." This distinguished group of individuals was each presented with a plaque in recognition of being a unit member for 50 years or more. We applaud you!

Entertainment was provided by a unique Las Vegas act. A gentleman served as host and serenaded the crowd with assistance from two lovely showgirls. High energy music concluded the evening with guests dancing the night away. The Las Vegas lights went out at 11:00pm. Sokol Stickney hopes to make a "Vegas Night" as an annual fund-raiser.

A good time was had by all. We wish Sokol Stickney the best on the next 80 years!





# AMERICAN SOKOL GYMNAST

Pages 7-10 are specifically designed to be a benefit to the Gymnastics programs of American Sokol.  
Please pull copy and distribute to your participants as you see fit.

Kandi Pajer – 117 Oakland Grove – Elmhurst, IL 60126

Kandi@pajer.us

## HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Since our organization is made up of a diverse group of nationalities and religions, I thought it might be beneficial to print this article for instructors and parents to read. KP  
:)

### Promoting Tolerance at School (Or Sokol in this case)

It can happen in any school at any time: hateful behavior by students, staff or others outside the school community. Sometimes the painful actions or words are small missteps that affect only a few. Sometimes they're very public and cause widespread tension.

These acts are the result of human bias, or a strong preference for a particular thing. Acts of bias can be defined broadly as any acts directed against people or property that are motivated by prejudice based on race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, social affiliation, ability or appearance. These include hate crimes, ranging from violent assault and harassment to vandalism and graffiti, as well as hate speech, hate literature and derogatory language and imagery in all media.

When these incidents occur, it's important to remember that one hateful act doesn't forever brand a school or a person as prejudiced. It's how schools, students, parents, teachers and community members respond to these incidents that has the greatest impact.

The best way to address tolerance issues is to encourage a school environment where respect for others is expected as a rule of conduct.

Mariner High School in Everett, Wash., developed a simple but effective respect policy that can guide others who wish to establish a respectful tone in daily school life: "Respect is the cornerstone of all our interactions and behaviors. We acknowledge the dignity and worth of one another, and strive never to diminish another by our conduct or our attitudes."

These could be words to live by in any community.

Good words for an organization to live by as well. Why not try this "policy" in your daily life-add this to your New Year's Resolutions!!

## 2009 MERIT AWARD

Upon recommendation of the Finance Committee and the Board of Instructors, the delegates of the XII American Sokol Convention, held in Detroit in June, 1975 approved Merit Awards to be paid from the Sokol Future Leaders Fund. **The Merit Award Committee is now accepting applications for the 2009 Merit Awards** from students who are planning a full time (at least 12 hours per semester or equivalent) course program in an accredited two-year or four-year college or who are already participating in such a course of study. The application process begins with the submission of the form below to obtain application forms and instructions.

The amount to be awarded is \$500. Each district is allowed 2 merit awards per year regardless of membership. If a district doesn't have 2 qualified applicants, the remaining merit award(s) for that district may be given to another applicant(s) who did not receive an award because 2 awards per district initial limit in their district. These "extra" awards are given on an "at large" basis to the next most qualified applicant(s) regardless of district affiliation. There are NO merit award renewals.

Failure to submit a transcript of grades to the American Sokol Merit Award committee for the year of the award and/or failure to complete the year's course of full time study will result in a request for repayment of the award.

The selections are made by the Merit Award Committee and approved by the American Sokol Board of Instructors and the American Sokol Executive Board. The following points will be considered by the Merit Award Committee in selecting the candidates:

1. **Regular attendance in Sokol classes for at least three years prior to this application. Juniors may be included but must become adult Sokol members at age 17.**
2. **Successful completion of Sokol Instructor School(s) – Unit, District, and/or National.**
3. **Teaching or assisting experience in Sokol gym classes.**
4. **Service to Sokol – Unit, District, and/or National Organization.**
5. **Recommendation of the Physical Director of Sokol Unit.**
6. **Recommendation of the District Physical Director.**

Although physical education study will not be criteria, more consideration will be given to those training in the physical education field.

Merit Award Committee, c/o American Sokol, 9126 Ogden Ave. Brookfield, IL. 60513

I desire to make application for the American Sokol Merit Award. Please mail an application form and other application materials to:

Name		Email	
Address		Phone	
City/St./Zip		Age	
Member of Unit		District	

Application Request Should Be Received No Later Than May 1, 2009

**Application Deadline Is June 1, 2009**



# American Sokol Weekend Instructors School



ANY UNIT OR DISTRICT CAN HOST ONE . . .

IT'S EASY!!!

CONTACT THE AMERICAN SOKOL OFFICE TO REQUEST  
THE FORM

YOUR UNIT/DISTRICT GETS TO DESIGN THE COURSE  
AROUND **YOUR** NEEDS FOR CURRICULUM

Juniors & Seniors are Eligible to Attend

Learn a Wide Variety of Teaching Skills

Apparatus

Marching

Spotting &  
Progression

Class  
Leadership  
Techniques

Game  
Leadership

Teaching  
Calisthenics

Sokol  
History

Folk Dances

CONTACT THE AMERICAN SOKOL OFFICE TODAY!!!!!!

## YOU'RE IT. GET FIT!

It only takes a small change.  
Instead of telling yourself you can't, tell yourself you can.

The President's Challenge is a program that encourages all Americans to make being active part of their everyday lives.

No matter what your activity and fitness level,  
the **President's Challenge** can help motivate you to improve.

New guidelines to promote physical activity were released by the Department of Health and Human Services on 10/07/08. The Physical Activity Guidelines summarize the latest knowledge about activity and health, with depth and flexibility targeting specific population subgroups, such as seniors and children.

The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans are the most comprehensive of their kind. They are based on the first thorough review of scientific research about physical activity and health in more than a decade. A 13-member advisory committee appointed in April 2007 by Secretary Leavitt reviewed research and produced an extensive report. Key guidelines are available for the following groups:

- Children and Adolescents
- Adults
- Older adults
- Women during pregnancy
- Adults with disabilities
- People with chronic medical conditions

<http://www.presidentschallenge.org/>

Please go to the President Challenge Web site and read more about the guidelines. Do you meet or exceed them? Also, join up and enter your activities to see where you fall in relation to others. It is a good way to get motivated to get up and go! You can enter your activities daily and see how many points you receive. You may even challenge others! Have fun with exercise! KP;)

~ Also, keep an eye out for the new "Wellness Initiative" the American Sokol is putting together. It is going to be another way to get up and get moving!



**See you at the Slet!**



## From the Educator ... Br. Vaclav Vlcek

Another important person who significantly contributed to the establishment of independent Czechoslovakia in the fall of 1918 was Milan Rastislav Stefanik. The prominent scientist and general was born on July 21, 1880 in Kosariska, Slovakia. He studied astronomy, mathematics, physics and philosophy in Prague and received a doctorate of philosophy in 1904. During his studies, he met Tomas Garrigue Masaryk who introduced him to the idea of cooperation of Czechs and Slovaks against the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Stefanik also wrote many articles informing Czechs about the disastrous situation of Slovaks struggling against Magyarization.

After his studies, Stefanik went to France where he joined the staff of the astronomical observatory at Meudon. He presented many scientific works to the French Academy of Sciences and became a prominent astronomer who served on scientific expeditions to Africa, the Americas, and Oceania.

Becoming a naturalized French citizen, he joined the French military after the outbreak of World War I. He went through pilot training and was deployed to the front in May 1915. During the same year, Stefanik was also drawn into the Czechoslovak liberation movement. He contacted Masaryk and mediated his meeting with the French Prime Minister and other prominent politicians. He became a vice-chairman of the Czechoslovak independence movement and helped to organize Czechoslovak resistance abroad. Between 1916 and 1918, Stefanik played an essential role in creating Czechoslovak legions in Russia, France and Italy. He also promoted the Czechoslovak cause in many other countries, including the United States, and later became minister of war in the provisional Czechoslovak government.

In November 1918, Stefanik arrived in Vladivostok, Russia, and started to organize the legionaries' return home. On his way back to Europe, he attended the Paris Peace Conference where he used his diplomatic skills to promote Czechoslovak interests. In May 1919, he left Paris and intended to fly to Slovakia via Italy. Unfortunately, he never reached his homeland alive. He died in a plane crash near Ivanka pri Dunaji on May 4, 1919.



## Sokol Central District Rhythmic Competition

Sokol Chicagoland recently hosted the Sokol Central District's annual rhythmic gymnastics competition at the Elite Sports Complex in Downers Grove. On December 7, girls and women of all ages competed in the sport of rhythmic gymnastics in levels 3-7 and group. The events contested at this year's meet included hoop, clubs, and group ribbon. The following awards were given to the top places in each level and age division:

### Level 4 (age 10-11):

1<sup>st</sup> place in Hoop – Jessica Vierke, Sokol Naperville Tyrs  
2<sup>nd</sup> place in Hoop – Angela Biancofiore, Sokol Naperville Tyrs

### Level 4 (age 12-14):

1<sup>st</sup> place in Clubs – Tara Luczak, Sokol Stickney

### Level 4 (Masters division):

1<sup>st</sup> place in Hoop – Andrea Scheirer, Sokol Chicagoland

### Level 5 (age 10-11):

1<sup>st</sup> place in Hoop, Clubs and All-Around – Viona Grace Lugo, Sokol Naperville Tyrs

### Level 5 (age 12-14):

1<sup>st</sup> place in Hoop, Clubs and All-Around – Julie Bajek, Sokol Naperville Tyrs  
2<sup>nd</sup> place in Hoop, Clubs and All-Around – Katie Baxter, Sokol Chicagoland

### Level 5 (age 15-18):

1<sup>st</sup> place in Hoop – Alex Zahrobsky, Sokol Spirit  
2<sup>nd</sup> place in Hoop – Alix Wilt, Sokol Spirit  
1<sup>st</sup> place in Clubs – Jenny Braun, Sokol Spirit

### Level 5 (Masters division):

1<sup>st</sup> place in Hoop – Florence DelCarlo, Sokol Chicagoland

### Group Ribbon (age 9-12):

1<sup>st</sup> place – Sokol Naperville Tyrs (Jessica Vierke, Kayla Burke, Viona Grace Lugo, Angela Biancofiore)

### Group Ribbon (age 18+):

1<sup>st</sup> place – Sokol Chicagoland (Florence DelCarlo, Beth Kocek, Anne Owen, Beth McCloskey)



# Sokol New York

[Source: Czech Radio 7, Radio Prague, © Copyright 1996, 2009 Radio Prague, All rights reserved 24.07.2008] - Panorama - Ian Willoughby  
The first New York Sokol opened its doors in 1867, only five years after the Sokol youth and gymnastics organization was founded in Prague as an important element in the Czech National Revival nationalist movement. Sokol New York's homely sports and social hall is on East 71st St in Manhattan. But that wasn't the group's first location.

Ed Chlanda is president of Sokol New York's library and knows a lot about the branch's history. "Originally it started on East 5th St in lower Manhattan. Because when the Czech community first came here they established themselves on the Lower East Side." However, the work was up here [on the Upper East Side]. Many of them were cigar cutters and many had come from the area of Kutná Hora where there was a tobacco industry too. The cigar cutting industry was uptown, in Yorkville, so they moved up here. Eventually it was a trip to go downtown for the gymnastics etceteras.



## Sokol Hall



"At one point they realized they would have to build a new building and they wound up buying some land here. This piece of land cost 200 dollars - it would cost a little bit more today. They put up the building in one year. They had a subscription and all these working people - who were not very wealthy at all, they struggled...if you read *How the Other Half Lives* by Jacob Riis, there's a chapter in there about the Bohemian community in New York and you can see that mom, dad and the kids all worked rolling cigars, very hard, on a piece-work basis."

And there would have been I guess tens of thousands of Czechs in this area at that time.

"There were forty thousand at the high point, forty or fifty thousand."

At its high point, how many people were members of Sokol? Josef Knedlhans, designer of the flag flown from a balcony during T.G. Masaryk's review of the parade from Sokol NY to Carnegie Hall, "I would guesstimate that there were a thousand members, maximum. That's a rough guess, though - I'd have to look into the archives."



Tell us, who were your most notable members?

"Actually our first member was Wocal. He was one of the first presidents and he was an officer here, and he was very instrumental in setting up a national Sokol organization, the predecessor to the American Sokol Organization."

"Another person that's very interesting is Josef Knedlhans, because the Czech flag today basically follows his design, with one small change."

1918, May 25 - March from Sokol NY to Carnegie Hall, photo:

[www.sokolnewyork.org](http://www.sokolnewyork.org)

"In 1918 [Czechoslovakia's founder T.G.] Masaryk was speaking at Carnegie Hall and the Sokols - all the Sokols, not just the Czech ones but the Croatian,

Slovenian, all the ones from the different Hapsburg Empire...areas came and marched from this area here over to Carnegie Hall, where Masaryk was going to speak.

"In doing so they were going to pass the Plaza hotel and he was going to review the parade from the balcony there. They needed a new flag, because the old Bohemian flag, red and white, was similar to the flags of Russia and Poland.

"Now with Slovakia they wanted to make a new flag, so they added a blue triangle for the blue skies of Slovakia. And Josef Knedlhans, who was a member of Sokol here, he designed one with the triangle going one third the length of the flag. Frank Kriz (left), "They hung it from the balcony at the Plaza hotel and the people marched by. That's how the flag got started, though eventually it was officially adopted with the blue triangle at half that length."

And one of your members was an Olympic champion? "Yes, Frank Kriz, who was a metal polisher at the time, was sent to Antwerp and to Brussels I believe in 1920 and 1924 for the USA team. He won the gold medal in 1924 for the long horse vault. Second and third were members of the Czechoslovak team, but he was first for the USA."





Norma Zabka When I visited Sokol New York there were dozens of little girls of various ethnic backgrounds happily exercising in the main hall, while a small women's group were limbering up. Among the latter were the organization's starosta or president Norma Zabka (in Czech Norma Žabková) and first vice president Irene Mergl (Irena Merglová). How long have you been members of Sokol? Irene: "Since I was five and a half years old." Norma: "Four years old."

Irene Mergl How far back does your family connection with the organization go back? Norma: "When we had an archivist here from Prague I found out that my grandfather was one of the early members of Sokol New York. And I could be a great



grandmother myself (laughs)." Norma Zabka during the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, Irene: "We lived two doors down from Sokol Hall, so it was a rite of passage at age five and a half to become a member. My father was a member in Czechoslovakia - I'm first generation - so it was an automatic thing for me to go to Sokol. There was no question about whether I wanted to go or not."



Norma: "The core programme of course is the gymnastics programme, but then we have what I would call the auxiliary programmes, which are ballet, taekwondo, we have a tots programme starting at the age of ten months, we have a folk dance class, volleyball, basketball on Sunday. The core programme is children, juniors and seniors."

Of the kids who are here now exercising, how many would be from a Czech background? Irene: "I would say it's almost nil. When they register in September on the application it asks whether they are of Czechoslovak descent. Norma went through the applications just recently and we discovered there are a few whose grandparents or great-grandparents were of Czechoslovak descent. It was Norma's idea to get this group together, so we can form some kind of...group that would help us to retain the Czech and Slovak heritage."



Do you think it's a bit of a pity that there aren't so many Czechs here anymore? Norma: "It's because the neighborhood has changed. Originally when this building was built it was a Czechoslovak neighborhood. As a matter of fact I couldn't speak English before I went to school - it wasn't necessary in this neighborhood. Then the UN came in and changed the whole East Side, buildings were torn down and high rises went up. The Czechoslovak community - like other communities, like the Hungarian community and moved out to



the German community - the suburbs or the outer boroughs. Very few are currently in the city." Norma: "It's because the neighborhood has changed. Originally when this building was built it was a Czechoslovak neighborhood. As a matter of fact I couldn't speak English before I went to school - it wasn't necessary in this neighborhood. Then the UN came in and changed the whole East Side, buildings were torn down and high rises went up. The Czechoslovak community - like other communities, like the Hungarian community and moved out to

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Irene: "We do our best to keep up the heritage not of Czech or Slovak descent have really been here, and we absolutely have no difficulty in future is very bright - and it is American

and the people who are fascinated by what we do attracting people. So our Sokol." Norma: "I think it depends on us. It's our aim right now with a heritage day where we're calling on people who have Czechoslovak backgrounds, whether it be themselves or their grandparents...Hopefully we can get them involved. I would say that we probably are more American than most units in the US."

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You've been members for many decades - what has Sokol given you over the years? Irene: "Well, first of all it gave me a husband (laughs). And a fulfillment that is indescribable. It's a part of my life - a big part of my life."

Throughout the issue you have seen Sokol Slim and Talon checking out the Slet parade route. There is so much being offered at the 2009 Slet - International Sports & Culture Festival – for complete details visit the website [www.slet2009.com](http://www.slet2009.com). One item in particular will be a display of Sister Annette Schabowski's huge Statue of Liberty collection – in the Sokol Museum at the Fort Worth Convention Center during the Slet days. When in Fort Worth be sure to see this collection which contains hundreds of memorabilia, such a statues, jewelry, dishes, glasses, pins galore, books, and even an original bolt from the Statue at Ellis Island. It will be a great display.

Submitted by Sister Henrietta Milan



Talon

**See you at the Slet!**



Sokol Slim



Sister Annette

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