



SOKOLETTER

P.O. Box 448
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JANUARY 2010
www.sokolbaltimore.org

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UNIT MEETING

MONDAY, JANUARY 18, 2010

Meeting at 6:30 pm

St. Margaret's
Episcopal Church
1834 E. Joppa Road

January 12th – Slavoj Vanicky
January 15th – George Mojzisek
January 17th – Marie Pokorny
January 22nd – Evelyn Manning

What's Inside

Highlights from Unit Meeting.....2
Sokol Baltimore History2

Board of Directors Meeting

The next Board of Directors meeting will be at St. Margaret's Episcopal Church at **5:30 pm on Monday, January 18th** – prior to the unit meeting.

Next GYM Session

The Gymnastics Program will start back the week of January 4, 2010 for the Winter Session. Call or email Renee Harrison to enroll! 410-375-9989 or info@sokolbaltimore.org. There are coaching opportunities also available.

Please remember to pay your 2010 membership dues!!

UPCOMING DATES & EVENTS:

Monday, January 18, 2010 – Board of Directors 5:30 pm @ St. Margaret's Episcopal Church.

Monday, January 18, 2010 – Sokol Baltimore Unit Meeting, 6:30pm @ St. Margaret's Episcopal Church.

Sunday, January 24, 2010 – CSHA Quarterly Meeting, 3:00 pm. Call 410-662-6094 for location and directions.

Donations to Sokoletter

Ann & Frank Huber
Geraldine Walter
David Morkovsky

Donations to Building Fund

Rose Krajca

New York Marathon Sponsorship:

Frank & Ann Huber
David Morkovsky

Happy January Birthday!

January 1st – Rose Marie Krajca
January 2nd – Joseph Vrzalik
January 3rd – Patricia Watkins
January 6th – Col. Joseph Shimek, Jr.(ret)
January 9th – Anton 'Tony' Primus

Send your check payable to "Sokol Baltimore" to:
Sokol Baltimore
PO Box 448
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Highlights from Sokol Baltimore's December Meeting – Christmas Party 12/14/09

The reading of the November minutes was postponed. Fifteen members were in attendance along with several guests. The 50-50 Raffle was very successful and Sis. Gloria Durham won. Sis. Durham donated a large sum back to Sokol. Br. Shimek emailed the membership chairman that he was back in Woodstock and facing some medical procedures. Sis. Durham broke her leg. David Morkovsky donated to the newsletter and the New York Marathon Fundraiser. Vice Pres. Will Kool will be working out of town for the next six weeks.

Renee Harrison reported that gym classes ended in late November and will restart on January 4, 2010. The gym will be open four evenings a week. A new program will start; it will be training for an exhibition team. Pres. Rokos gave a small thank you gift to Sis. Harrison for all she has done.

The gym insurance and the district dues have been paid. The Maryland Association of Nonprofits Organization (MANO) yearly dues of \$100 are to be paid. Sokol Baltimore received a refund from IWIF (Injured Workers Insurance Fund).

The National Czech & Slovak Museum and Library (NCSML) report was given by Sis. B. Kilian. The museum and library is asking for donations to rebuild and move the flood damaged museum. The plan is to move the museum across the street; elevate and expand it to three times its current size. All or most of the building will be above garage parking.

They are hoping to open the new museum in 2012. Presently the NCSML will operate from the Kosek building in the nearby Czech Village.

Membership dues structure will be reviewed at the January meeting. A summary of dues paying members was circulated for members to take home and review. Pres. Rokos represented the Czech community of Maryland, the Bohemian National Cemetery and Sokol at a recent get together at the Czech Embassy. He also attended an "Award Gala" in Chicago celebrating the "Velvet Revolution" and 20 years of freedom for the Czech and Slovak countries; as well as, honoring Chicago's Mayor Richard Daley. Pres. Rokos will be spending Christmas and New Years in the Czech Republic.

Following the meeting the members and guests enjoyed a wonderful pot luck dinner and including delicious desserts. The socializing and visiting among the members made it one of the best parties ever. Thank you to all those who attended and to Pres. Rokos for providing a wonderful atmosphere.

Brazilian Clues of Jan Antonín Bat'a

We received a DVD from David Morkovsky about Jan Antonin Bata. There is a very short section about Belcamp, showing the construction of the factory and the individual buildings in the Moravian Village. **It is in Czech.** Most of the disc is directed to Bata in Brazil. Frank copied the disc but it has to be read in a personal computer. If members would like to view the disc, they will need a computer. Contact Frank or Anči at 410-877-0534 or by editors' email if you would like to borrow the disc.

The following article is extracted from the 125th Anniversary of Sokol Baltimore program book. This compilation and presentation was written by **Sister Dolores Zajicek Gentes**. It is a concise and readable account of Sokol Baltimore's history from 1872 to 1997. The editors believe that this retelling of the unit's story is important for all our members – especially for those who have been members for less than ten years.

SOKOL BALTIMORE – A SALUTE TO 125 YEARS 1872-1997

1872-1897

In 1872, Sokol Baltimore had its beginning in a bookkeeper's office in the Kremlberg Cigar Factory at 16 S. Frederick Street. At that time Sokol Baltimore was called Sokolska Jednota Blesk and grew so rapidly that it had to move its meeting place numerous times. From the cigar factory Sokol moved to Kopecky's Hall, to Pejrla's Hall, to the German Vorwaert's Hall, and finally to Simek's Bohemia Hall at Broadway and Barnes Street.

The first officers of Sokolska Jednota Blesk were Vaclav Simek, Frantisek Mathaus, Jan Mendlin, and Josef Sip. J. Rejzek was elected as the first Physical Director, and Stepan Skoch became the first Singing Director. In 1887, Vaclav Simek volunteered to be the first instructor in the Czech language school. He also donated the cost of the light and heat of the school for one year. Other instructors were J. Hojda, F. Rohan, K. Masopust, J. Jarosik, and A. Francova.

The tradition of Sibrinky (a masked ball) was instituted in these early years.

As early as in 1887, Antonin Primus was selected to attend the Sokol Slet and competitions in Prague, and in 1892, six competitors and one substitute were sent to Chicago to participate in the Sokol Slet and Chicago World's Fair.

Also, in July of 1892, Sokolska Jednota Blesk celebrated its twentieth anniversary. V.J. Simek was the main speaker, and the mayor of Baltimore was represented by C. Love. Chief Physical Instructor was A. Kadlec.

Women also participated in Sokol. First there were the Libusanky, and then in 1894, it was decided to form the women's gymnastic unit, Sokolky Spolku Blesk, later called Baltimorska Jednota Sokolic.

In 1896, Frank Mendik, a Sokol and an instructor, came from Bohemia to teach the Tyrs Sokol methods to the Sokol unit in Baltimore. Originally in 1862, Miroslav Tyrs, a Czech professor, was one of the founders of the Sokol organization, and it is his philosophies and skills that make up the foundation on which Sokol is based.

During those early years, the Sokols encouraged Enoch Pratt to place a sizeable collection of Czech books in the Enoch Pratt Library on Broadway and Miller Streets. They also solicited funds for the Jan Hus Memorial in Prague and for a memorial honoring Augustine Herman; they started a fund for schools in Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia in celebration of the 300th anniversary of the birth of Jan Amos Komensky (Comenius); they sent funds for victims of a devastating flood in Europe, and when the National Theater in Prague burned, they sent funds to help rebuild it.

1897-1922

The next twenty-five years were dynamic years that began with Frank Stetka as Physical Director, a position he held for thirty-five years. The unit moved to a building on Ashland and Dallas owned by Joseph Klecka, but it was too small, so it was necessary to have gym classes in Honor Hall on McElderry Street, and then later at Danzeglock's on Ashland Avenue near Washington Street.

In 1900, the building committee recommended the purchase of a lot at Hopkins, Gay and Preston Streets for \$5000. At the time of the purchase it was necessary for the unit to be officially incorporated as Sokolska Jednota Blesk. By January 1902, the unit had raised \$6000 through raffles, loans, and other fund raising activities and acquired architect Ahrense and contractor Andrew Knell to design and construct the new hall. The estimated cost was \$18,000. The cornerstone of the building was set in place on May 12, 1902, during a dignified ceremony attended by Baltimore Mayor, T. Hais, and the Grand Opening took place on September 6, 1902.

The new hall was heated by steam, electrically lighted and with gas. Besides the gymnasium, the new hall had a restaurant, meeting room, two school rooms, living quarters for the janitor, a manager's office, a bowling alley, a kitchen, three bathrooms, showers, a warehouse, a stage and dressing rooms.

One source indicates that there were 552 members at that time. A sick benefit of \$4.00 per week was paid to incapacitated members, and in the event of death a funeral service was provided which each member was required to attend. At that time twelve members had become meritorious members, and Barbara Stetka became President, and Anna Minar became Secretary of the women's unit.

The rapidity with which the Sokols could get things done was amazing. Almost immediately after the opening of the new hall, the Dramatic Club presented the play, Karel Havlicek Borovsky, on the new stage to an overflow audience as early as November 10, 1902, and the first gymnastic exhibitions were held in the new building in January of 1903.

In 1904, a choral group was formed under the direction of Joseph Mecers, and when the athletic field in Patterson Park was dedicated in June of 1904, Sokolska Jednota Blesk was invited to participate in the ceremonies. Members of all the gym classes took part. This was the first time the gym classes appeared before an American public. It was a triumph for the Sokol system.

The Sokols participated in the 175th anniversary of the City of Baltimore Parade in 1906. Led by their own Sokol band, over 130 members marched in uniform and were judged to be the best in the parade.

In 1909, a women's team was sent to the Slet in Chicago. They participated in calisthenics because there were no competitions for women.

The convention of the National Sokol Organization was held in Baltimore in August 1913. It was at this gathering that plans were made for the formation of the American Sokol Organization as it exists today. In June 1921, a women's and men's team was sent to the first Slet of the American Sokol Organization in Chicago.

Then during WWI (1914-1918) the Sokols were engaged in many fund raising activities for the war effort. A very memorable event occurred in October of 1918.

Tomas G. Masaryk, first president of Czechoslovakia, visited Baltimore and was made an honorary member of Sokolska Jednota Blesk.

1922-1947

During the 1920's and 30's all of the activities of the unit were at their best. The enrollment in the gym classes was excellent and exhibitions were held every year. Members of the gym classes made appearances throughout the metropolitan area. In 1933, a record 45 gymnasts were sent to the Slet in Chicago. This was the first time that juniors participated in the Slet in Chicago. During this time, Frank Novak, a builder, leased an eight acre plot of land to the unit for use as a summer camp and which was used extensively for picnics and gym classes for about ten years. The Dramatic Club, which was recognized as one of the best in the nation, presented at least eight plays a season, including two operettas or musicals. On several occasions they appeared in Philadelphia. The education committee had several public programs every year, which included prominent speakers, and the entertainment committee sponsored a number of fund raising activities.

In 1941, the members of the Baltimore unit were instrumental in the formation of Sokol Belcamp, and in 1947, they helped to organize Sokol Washington. During WWII (1941-1945) Sokol activities practically ceased to exist.

1947-1972

Following the war, the first task was to reorganize the gym classes, but this proved to be very difficult. It was decided to sell the building and build in another location. The last meeting at the hall on Preston and Gay was on January 9, 1949. Present at this meeting were 14 members, who 46 years previously, had attended the dedication.

At first, the Sokols temporarily used the Augustine Herman Czech School building, but in November 1951, the unit purchased the lot at 2931 E. Madison Street, which is the present site of Sokol. Construction of the building began on July 16, 1953, and the Grand Opening took place on Saturday, January 16, 1954.

In January 1962, it was decided to change the name of the unit from Sokolska Jednota Blesk to Sokol Baltimore. In January 1971, Sokol Baltimore and Sokolky Spolku Blesk merged.

1972-1997

In 1978, Sokol Baltimore, under the guidance of Chairman, Donald Otenasek, hosted the Eastern District Sokol Slet at Towson State University, and Baltimore County Executive, Theodore Venetoulis, proclaimed June 23-25, 1978, Sokol Slet Festival Weekend.

In 1984, a huge renovation program of Sokol Hall was instigated.

In 1990, several members of Sokol Baltimore attended the Sokol Slet held in Paris and, subsequently, the Sokol Exhibition in Prague. Only months after the fall of communism, Ann Huber, Joe Vrzalik, and Lee Sain participated in calisthenics and carried the Sokol Baltimore flag in the ceremonies in Prague. It was the first gathering of Sokols on Czechoslovak soil since the Sokol movement was banned by the communists in 1948. It was a most emotionally charged experience for everyone.

Then, in 1994, a number of Sokol Baltimore members participated in the first Sokol Slet to be held in Strahov Stadium in Prague since the communist ban. The Ehrenberger family - Joe, Kate, Chris, and David; Ann and Frank Huber and Ann's mother, Rose Cervin; Jarka and Joe Kasl, and Joe Vrzalik, all long-time members of Sokol proudly represented Sokol Baltimore.

Today, Sokol Baltimore still upholds all of the original goals of the organization: the educating of the members, the appreciating of the language and songs of the homeland, the teaching of gymnastics, and the sponsoring of cultural events.

Today, Sokol Hall resounds with the voices of hundreds of youngsters and adults, who over the years, participated in enjoyable and enriching activities that benefited their physical and mental health. After so many years, Sokol Hall still echoes with the sounds of triumph and despair expressed by gymnasts who performed in rigorous exhibitions and competitions. Sokol Hall vibrates with the sounds of polka music from all of the Sibrinky, Dozvuky, and Vinobrani dances, and there are still the sounds of gleeful children enjoying the many happy Christmas parties. Finally, after so many

years, there still lingers the spirit of those who have departed, but who, over the years, dedicated and contributed so much.

Sokol has had an immense impact on the development of character and citizenship of so many people. Our community and our nation are a better place because of all of the Sokols who work hard, who play hard, who strive to be the best in whatever they do, who have concern for their fellow man, and who take pride in their heritage, in democracy, and in their country.

Today, there is a "For Sale" sign tacked on the front of Sokol Hall, but we are not saying goodbye. We are taking all of our fond memories and the principles of Sokol with us, and we are moving into a bright future. We must think of the many generations of people still to come who will need Sokol, and, like the strong and graceful falcon, Sokol Baltimore must soar to ever greater heights.

Nazdar! Nazdar! Nazdar!

Dolores Zajicek Gentes
Sokol Baltimore Historian
November 15, 1997

1998-2010 Postscript

The building on Madison Street was sold in 1998 and Sokol Baltimore moved to 1728 Bank Street, in the Fells Point area; a former Christian education building owned by St. Patrick's Church. An active gym program continues to flourish - serving the children of Baltimore and the surrounding counties.

FUTURE PLANS

A 10.8 acre wooded area on Honeygo Blvd. was purchased in 2004. Our plan is to build a facility at this site that will offer community programs in gymnastics, volleyball, weight training, aerobics, dance instruction, other sports, language school, a library/museum, meeting rooms, a kitchen facility and other programs to benefit the community. In order to provide programs and activities to the community and interested groups, our success will continue to depend on philanthropic generosity. Sokol Baltimore is a non-profit, 501(c)3 organization.

PATRIK ELIAS



Last week, Patrik Elias of the New Jersey Devils (NJD) reached a career milestone—720 points (301 goals, 419 assists), making him the third most successful Czech player in NHL history. In March 2008, Patrik set the all time franchise points record (702 points) for the New Jersey Devils. Combined with his summer award of the Golden Stick (Zlata hokejka) for the Czech Hockey Player of the Year, Patrik is currently not only the best Czech player in the NHL, but one of the best to ever play the game. For Patrik, it is not just about the game. Adding to his extracurricular community activities off the ice and extensive duties he and his wife Petra have conducted for both UNICEF Czech Republic and UNICEF USA, Patrik Elias has become not only a role model for many young hockey players from all around the world, but also one of the most recognizable icons of today's sports community.

Picture and text from "Czech The News", vol 3, 2009

The Sokoletter is published monthly by Sokol Baltimore Inc. All articles, news and contributions can be forwarded to Ann or Frank Huber, 514 Sellrus Court, Fallston, MD 21047-2421, (410) 877-0534. Email: frankh1228@aol.com or ann12141@aol.com. Material to be published is due by the 20th of the preceding month. Please also advise of address changes, etc. to ensure continued delivery. Annual subscription is \$10.00 for all non-members. Send check, payable to "Sokol Baltimore" to P.O. Box 448, Perry Hall, MD 21128.



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DATED MATERIAL

***BALTIMORE SYMPHONY
 CONCERT OF CZECH
 MUSIC WITH CZECH
 CONDUCTOR***

at the Meyerhoff Fri Jan 22, 2010 8:00 pm

Jiří Bělohávek, founder and music director laureate of the Prague Philharmonia, will conduct soloist Garrick Ohlsson and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra in Beethoven's Coriolan Overture and Third Piano Concerto.

The orchestra completes the program with Dvořák's Othello Overture and Janáček's Taras Bulba. Don't miss this opportunity to hear two great pieces by two of the best known Czech composers conducted by a world renowned Czech conductor.

Sokol Baltimore, Inc.

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Information obtained from the CSHA website

www.czslha.org on 1/03/10