

## **2017 National American Sokol Award Recipients**



**Friday, June 23, 2017  
at  
National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library  
Cedar Rapids**  
*Revised Edition August 2017*



Dear Members and Friends of Sokol,

June 23, 2017

As we initiate this new Awards Program for the American Sokol, it is important to recognize that there are many deserving people who gave of themselves, their money, their time and their abilities to grow this amazing organization. We hope to begin honoring, memorializing and recognizing all of these people as the awards program progresses into the future. Our Sokol members not only built the organization, they also contributed to the sport of gymnastics in the USA, and have even gone on to make major contributions in society. It is of great value to all of us that we discover these amazing contributions amongst our members and have the ability to honor them, thank them and record their stories in our Sokol history.

Congratulations to the recipients of the 2017 American Sokol Awards! We are proud of your accomplishments and are grateful for your service to our organization. Thank you for enriching our organization. Thank you to the families of our honorable award recipients, for you have been the ones who shared them with us and have allowed them the ability to be loyal Sokols.

Thank you to Bro. Jerry Milan, Bro. Rome Milan, and Deb Allison for pursuing the initiative of the National Awards Program. The idea started many years ago, and we are truly proud that your visions have now become a reality. We look forward to the future and the chance to learn more about our great Sokol members while giving us a chance to recognize them.

We also recognize the National Executive Board and the National Board of Governors for their willingness to take a chance and bring this program to life. Without your support we couldn't make this happen. There are many people and stories of Sokol that we will now be able to share with the world.

To all of our 2017 Award Recipients, their families, our Brothers and Sisters and friends...

***Nazdar!***

Jean K. Hruby  
President

- Award recipient information was provided by the families, Units and or Districts for reproduction

## **Sokol Awards Program 2017**

*"Inside every human being is a desire to be recognized. Anyone in any organization who strives to do their best is not only trying to succeed, but they are also feeling this desire."*

American Sokol established a system of awards designed to properly recognize, thank, honor and reward those who make or have made a meaningful difference in the Sokol organizations on either International, National, District or local level. Individuals will be awarded for outstanding service in individual events and for extended service to the organization. This Sokol awards program may be supplemented on the District or unit level. Many individuals could be honored at any time during the year. Eligibility includes any member or individual, unit, district, organization, contributor, sponsor, supporter or volunteer that has contributed to the enhancement of the American Sokol and its programs or projects. This could be officers, coaches, judges, lecturers, directors, workers, clinicians, athletes, businesses, technicians, composer, choreographer, supplier, medal winner, record holder, cook, historian, etc. The results of this program will encourage excitement, generate enthusiasm and satisfaction, create pride, affect ingenuity, improve performance, maintain retention and spark vision.

~ Rome Milan, Awards Committee Chairman

## **2017 Award Recipients**

### **The James Čihak Service Award**

Lucia Maruska Levendis*	Sokol Washington DC
Lillian Roter	Sokol Los Angeles
Mary Beth Dulock	Sokol West (Texas)
Allison Gerber	Sokol Cedar Rapids

### **The Jindřich Fügner Distinguished Service Award**

Vladislav "Walter" Slavík*	Sokol New York
Chuck & Janet Kalat	Sokol KHB, Ennis TX
Joan Sedlacek	Sokol Minnesota

### **The Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk Leadership Award**

Frank Capek*	Sokol Little Ferry
Otto Notzl	Sokol Los Angeles
Larry Laznovsky*	Sokol KHB, Ennis TX
Mickey & Jolene Dalton	Sokol South Omaha

### **The Frank Kříž Sports Achievement Award**

Laddie Hinz Bakanic	Sokol New York
Lubomir Hintnaus*	Sokol Los Angeles
Paula Stansbury	Sokol Zizka, Dallas
Jim Hartung	Sokol Omaha

### **The Miroslav Tyrš Honor Award**

Mildred Barcal*	Sokol Washington DC
Marie Provazníková*	Sokol New York
Cheri Riddle	Sokol Los Angeles
Florence Palas	Sokol Los Angeles
Joe Kos*	Sokol Houston
Mike Wilson	Sokol Zizka, Dallas
Ed & Bea Pavoucek*	Sokol South Omaha
Vojmir & Sandy Benak	Sokol South Omaha

\* posthumous award

## **The James Čihak Award – Service Award**

**Brother James Čihak** served in the Czechoslovak Legion in France and fought many battles that liberated the country of Czechoslovakia. Towards the end of the war he became a member of the personal guard of the President TG Masaryk, and stayed in Czechoslovakia working as a translator for a relief mission of the American President Hoover. Brother Čihak returned in September 1919 where he graduated from the Medill College of Commerce. Throughout his life he gave generously and was devoted to the Sokol ideals of Fuegner and Tyrs as an outstanding member of Sokol Town of Lake in Illinois. He wrote many pieces about American Sokol history and was the key person who organized and successfully attained the Sokol 100 year anniversary U.S. Stamp. Not only was he a pioneer in the American Sokol organization, but he was the founder of the Woodrow Wilson CSA Lodge and Czech Legion organizations. As a devoted follower of Masaryk and Sokol Ideals, he took the American principals of democracy and freedom to his membership in the Czechoslovak National Council of America where he served for many years. James and his wife Blanche were recognized for their perseverance to Sokol and the Czech American community.

**Award Description:** This member must be an individual who has demonstrated good character, diplomacy, a positive attitude, good judgment, exemplary qualities, and extraordinary **service** to the ASO. Receiving a Award is not something for which a member can work or plan. A member does not apply for a Award. The James Čihak Award should be overdue rather than premature, but tenure alone is never an adequate criterion. To obtain this classification, a member must be nominated by a District.



## Lucia Maruska Levendis Sokol Washington D.C. - EASTERN DISTRICT



Lucia Maruska Levendis was born on November 16, 1953 in the village of Cifer, located between Trnava, to the west, and Bratislava, to the southeast, in what now is the Republic of Slovakia. Lucia died of cancer at home, in Arlington, Virginia, on May 18, 2015, at the age of 61.

Lucia's parents, Lydia and Alfred, a seamstress and an accountant, raised her in Cifer and Bratislava. Shortly before Lucia's fourteenth birthday, her mother left Bratislava with her two children (Lucia and Lucia's brother, Rasto) and headed to Italy, in breach of the law of Czechoslovakia at that time. Lucia's father had abandoned Czechoslovakia, at the insistence of Lucia's mother, some five years earlier. (He was entitled to go to Austria on business and, on his final such trip, he simply headed west instead of returning to Bratislava. Lydia thought it would be a straightforward matter to leave and join her husband, but discovered that the government did not agree.) The three of them, mother and children, were captured as they tried to evade a checkpoint, in the dead of night, above the Adriatic Sea enroute, on foot, to Trieste. After being herded back several miles, they were placed on a train and sent back to Bratislava. Lydia was not done, though. Seizing opportunity, she leapt from the train in Gratz, Austria, with the children, and immediately called for political asylum to the Austrian officials on the platform. This worked. In a matter of months, Lucia and her brother and mother were reunited with Alfred in Los Angeles. [The story of her family's adventures in escaping from Communist Czechoslovakia is detailed further in Lucia's interview recorded and memorialized in the "Immigrants' Exhibit" at the National Czech & Slovak Museum and Library in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. It also can be found on their website.]

Lucia, now 14 years of age, as well as her brother and mother, spoke no English when they arrived in California. Like her father (who already was conversant in English), though, Lucia was a gifted linguist and already spoke several languages. Within six months, she was speaking English and she graduated on schedule from the local public school, Fairfax High School. Forever after, Lucia was a devoted supporter of the public school program, "English as a Second Language" (ESL), for which she volunteered as a teacher's assistant at the public schools attended by her children.

Lucia, like many members of her extended family, was a gifted artist. After high school, with the help of her dedicated Art Teacher (without whom she almost certainly never would have gotten on track to attend college, inasmuch as the family did not understand graduate school processes in the United States), she was admitted to the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) in New York City. Over the next four years, Lucia received a degree from FIT in Fashion Design and a Bachelor's Degree in Art History (emphasis in Byzantine Art and Architecture) from Hunter College.

Lucia expanded her attention to the culture of her native Czechoslovakia while in New York City, in particular, by participating with American Sokol New York and by joining and performing with the Slovak American dance troupe, Limbora, which is based in New York City. She remained devoted to the

study and teaching of the cultural heritage of her beloved Slovakia and (what now is) the Czech Republic to her dying day.

Lucia worked in the fashion industry as a designer for companies located in New York City, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Atlanta. Her work, which she enjoyed, was well received. In 1982, while in Atlanta, she met her husband, George Levendis, a native of Northern Virginia. In 1984, she and George were married and settled in Arlington. They have two children, Marissa and William. Lucia also was stepmother to George's older children, Page and Beth, who considered her as a second mother to themselves.

When her children were very young, Lucia returned with great energy and purpose to her association with Sokol America. She joined the local Unit, American Sokol Washington, where she lived and, with Antonin (Tony) Bartos, resurrected the unit's Czech and Slovak School. Tony handled the athletic component of the school and Lucia became its lead teacher. Through Lucia's efforts, the children of the members of the Czech and Slovak American community of the Washington, D.C. area, became skilled in the language, culture, including song and dance, and history of their parents and other ancestors. The kroje worn to this day in performances and at celebrations [St. Nicholas (Day; etc.)] by the unit's Sokolnik's are essentially all of Lucia's handiwork. Lucia was certain, of course, to teach her two children the Slovak language (not permitting very much English to be spoken around them when they were very young, so that they would learn Slovak before learning English). The ASW Unit has thrived to this day, through good and bad, in large measure due to Lucia's vision and dedication. She served as the seventy-five year old unit's first woman president (starostka) for several years, until her resignation in 2013 because of her need to address her illness.

Lucia always loved her native Slovakia. What made her exceptional in that regard was her study and absorption of not only its history and heritage, but also that of Bohemia and Moravia. She wrote and spoke about that heritage, including, for example, to the Ambassadors' Spouses Luncheons and educational series presented by the Smithsonian Institute, both in the District of Columbia, on subjects such as the Great Moravian Empire, the evolution of Ceramics in Europe and the advent of recorded Slavic language with the introduction of the Cyrillic alphabet and written Slovak language circa 1,000 AD. When the first Ambassador from Slovakia to the United States of America, Branislav Lichardus, was assigned to Washington, D.C., Lucia volunteered as his administrative assistant and was instrumental in helping the new diplomat, his family and the fledgling embassy staff acclimate to their roles in the United States.

During her marriage, which ended tragically with her death, Lucia was a homemaker who cared full time for her children. She employed her talents, nevertheless, not only with Sokol and the activities mentioned above, but also at her children's schools, where she was a constant volunteer including as a PTA President, and in the civic activities of her local community. She also served, for a friend, as a volunteer executive assistant to a public charity dedicated to the development of children and advancement of international relations; and as a principal leader with the Girl Scouts of America and the Boy Scouts of America (her son is an Eagle Scout). In 2006, once her children were away in school, Lucia and George began a law firm, with George handling management of the legal practice and Lucia acting as (a very effective) Director of Operations.

While cancer eventually outlasted Lucia, she never conceded anything to the disease. For three years after being diagnosed, until only a week before her death, Lucia maintained a full schedule conceding only an extra hour in the morning and at night to sleep. In the last year of her life she designed and made her daughter's wedding dress by hand and planned her wedding, including supervising the conduct of important traditional Slovak customs; and prepared a Slovak Cook Book for her children. Eight days before her death, Lucia traveled by plane to witness William receive his graduate degree in Forestry. The memory of Lucia will survive.

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## Lillian Roter Sokol Los Angeles - PACIFIC DISTRICT



For her exceptional dedication and hard work on behalf of her unit and the district over the past 15 years. Sis. Roter has been Sokol Los Angeles President for many years, was also Pacific District President, the District's representative on the Bylaws Committee, Unit Treasurer, Financial Secretary and Editor of our newsletter. She personifies all the qualities that this award seeks to recognize: good character, diplomacy, positive attitude, good judgment, exemplary qualities, and above all, extraordinary service and dedication to the American Sokol.

In 2000, my cousin **Anne Plachy** invited me to attend a Sokol Los Angeles meeting with her, encouraging me to join the Unit. Since becoming a member in 2001, I have held various Unit positions and Pacific District President, always willing to help where needed.

I attended my first ASO convention in 2004 and the following two as District Bylaws Chairman. I attended the 2009 American Sokol Slet and the 2012 International Slet in Prague as a participant in the senior calisthenics exercise.

I enjoy volunteering with Sokol Los Angeles to help ensure our members reap the many benefits Sokol has to offer. I owe this wonderful opportunity to my Cousin Anne Plachy.

### Historical notes:

My grandmother, Anna Pospicil nee Mizera emigrated to the United States from Bohemia in 1913 with her daughter Mary (age 8) and son Emil (age 2). Here in America, she divorced her first husband of an arranged marriage and married my grandfather, Frank Plassil. After the birth of my mother in 1925, my grandmother and grandfather built a home in Monrovia, California, where she lived until her death in 1977. My grandfather had passed away from tuberculosis when my mother was 12 years old, so I never got to know him.

I was born in my grandmother's house and lived there with my mother and older sister until my mother remarried when I was five. Unfortunately, my grandmother had left all behind in the Czech Republic and did share the language or customs with us. Those memories she kept buried as those times were unpleasant.

I never knew Sokol existed until my introduction in 2000. My grandmother's brother, William Mizera, and his family (Anne Plachy's parents) lived in Los Angeles, California and were active in Sokol. I remember going to dances with my mother as a little girl but was too young to know that they were Sokol affairs.

I am disappointed that I did not know Sokol earlier in my life when the Los Angeles Unit was more active and had a large membership. However, I am glad I had the opportunity to join the organization when I did and to help keep it alive.

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**Allison Gerber**  
**Sokol Cedar Rapids - WESTERN DISTRICT**  
**Award Sponsored by the Western District**



It's often been said that many of us wear many 'hats' as a Sokol Member – here are few of mine...

As a youth and as an adult, I attended gymnastics classes and competed at district and national meets. I attended the 1990 Prague Slet and won 1<sup>st</sup> Place in the Women's Gymnastics Level. In my late twenties, I was asked to 'help' with a girl's gymnastic class and now 35 plus years later, I continue to teach, judge, compete, organize and 'serve' Sokol in any way I can. I organize and hold clinics for coaching, skills (both female and male) and rhythmic.

I have achieved an Elite Instructor level. I have taught many students how to do a forward roll, at the same time installing confidence in them and make the learning fun for them. I watch as they grow into young adults, many who are now bringing their children to Sokol. It's through these students one realizes the years going by.

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In 2008, a devastating fire at our USAG Gym, and secured workout time for Sokol students. I was on the committee to locate another building and see to it that the Sokol Cedar Rapids Tradition Continued. We opened up for classes in our new building on March 11, 2009 -my birthday- and held the district Slet that April.

Sokol Cedar Rapids, in partner with Cedar Rapids Recreation Center, held gymnastic classes for Special Olympians. I taught these students for 25 years and coached a gymnastic team at their Inaugural Nationals in 2006 and a rhythmic team at their 2010 Nationals. I received their Outstanding Volunteer Coach Award in 1997.

For Sokol Cedar Rapids Unit, I have been Physical Director for 30 years, many of those years serving as both Women's and Men's Director. I served as Unit Treasurer for 11 years.

At the American Sokol District level, I served as Western District's Physical Director for 20 years, and in 2012 was elected the first female President for Western District. Together we asked to hold this 2017 Slet in Cedar Rapids, IA for which I was elected to serve as Slet Chair(wo)man. Truly – the biggest 'hat' I have ever worn!

Nationally, I held the position on the Executive Board as an Alternate Board Member and presently am a Board Member. I have served on the Board of Instructors as Assistant to the Physical Director for 8 years. Writing Master/Garnet level routines for National Slets, and as Program Coordinator Manager. As WD president, I also serve on the Board of Governors.

I consider it my honor and duty to do all I can for the betterment of Sokol and its programs, BUT I could not have done it all without the support of my family. Many a time, family plans have been delayed due to my Sokol responsibilities and without their understanding and patience, I would not be able to wear my many 'hats'. THANK YOU

~ ~ ~

**Mary Beth Dulock  
Sokol West - SOUTHERN DISTRICT**



She has been the driving force keeping Sokol West active for the last 10 years. Her constant dedication counts in the thousands of hours. On April 17, 2013, a tragedy struck the small town of West, Texas killing 8 members of the community, one being a past President of Sokol West. Sokol West's two buildings were both destroyed. Mary Beth's service exemplified the best a true Sokol can give. Within an hour she was in the midst of hundreds of victims caught in the devastating explosions wake. Marybeth quickly had mats pulled from the Sokol to use as mattresses for the victims needing treatment. Her service to the community and care for the victims were second nature to her. In the after math Mary Beth was relentless in the charge to rebuild Sokol West and continue their active program. This year Sokol West is host to the Southern District Slet. We show appreciation towards the Sokol Spirit and service that Mary Beth Dulock provides in our organization.

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## **The Jindřich Fügner – Distinguished Service Award**

**Jindřich Fügner** born (Heinrich Fügner, 12 September 1822 – 15 November 1865, Prague) was co-founder (together with Miroslav Tyrs) and the first starosta (leader) of the Czech sport organization, Sokol.

**Award Description:** The Jindřich Fügner Award is to be given to active members or non-members of the American Sokol Organization who have completed extraordinary and distinguished service to support a local unit, District or National program (District and National President ineligible). A recipient of the Jindřich Fügner Award is defined as a member, non-member, District or National officer, program director, adviser, coordinator or any other core administrative positions (treasurer, secretary, legal counsel, public relations, education, membership, etc. who may have provided for the vision and mission of the organization) This annual award is given to one member from each District.



**Vladislav "Walter" Slavík**  
**Sokol New York - EASTERN DISTRICT**  
**Award Sponsored by Julie Pokorny-Conklin**



Bro. Slavík was born July 15, 1924 in Rakovník in what is now the Czech Republic. He began going to the gym in the local Sokol lodge at the age of four. As a junior gymnast he participated in the gymnastic competition and calisthenics at the 1938

X All Sokol Slet at Strahov Stadium in Praha. After the communist takeover of the Czech government in February 1948, he left Czechoslovakia in May and crossing Regensburg in what was then West Germany, made his way to a refugee camp in Bavaria. In August of the same year he left with a group of Czechoslovakian refugees to a camp in Bagnoli near the suburbs of Naples, Italy. Because he understood English, he obtained employment with the office of the American Immigration Commission. When a Sokol unit was established in Bagnoli on September 24, 1948, the first Sokol Unit ever established in Exile, he became a member. With the founding of Sokol District Dr. Eduard Beneš, he was elected President of the District's Italian branch.

Bro. Slavík arrived in the United States in November 1950 and immediately after disembarking was taken by Bro. Karel Bednar to T.J. Sokol Hall where that evening he participated in the men's gymnastics. He became a member of T. J. Sokol on March 26, 1951. Initially he lived in the Perth Amboy, NJ apartment of his sponsor Bro. Karel Bednar, long-time physical director of the Slovak Gymnastic Union Sokol, now Sokol USA, and worked in the printing shop learning typesetting. With Bro. Bednar's assistance he became a joint traveling instructor for the Slovak Sokol and conducted several gymnastic schools. He maintained this position for four years. In 1955 he moved from Manhattan to Astoria and a year later married the gymnastic directress of Sokol Fuegner, Sis. Anna Pokorny. He was employed as a typesetter for the New Yorské Listy until its demise in 1962. He then found employment with the New

York Times where he became a chairman of the local New York typographical union and served in the position for eight years. He retired from the New York Times in 1990.

He served as President of T. J. Sokol in New York in 1964-65, in 1980-81 and again in 1983-84. He edited the Unit's newsletter for its membership. He served as gymnastic director for the Eastern District of the American Sokol organization in 1960-63 and again 1980-83, writing a number of calisthenic compositions for children and juniors. He was a member of the executive committee for the Czechoslovak Sokol in Exile in 1951-52, and 1957-60. After his retirement from the New York Times, he continued to be fully involved in Sokol activities. He also wrote and translated for the Czechoslovak and American Sokol papers. He helped to organize Sokol Slets held jointly by the American Sokol Organization and Sokol USA and participated in the callsthenic presentations as did his wife. He and his wife performed in the calishtenic programs for seniors in the Sokol Slets in Praha in 1994, Košice in 1998 and again in Praha in 2000. He was a President of the World Sokol Federation, a post which was to expire in two years. While in Praha in 2000 he received the Jan Masaryk GRATIAS AGIT award presented to him by Jan Kavan, a vice-chairman of the Czech Government and Minister for External Affairs, honoring him for his work in the Sokol movement which helped to spread the good name of the Czech Republic in the international community.

He maintained a regular routine of running, even taking part in the New York Marathon. All those who had any contact with him knew him as an energetic, outgoing and immediately likable individual. As is typical of Sokol activists, he gave far more to the community than he expected in return, never measuring the value of his Sokol efforts by monetary standards. He loved his close-knit family, his wife Anna, two daughters, his son-in-laws and his grandsons. And he loved his house in Mahopac, NY where he lived in a community of 55 other residents, all members of a land trust association. AS could be expected, he was actively involved in the life of the association and was respected and honored for his efforts on behalf of the association.

In 2003, in memoriam, Walter received a Gold Medal (the only one given in history of the Czech Sokol Organization), at the Sokol USA Slet in Valporaiso, Indiana. It was also the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the World Sokol Federation. It was presented to his wife Anci, by Sis. J. Zitna and Br. V. Protiva of COS. At the same time Br. Paul Lebloch and Br. V. Zbuzeck of American Sokol received Silver Medals.

His leadership was always guided by Democratic principles in which he fiercely believed. Walter was President of Sokol New York for seven years, President of Eastern District for fifteen years! He taught, mentored and inspired members for 50 years. His childhood Sokol in Rakovnik has a memorial display and sculpture of him in their entryway. Walter passed away on September 10, 2001 of lung cancer and is remembered by all as an incredible Sokol leader.



**"The Memorial Gold Medal"**

~ ~ ~

**Chuck & Janet Kalat**  
**Sokol Karel Havlicek Borovsky, Ennis TX - SOUTHERN DISTRICT**  
**Award Sponsored by the Southern District**



Jan & Chuck, as you would expect, met during a weekend Sokol training trip to Sokol St. Louis in 1966. Their love for and dedication to Sokol has lasted a lifetime – Janet since the age of 10 and Chuck since 6 when his mother dragged him kicking and screaming to boys class. That was the start and it has not finished yet.

Both Jan and Chuck have been adult Sokol members for over 50 years – Janet 53 years at Sokol Tabor and Chuck 55 years at Sokol Slavsky / Berwyn-Slavsky / Spirit. Both also enjoy dual membership at Sokol Karel Havlicek Borovsky (KHB) Ennis, TX. As children they competed for their respective Sokols for over 12 years into adulthood.

Both have performed as able Sokol instructors/coaches for many years – Girls and Junior Girls at Sokol Tabor; Boys at Sokol Slavsky, Girls and Boys at Sokol Zizka-Dallas; girls class assistants at Sokol KHB-Ennis; and Senior II class instructors at Sokol KHB-Ennis. They have also been the designated calisthenics enthusiasts/ instructors throughout the Southern District (SD). Tabulating and awards have been their responsibility at many SD Slets. Janet's dedication to SD "attendance" collecting spans many years. They played major roles in the success of the 1981 and 2009 American Sokol National Slets hosted by the Southern District.

Jan's & Chuck's passion has always been in the realm of the Board of Instructors. They have worked as members of unit and district BOIs as well as over 90 combined years on the National Board of Instructors. Janet served as unit director at Sokols Tabor and Zizka-Dallas and as the National Women's Physical Director for 10 years. As national director, Jan was instrumental in initiating the Directors Newsletter as a communication / training tool between the National BOI and unit and district directors and the "Action List" still used today to track the status of BOI tasks to be performed. Chuck served as Unit Director at Sokols Slavsky and Zizka-Dallas, as District Director in the Central District, and as National Men's Physical Director for 10 years. Chuck also served as editor of the "Gymnast" section of the American Sokol publication for a number of years; and serves as editor of the Directors Newsletter (27 years) since its inception. Their 20 combined years as National Physical Directors spanned the conduct of 5 national Slets.

Outside the BOI, both recently stepped up as Youth Membership Directors and Administrators. Chuck has served as Southern District Educational Director; unit Financial Secretary and Membership Director at Sokol KHB-Ennis; Future Sokol Leaders Fund Administrator; and currently chairs the National Budget and Finance Committee.

Walter Slavik once remarked to Jan & Chuck, "whenever one of you takes a job, we get you both!"

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**Joan Sedlacek**  
**Sokol Minnesota - WESTERN DISTRICT**  
**Award Sponsored by the Western District**



Some of my earliest memories are of my parents Sokol Friend in St. Paul and Berwyn. Their joy, commitment and dedication showed how much Sokol meant to them. When I joined Sokol St. Paul as an adult, my parent's friends became my friends. I, too, found joy, commitment and dedication. Also, the pride. As with most of us, there had been blood, sweat and tears shed at the Hall. When I think that Sokol activities might be interfering with life, I realize – Sokol is life.

I have held the Unit Women's director position, been a tot's teacher, class helper and currently see to it that the equipment is set--up for classes and I take it back down. I have been Vice President, Sargent at Arms, Educational Director, and Board of Trustees Chair. Sokol Minnesota attends many cultural events and I have worked in the booth at the Minnesota State Fair, Co-chaired the Czech and Slovak Festival, served on the committee and prepared the hall for the Czech Prime Minister's visit. I have also worked many hours improving Sokol MN hall, by running a jackhammer to tear out bathrooms, shoveled snow off of the roof, planted trees and sealed the parking lot.

I am the current Educational Director for the Western District. I am on the board for the 2017 Slet. I have researched extensively the history of Sokol units and buildings and collected pictures of building in USA and Czech and Slovak and serve as Western District Historian

As National Educational Director for 5 years, I re-wrote the Sokol Educational manual, wrote the opening and memorial for the convention held in Omaha. I also served as National Membership Director for 5 years. I've been a delegate to many district meetings and American Sokol conventions. Attended many District National, Abroad slets, unit anniversaries, and danced at many festivals.

I have lectured at 2 SVU congresses, and been guest speaker at various Sokol events, Sokol units, National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library.

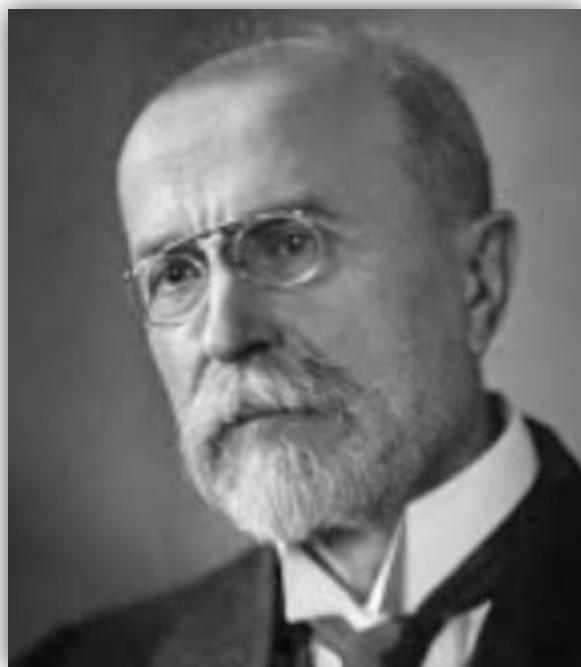
One day I may be the chief dish washer and the next day I'll be in attendance at a gala – it's all because of my wanting to keep Sokol alive.

~ ~ ~

## **The Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk – Leadership Award**

**Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk** (sometimes called **Thomas Masaryk** in English (7 March 1850 – 14 September 1937), was a Czechoslovak politician, sociologist and philosopher, who as an eager advocate of Czechoslovak independence during World War I became the founder and first President of Czechoslovakia, and thus referred to as "President liberator". He originally wished to reform the Austro-Hungarian monarchy into a democratic federal state, but during the First World War he began to favor the abolition of the monarchy and, with the help of the Allied Powers, eventually succeeded. (Wikipedia)

**Award Description:** The Tomas Garrigue Masaryk Award may be given to individuals who have performed extraordinary service, dedication and achievement as a **leader** to the American Sokol Organization over a long period of time (minimum is 25 years). This is distinguished by exceptional devotion and outstanding service as a leader to ASO's vision and mission.



## Frank Čapek Sokol Little Ferry - EASTERN DISTRICT



Frank was a Sokol New York member since he was six years of age. He became the youngest Men's Director at 18 years of age, a position he held only for a year and relinquished it because he felt he was too young to be in charge of men much older than him. He then took over the Junior Boys classes, which he taught for 14 years. He played basketball for the New York Sokol and was a member of all gym teams at all Sokol competitions and AAU meets. He tied for second place on rings in a Junior AAU Gym Competition Meet. His best work was on the long horse vaulting. Besides being active in the New York Sokol and playing basketball he was on the Varsity Teams in High School playing basketball and swimming. He also competed in wrestling, weightlifting and canoeing meets for various clubs. He was Men's Eastern District Representative on the American Sokol 1938 Team that was sent to Czechoslovakia.

Brother Capek had charge with Bro. Oldrich Kudrnovsky of the Eastern District Mid-Slet at the 34<sup>th</sup> Street Armory which was the last major Slet in the East. With the exception of two years he was Eastern District Director from 1946 to 1974). He attended Instructor Schools in Little Ferry, Philadelphia, Yonkers, New York (Slovak School) and a monthly school in South Haven, Michigan. He also attended four conventions and many Slets in Chicago, Cleveland and Dallas.

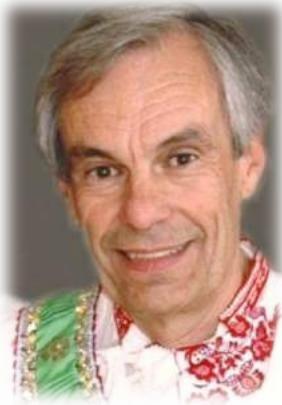
Bro. Capek served two years under General Patton in the 51<sup>st</sup> Armored Infantry, winding up in Strakonice, Czechoslovakia and also received the Silver Star. After World War II Bro. Capek moved to Little Ferry and at their request coached the Junior Girls High Division Team. The teams did very well in all meets with one girl, Shirley Hartwick winning the Championship in the Junior Girls Division in Chicago. Shortly after, he took over the Junior Boys' Classes which at the time numbered over 100 registrants each year.

Frank had three sons Frank Jr., Thomas, Kenneth and a daughter Christine. His wife Rose, was the one who sacrificed while Frank attended gym classes, meets, meeting and Slet!

Frank was an active gymnast and instructor at Sokol New York. He transferred membership to Sokol Little Ferry to help build their program. There, he was a Unit and District Physical Director. He also served as the Eastern District President.

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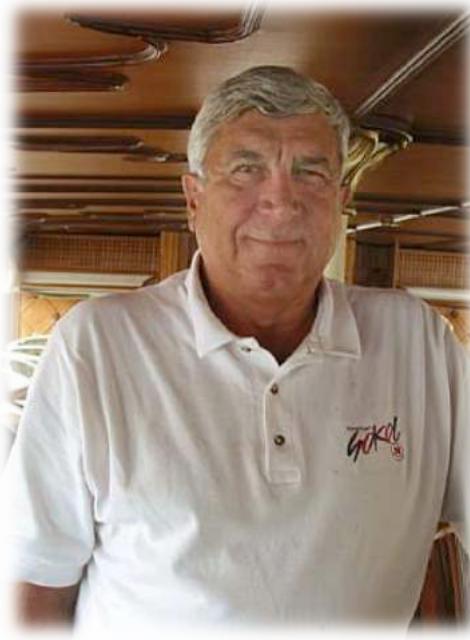
**Otto Notzl**  
**Sokol Los Angeles - PACIFIC DISTRICT**



For his extraordinary dedication and exemplary leadership at both the Unit and District level. Bro. Notzl has been náčelník (Men's Physical Director) of Sokol Los Angeles and Pacific District for most of the past 25 years and as such has demonstrated exceptional leadership and creativity both in introducing and exploring different fitness activities and in the teaching of our Slet calisthenics, which is especially difficult in our District due to the great distances here in the West. Frequent team practices are nearly impossible. Bro. Notzl has also been the Camp Director of Pacific District's Sokol Family Camp for the past 10 years, where his leadership has proven crucial to the camp's continued popularity.

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**Larry Laznovsky**  
**Sokol KHB, Ennis TX - SOUTHERN DISTRICT**



Larry was a big man with a big heart. His love and compassion for Sokol was matched by no other. Larry served in every capacity with never a thought for himself. A student of Gymnastics, an instructor, a manager, a Unit Director at age 17, a District Director, Committee member, Unit President for 28 years, District President and ultimately the American Sokol President from 2000 to 2010. Larry was a true leader in Sokol. It was under Larry Laznovsky's direction that the 1967, 1981 and 2009 National Slets were held in the Southern District. His leadership and work in Sokol was well known and led him to be desired in other organizations. He was a founding Board member of Texas Czech Heritage Cultural Center in La Grange, Vice President of Czech Cultural Society, Vice President of the World Sokol Federation in Prague, Board member of the Texas Cultural Partnership, District Representative for the Texans of Czech Ancestry, leading member of WFLA Lodge #402, President of CWA Local #6250, President of Retirees Union of CWA and President and organizer of the famous Ennis National Polka Festival. Larry Laznovsky is truly worthy of the distinction that the TG Masaryk Award represents.

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**Mickey & Jolene Dalton**  
**Sokol South Omaha - WESTERN DISTRICT**  
**Award Sponsored by Western District**



Bro. Mickey & Sis. Jolene Dalton have individually contributed to Sokol but since they married (over 37 years ago), their accomplishments have been because of their joint love & support of Sokol. The "behind the scenes" work they do for each other confirms that it definitely has been a "team" affair. Bro. Mickey, a 48 year member of Sokol South Omaha, "discovered" Sokol when he was hired as the live-in caretaker at Sokol South Omaha. Shortly thereafter he joined the Unit and the rest is history. On the Unit level, he served as President in 1975 (the 1<sup>st</sup> non-Czech to hold that office), Financial Secretary 23 years, and Bylaws Chairman 12 years.

He got involved in the gym: became a gymnast at age 25 & competed for 10 years, went to a Western District & American Sokol National Kurz, and taught Class I & II Boys for 4 years. He served on the Board of Instructors 27 years (Treasurer 4 years), the Hall Board 14 years (Chairman 7 years), and the Museum Board 17 years (is now an Honorary Member of that Board). On the District level, he served as President 11 years, Vice President 4 years, and Bylaws Chairman 10 years. On the National level, he served on the ASO Executive Board 1995-2000 & 2010-2014 and as an Alternate Board member 1990-1995. He has attended 9 National Conventions either as a delegate from Sokol South Omaha or the Western District and was elected ASO Convention Chairman in 2005 (the first non-Czech to serve in that position). He received the Western District Ed Pavoucek Outstanding Sokol Service Award in 2001.

Sis. Jolene, a 49 year member of Sokolice/Sokol South Omaha, "discovered" Sokol in high school, following her siblings as they became involved at Sokol South Omaha. She competed for 25 years, attended a Western District & American Sokol National Kurz (was top student at both), taught mainly Class II Girls for 19 years, and taught Sr. Women's Calisthenics for 20+ years. She was an instructor at 6 National & 5 District (Western, Southern & Northeastern) Kurzs. On a Unit level, she served as President 6 years, Treasurer 6 years, Director of Women 9 years, and By-Laws Chairman 24 years. On the District level, she served as Financial Secretary 10 years, Treasurer 8 years, Director of Women 7 years, and Bylaws Chairman 17 years. On the National Level, she served on the ASO Executive Board 1990-1995, as an Alternate Board member 1995-2000, and as National Bylaws Chairman from 2010-present. She has attended 9 National Conventions either as a delegate from Sokolice South Omaha or the Western District and was elected ASO Convention Vice-Chairman in 2005 & Convention Chairman in 2010 (the first female to serve in that position). She is an Honorary Member of Sokol Greater Cleveland & Sokolice/Sokol South Omaha. She received the Sokol South Omaha BOI Service Award in 1998 & the Western District Ed Pavoucek Outstanding Sokol Service Award in 2010.

Bro. Mickey & Sis. Jolene have been co-chairmen or served on numerous Unit & District committees together, including Sokol South Omaha Newsletter Circulation for 22+ years, Editor for 3 years, Sokol South Omaha Czech Festival Chairmen for 2 years, 1989 National Slet Committee and 2000 National Convention Committee.

Bro. Mickey & Sis. Jolene feel the biggest joys from their Sokol years are the many friendships they have made and exposing so many children & their families to this wonderful organization. They feel very honored for being chosen to receive this award.

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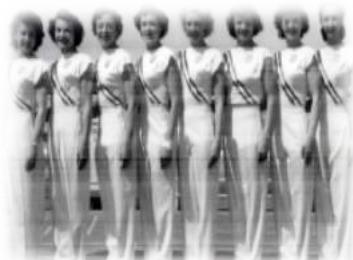
## **The Franz Kříž – Sports Achievement Award**

**Frank Josef Kříž** (March 26, 1894 – January 11, 1955) was an American gymnast and Olympic Champion. A member of the New York Sokol and the Bohemian Gymnastic Association, he competed in the 1920, 1924, and 1928 Summer Olympics in 1924 he received a gold medal in Vault. In 1922 and 1924 he won the Amateur Athletic Union national gymnastics title. In 1959 he was one of the initial inductees to the USA Gymnastics Hall of Fame. (Wikipedia)

**Award Description:** An annual award given to one member from each District. This member is an individual who has demonstrated good character, diplomacy, a positive attitude, good judgment, exemplary qualities, and extraordinary **achievement in sports** associated with the American Sokol programs. The member does not apply for a Frank Kříž Award. The Frank Kriz Award should be a mark of extraordinary achievement recognized by leaders, coaches and peers, but tenure alone is never an adequate criterion. To obtain this classification, a member must be nominated. A Frank Kříž Award is not intended to be a retirement award.



## Laddie Hniz Bakanic Sokol New York - EASTERN DISTRICT



Sokol Champion gymnast, member of the 1948 U.S. Olympic Gymnastic team in London, Instructor and mentor in gym classes. The following article about Laddie was submitted by Julie Barcal in the May 2017 American Sokol publication.

"I had the pleasure of speaking with Laddie (Ladislava, but she goes by Laddie) about her Sokol and Olympic experiences. She kindly provided the photos for this article.

Laddie grew up in a Sokol family in New York City in Yorkville. Her father, Charles Hniz, was President of Sokol New York and a tailor by occupation who also made Sokol uniforms. Laddie began attending Sokol classes as a small child and her father coached her in gymnastics as well. Besides staying busy with Sokol activities, she enjoyed riding her bicycle along the East River with her cousin.

When she was just seventeen Laddie won first place in the Women's Championship Division at the 1941 National Slet in Chicago. At the 1947 National Slet she placed second in Championship Division. In those days Sokol competitions included track and field which were not her strongest events. She also taught children's classes at Sokol New York.

Laddie said that back then Sokol was the place for young people and families to go. The various Sokols in the area (Slovak and Catholic as well as Czech Sokols) knew one another. She met her husband George Bakanic when he came to Sokol New York to work out. Sokol New York had a nice gym and apparatus while his Slovak Sokol was working out in a room behind a bar. They were married in 1945.

Laddie and her father were planning on attending the 1948 COS Slet in Prague when her father suggested she try out for the Olympics instead. She did, and when she made the US Women's Olympic team she was surprised. Off to London it was where the US women's gymnastics team placed third. There were no women's gymnastic individual competitions in the Olympics at that time. The women's events consisted of flying rings, pommel horse, balance beam, and calisthenics. The calisthenics had two parts, one part without hand apparatus and one part with poles. The poles were done with four girls to a pole. Pole calisthenics included marching, arm movements, and bending which had to be performed in unison.

Laddie enjoyed her Olympic experience of being with the group of girls, competing, and seeing what other gymnasts could do. Also fun was meeting so many different people, and trying to communicate with hand motions.

After the Olympics Laddie retired from competing to have children. She has been a member of Sokol New York now for 75 years. She said what she enjoys most about Sokol is that it is like family and a person can meet Sokols in so many different parts of the country. She still has people sending her pictures to autograph and said she enjoyed watching the 2016 Olympics, except for the race where the runner threw herself over the finish to win instead of running across it (Shaunae Miller, 400 meter race). We wish you continued good health Laddie. Nazdar!"

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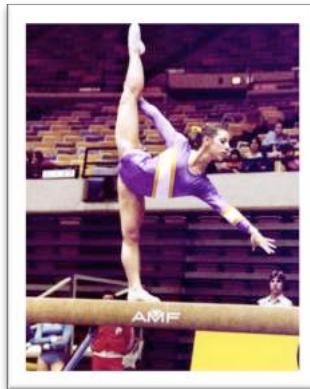
**Lubomír Hintnaus**  
**Sokol Los Angeles - PACIFIC DISTRICT**  
**(1927-1997)**

For his exceptional contribution to the Sokol Los Angeles gymnastics program. He was the náčelník (Men's Physical Director) and gymnastics instructor throughout the 1960s and early 1970s. He was not only an exceptional gymnast himself, he was also an exceptional trainer and personified all that Sokol stands for. He was of good moral character, universally liked and respected, and extremely dedicated to the Sokol Ideals. Two of his students, his son Tomas Hintnaus and his daughter Dagmar HIntnaus, went on to become Olympic athletes. Dagmar HIntnaus was an alternate on the 1972 US Women's Olympic Gymnastic Team and Tomas Hintnaus won the pole vault at the 1980 US Olympic Trials, but missed the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow due to the American boycott. He participated in the Liberty Bell Classic (Olympic Boycott Games) where he won!

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**Paula Stansbury**  
**Sokol Zizka Dallas - SOUTHERN DISTRICT**

Paula grew up with Sokol in her heart. Her athletic prowess was evident at a young age. Her Sokol coach was Bill Willis who trained many fine competitive gymnasts at Sokol Zizka in Dallas while instilling a passion for the sport. Paula was a local AAU Champion, Texas High School Champion, USGF Champion and ultimately became the Sokol National Champion in 1977. Her grace and athleticism were admired by everyone in the gymnastics community. She placed Sokol on the map in the gymnastics community. We appreciate her achievement in Sport and bringing such great recognition to our beloved organization.



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**Jim Hartung**  
**Sokol Omaha - WESTERN DISTRICT**  
**Award Sponsored by the Western District**



Jim Hartung is quite possibly the most consistent male gymnast in the history of collegiate competition, having averaged something like 9.4 for all six events during all of his four years at the University of Nebraska. In the NCAA National Championship meets alone, over a period of four years, he averaged over 9.6 per event (compulsory and optional) for the All Around. Jim was also an eight time U.S. National Team Member. He was a 22-time All American and captured 11 conference individual event titles and went on to win seven NCAA gold medals, and 14 USAG National Championship gold medals. Most telling of all is that he competed as a member of the American Gold Medal team with a very swollen and sore finger that he couldn't adequately bend, and he never mentioned a word to others although his coach and a few teammates knew about it. His competitive qualities and true character surfaced in the competition. No one was tougher than Jim, and no one encouraged his teammates more than Jim. He was an inspiration to them all.

Getting Started: Jim Hartung began his gymnastics career at the Omaha Sokol gymnastics club in Nebraska . There, he was coached by Phil Cahoy, Sr. whom he credits as his most influential coach. Jim trained at this club for twelve years and under Cahoy's leadership Jim led the Omaha Sokol team to three state titles. He recorded 18 gold medals in competition during this time. Olympic Games: Team member, (1980). Ironically, considered the problems in the Middle East and Afghanistan today, the U.S. boycotted the Olympic Games in Moscow due to Soviet aggression in Afghanistan. The U.S. did not compete. Gold-Team, (1984). Jim helped make U.S. gymnastic history as a member of the 1984 U.S. Gold Medal winning Olympic Team. He finished 9th in the AA and placing 6th on the Vault. Although Linda Metheny was the first to compete in the finals in Tokyo, (1968), and Peter Kormann won a Bronze medal, Montreal, Canada, (1976), Jim along with Vidmar, Daggett, Gaylord, and Conner, made the finals in 1984 that made him among the few outstanding American gymnasts to compete in an Olympic gymnastic event finals. World Championships: Team member, Fort Worth, Texas, USA, (1979), Moscow, USSR, (1981), & Budapest, Hungary, (1983) NCAA Championships: Gold-Team, (1979, '80, '81, & '82); Gold-AA, (1980 & '81); Gold-PB, (1981 & '82); Gold-R, (1980, '81, & '82). USAG Open National Championships: Gold-AA, (1981); Gold-SR, (1980, '81, '82 [T], & '84); Gold-HB, (1980); Gold-V, (1978 & '82[T]); Gold-FX, (1981 & '82); Gold-PH, (1978, '80, '81, & '82). His 14 USAG gold medals rank Jim among a select group of gymnasts such as standouts like Blaine Wilson, Alfred Jochim, George Wheeler, Frank Cumiskey, and Makoto Sakemoto with 14 or more national wins albeit under the auspices of the AAU, the USGF or USAG. He

competed for the University of Nebraska and was coached by Francis Allen and Jim Howard, GHOF Coaching Team Honorees, (1999). **Judge:** Jim Hartung is presently one of the most widely respected men's brevet level judges in the United States, and in 2005 he was named assistant coach for the U. of Nebraska. He remains unavailable for comment regarding his present duties or family.

**Sources:** Introduction by Jerry Wright, author of *Gymnastics Who's Who, 2005* and Abie Grossfeld, 1979 GHOF Honoree. Primary information provided courtesy of Jerry Wright, the *USA Gymnastics Media Guide, 2003-2004*, and important editing performed courtesy of Abie Grossfeld. Formatting by Dr. Larry Banner, Web Manager

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## **The Miroslav Tyrš – Honor Award**

**Miroslav Tyrš** (17 September 1832 – 8 August 1884) was a [Czech art historian](#), sports organizer and founder of the [Sokol](#) movement. A place where **a true legacy of Sokol**, a Gymnastic pioneer, Olympian, mentor, champion, innovator, and trendsetter are remembered for eternity by the Sokol community.

**Award Description:** This recipient must have brought a distinguished notoriety to the Sokol name. This award is specifically for a member or past member who has truly marked or changed the History of Sokol in a positive way.



**Marie Provazníková**  
**Sokol New York - EASTERN DISTRICT**  
**October 24, 1890 - January 11, 1991**



In her lifetime of 100 years, Marie Provazníková dedicated herself to Sokol and contributed significantly to the field of physical education. Her leadership was recognized by international awards including the French Legion d'Honneur, Yugoslavia's Sava Cravette, the key to the City of Chicago, and posthumously, the Order of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. Recognized for her calisthenics compositions and leadership abilities, she was called "Prvá", a contraction of Pr(ovazníko)vá, meaning "the first" in Czech. The nickname served as an unofficial signature, and was most fitting for someone of her stature.

Born in Prague, on October 24, 1890 to Václav Kalouš, an engineer in iron bridge building and his wife Marie (née Klementová), a dressmaker, Provazníková was the eldest of four children. The Kalouš parents were devoted to their family introducing the children to cultural and historic Prague on weekends, and spending the summer vacations in the country. Theirs was an uncomplicated middle class life. "Thanks to my parents, whose wisdom I learned to appreciate only many years later," wrote Provazníková, "I had a happy childhood." The Kaloušes valued and made education available to their children. According to her mother, Provazníková was an easy child.

In primary school Provazníková was a quick learner and excelled in all subjects; she loved physical education best joining Sokol in the second grade. In Austro-Hungarian Bohemia, secondary education was not available to girls until the latter part of the 19th century. In 1890, Minerva, a school for girls founded to educate future leaders, opened in Prague. In 1903 Provazníková enrolled at Minerva and excelled both academically and in Sokol where she quickly became a junior Sokol instructor.

Her youth involved participation in sports, attending lectures, concerts, theater performances, going dancing, and ultimately meeting František Provazník, an artist, who designed and crafted jewelry and other metal artifacts. They married and on January 9, 1911 their daughter Alena was born. František

did not want his wife to work, but Provazníková was determined to finish her studies. She accomplished this end in record time, taking classes simultaneously at Minerva and at the Charles University Institute for Teachers of Physical Education. Despite many obstacles including motherhood, WW I with the conscription of her husband to the Russian Front, and closures at the Institute, in June 1915, Provazníková received her diploma and accomplished her goal of teacher of physical education at Minerva and at a girls' secondary school in Smíchov. She also continued her participation and duties at Sokol Karlín.

The war ended in November 1918, a new nation was born, professionally and in Sokol, Provazníková was now leading a new independent life the purpose of which revolved around the philosophy and practices of Sokol and all aspects of physical education. Beside her official work (as below) from 1922 she regularly wrote articles for *Cvičitelka*, a monthly magazine for women physical education instructors, broadcast on the radio, wrote books on Sokol, physical education, moral, social and physical fitness, and personal responsibility.

From 1897 until 1931 she rose through the ranks from child member to Náčelnice in Československá Obec Sokolská (ČOS), the national Sokol organization. Professionally, from 1916 and her first position at Minerva, she rose to full Professor of Physical Education at Charles University, member of the government Teacher Examination Board, Advisory Committee in the Ministry of Public Health and Physical Education, and Department Head of Physical Education of Girls and Women of National Voluntary Sport Organizations in the Ministry of Education.

Sokol principles, with a fundamental belief in true democracy, were at the core of her being.

In 1939 when Czechoslovakia became a Nazi Protectorate all efforts were made to suppress organizations which demonstrated a Czech/anti-Nazi spirit. Sokol was banned and university and secondary school teachers were forced to resign. Many Sokols were taken to and perished in concentration camps. Clandestine Sokol leadership meetings continued. Because of her organizational abilities Provazníková was identified as the designated survivor of the war, tasked with re-establishing Sokol after liberation. Instructed to go into hiding, she fled to her daughter's country cottage near Ždár nad Sázavou. The cottage was by a pond - Na Rendlíčku. As word spread, a saying developed: "Máme Náčelníčku Na Rendlíčku." (We have the Dear Náčelnice at Rendlíček.) There Provazníková raised farm animals including the biggest hog any local farmer had ever raised. Always productive, she supplied her family and Sokol friends with protein and other farm products. A major challenge was covertly raising and butchering the massive pig. Farm products were requisitioned by the Nazis and being caught with 'contraband' was an offense punishable by death. Sokols came through for one another by making secret agreements for the 'contraband' to be smuggled out in bits and pieces on bikes, buses and trains in rubber bags packed into suitcases.

As Náčelnice, Provazníková had presided over the women's events of the 1932 and 1938 Slets and continued in that capacity preparing for the post war Slet. Although Sokol had been dissolved during the Protectorate, all wished for the Slets to continue. The slogan, "*Slet bude!*" ("There will be a Slet!") resounded in the 1946 torch relay to the most distant reaches of the Republic, organized to communicate the message of preparations being made. The next year's relay heralded, "We are ready!"

Following the February 1948 putsch all physical education organizations were consolidated with Sokol. Before the Slet commenced Provazníková delivered an inspirational address to "My Sisters" noting that the Slet would go on, that it would mark the end of a beautiful era, that it would be her final time directing them, and that the ideals of Sokol must continue.

The Sokol boys and girls divisions performed several days before the official festival took place at the Strahov Stadium from July 1 – 8, 1948. Náčelnice Provazníková directed the activities of 66,367 senior women, 43,703 junior girls and 45,503 girls. Among the highlights was the innovative composition Rej (the romp) with 30,000 women performing. Statistics tell us that there were 585,000 gymnasts and 2

million observing spectators. At the time, in a country of 12.3 million, Sokol had 1,004,987 adult members.

The air was ripe with resistance against the new Communist regime. Even though President Beneš had abdicated, 11-14 year old girls started the demonstrations by chanting, "Long live President Beneš", and were joined by all spectators; Provazníková did not stop them and other demonstrations ensued in the following days. Provazníková was held accountable, interrogated by the secret police, and subsequently accompanied by a plainclothesman for the remainder of the Slet. As word of the demonstrations and her detention spread, the public reacted by turning out in even greater numbers, hundreds of thousands filled the sidewalks and balconies to view Sokol parades and joined in the chanting of "Beneš! Beneš!" About 160 Sokols were arrested, but attempts at mass arrests by the police were thwarted by the public. After the end of the Slet, there were massive arrests of Sokols throughout the country.

Resistance against tyranny was the legacy of the 1948 XI Sokol Slet.

Earlier, in 1945, ČOS accepted participation in the 1948 Olympic Games planned for London. Execution of gymnastic events fell to the *Fédération internationale de gymnastique* (FIG) which had to abide by the rules of the Olympic Committee. The three Czechoslovak representatives were those from before WW II and included Provazníková, vice president of the women's technical committee. After the international gymnastic federation elected Provazníková, as Director of Women's Events she convened a meeting of the women's technical committee in Amsterdam to review the field of gymnastics which had evolved differently in many countries; in some, it was similar to that of Sokol: movements were to be feminized both in calisthenics and small apparatus, with importance placed on correct execution. The Communist regime tried to prevent Provazníková from obtaining an exit visa for the Olympics and withheld her passport until the close of the day of her flight to London. Unbeknownst to her, the British consulate had been given orders to stay open until her passport was received and paperwork processed. Who gave this order remains unknown.

Upon arrival in London Provazníková realized that there were no standardized judging guidelines and quickly organized training of judges for women's gymnastics events. Her team of 12 gymnasts had been training relentlessly. The communists insisted on inserting one of their own members onto the team. Provazníková placed the "new" gymnast as the team leader thus freeing a team member to be a judge. Tragically one of the team became sick with polio shortly after arrival in London and died while the team was performing and earning a perfect "10" score securing the gold medal for the 1948 Czechoslovak team. For the medal ceremony team members wore black armbands and a black sash was draped on the Czechoslovak flag.

Knowing with certainty that she would be arrested upon her return, Provazníková decided to defect. Blamed for the anti-Communist demonstrations and pronounced Communist enemy number one, at the close of the games she resigned her position in FIG announcing that she would not return to Czechoslovakia. When international news media reported her defection it became clear that the takeover in Czechoslovakia had not been the will of the people, but had indeed been a putsch. Time magazine referred to her as "the first Olympian to have sought asylum".

In 1947 as the leader of ČOS, Provazníková had visited Sokol units in the USA. Prior to returning she deposited \$200 in a Chicago Bank knowing that in post war Central Europe essential staples could not be found. She asked her American Sokol friends to buy items as needed and send them to her to Czechoslovakia. This account became important at the end of the London Olympic Games when she refused to return to her homeland.

Getting refugee status in England, and later an entry visa to the US took nearly half a year. She used the time to contact the Czech network of BBC intending to transmit her message of pro-democracy/anti-communism to her countrymen. BBC management gave her prime time broadcasting

status at 1:00 p.m. on Christmas Day, 1948. Reportedly in Czechoslovakia she was widely heard and transcripts were circulated throughout the Republic. This new chapter in her established broadcasting career was continued in the USA with weekly broadcasts on Voice of America and Radio Free Europe during much of the Communist era until the late '70s.

Thanks to her active participation in FIG Women's Technical Committee, Provazníková became acquainted with Dr. Margaret Brown, president of Panzer College of Physical Education in East Orange N.J. as early as the Olympic Games in Berlin in 1936. They became friends when Brown came to Prague for the 1938 Slet. Upon hearing of Provazníková's defection, Brown offered her a teaching position at Panzer College as soon as she arrived in the USA. She thus applied for a "Non quota visa" but needed an affidavit of her employment at Charles University, something no Communist functionary would grant. After a long delay, a Minister of Education, also in exile, wrote a note confirming her University appointment but doubtful that his endorsement would be accepted without official stationery and official stamps. It was accepted as Christmas was approaching and her passport was valid only until December 31<sup>st</sup>. At Cunard Lines, she was told the first possible booking was in April. Ultimately, she purchased a First Class ticket spending almost the entire \$200 she had deposited in America in 1947. She sailed to the USA on December 24, 1948 and reached New York Harbor on January 2, 1949 - First Class, but totally penniless!

Upon arrival at the age of 58, Provazníková joined the American workforce at Panzer College and registered with Sokol, New York. Having witnessed Provazníková's talent in calisthenics composition, Dr. Brown, a delegate from the National Amateur Athletic Union, Gymnastic Committee of the United States of the Women's Technical Committee FIG, recommended Provazníková to create the composition in rhythmic gymnastics for the American Gymnastic Olympic Team of 1952; this became her first contribution to her new homeland. She was also invited to join The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports during the Eisenhower administration.

In the US at that time, Sokol was purely a physical education organization and did not adhere to the original philosophy of Tyrš and Fügner. Provazníková's attitude was that "the responsibility of Sokols in exile was to show how Sokol can blossom in freedom." By the end of 1950 "Czechoslovak Sokol Abroad" was formed. From its foundation until 1976 she carried out countless duties: national/international director of women, vice-president, and treasurer. In New York she set up "Relief for Sokols in Exile", wherein clothing and money for medical supplies were collected and sent to Sokols in refugee camps.

She taught instructors' schools in units in Canada, Austria, Switzerland, Germany, and wherever she was needed. She functioned as a member of the organizational committees for the Slets in Canada, Austria and Switzerland, and composed mass calisthenics exercises for the Slets in 1956, and 1962. Between 1956 and 1964 she helped organize, direct and promote camps for European Sokols in Austria, France and Switzerland. Between 1955 and 1967 she served as editor of the monthly bulletin "Czechoslovak Sokol Abroad".

In 1956 Provazníková gave up her teaching career and moved to Ohio to help her daughter's family and continued her work for Voice of America and Radio Free Europe sharing stories of the free West to those behind the iron curtain.

In 1965 Provazníková moved to NYC where she continued writing articles and books about Sokol and gymnastics related themes. Always thinking about children and promoting/maintaining Czech culture and Sokol ideals, she created a summer camp in East Haddam, Connecticut so children and grandchildren of Czechs could be in nature, continue to speak Czech, and eat *knedliky* and *buchty*.

At the age of 88 she moved to Salem, Oregon where she lived with her granddaughter and her family. Sokol brothers and sisters came to Salem to help update Sokol programs for instructors' schools, revise the Sokol Manual, write her final work *To Byl Sokol*, and other books on terminology in gymnastics and related matters. Some helped her edit, some put *háčky* and *čárky* on her work as her American typewriter did not have that function. She corresponded with Sokols worldwide. Always interested in

young people and engaging them in learning and physical activity, she created obstacle courses and treasure hunts for her grandson and his friends at the family's mountain cabin. In Salem she insisted on contributing to the family budget by contacting the Oregon State Extension Service and learning to raise rabbits for meat.

At the age of 97 Provažníková returned to her daughter's home in Altamont, New York where she spent her final years. With assistance of Sokol sisters who came for extended visits from Czechoslovakia, she continued her Sokol work. With Sokol as the beneficiary of her labor and dedication, she always insisted that she received more from Sokol than she had been able to give.

Although she longed to return to her beloved motherland, and as the sole survivor of the "Golden Age of Sokol", she refused to return and to die until Czechoslovakia was once more a free democracy. She did live to see a free Czechoslovakia but was never able to return, passing away at 100 years.

In 1992 she was awarded, in memoriam, the Order of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk by President Václav Havel.

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## Mildred Barcal Sokol Washington D.C. - EASTERN DISTRICT



In 1927, at the age of 11, Mildred Barcal left the family farm in Zurich, Kansas with her parents Alois and Anna and her siblings Emil, Stanley, Robert and Helen and moved to Chicago. Her lifelong association with Sokol began when after moving to Chicago her father Alois, became the Manager/Janitor of Sokol Chicago. Alois had been a Sokol instructor in Vodany (Czech Republic) before coming to the United States. The family lived in the Sokol Chicago building and everyone helped with the running of the building and setting up and cleaning up after events. Everyone pitched in to help until they left there in 1934.

In 1941, Mildred accepted a job to work in a civil service position for the U.S. Government at the Army Corp. of Engineers in Washington D.C. Her office was in the yet to be finished Pentagon building. At this time she left her activities at Sokol Chicago behind. Upon her arrival in Washington, Mildred quickly connected with the small Czech community there and very soon she became part of a group who were seeing the need to form a Sokol Unit in the Washington D.C. area.

Following World War II and several years of hard work, Sokol Washington D.C. held its first classes and exhibition in 1947 with Mildred as one of the founding leaders. For over 40 years Mildred served Sokol Washington D.C. in many capacities. Her home in Chevy Chase, Maryland was a hub of Sokol social activity along with frequent visits from her Chicago family.

Mildred finished her employment with the government working as an accountant at the State Department. She retired in 1971 after thirty years of service.

Mildred stayed connected to Sokol Washington D.C. activities despite her move to Venice, Florida in the early 1990's and then back to the Chicago area in 2006. In 1997 she received an award for Outstanding Contributions to Sokol Washington D.C. for promoting Sokol ideals through leadership, dedication and diligence. In 2007, Mildred was thrilled to join Sokol Washington D.C.'s 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as a special guest by conference call from Chicago!

Mildred was a 77 year member at the time of passing at the age of 94 in April of 2011.

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**Cheri Riddle**  
**Sokol Fresno/Los Angeles - PACIFIC DISTRICT**



Sis. Riddle has been an active Sokol member for the past 35 years and has held numerous offices at both the Unit level as a member of Sokol Fresno and at the District level where she served as the President and the načelnice (Women's Physical Director) of the Pacific District. In various capacities she participated in several ASO Conventions, and over the past three decades was one of the hardest working and most dedicated Sokols in our District. Sis. Riddle has been especially involved with the Pacific District's Sokol Family Camp, where she served as Camp Director throughout the 1990's and ran the camp almost single-handedly. There is no doubt that she has done more than any other single individual to ensure that this camp is still going strong and in its 48<sup>th</sup> year in 2017.

Throughout the years, she has consistently demonstrated good character, diplomacy, positive attitude, good judgment, fairness, and many other exemplary qualities and above all extraordinary service and dedication to the American Sokol. She is a true leader, encouraging and motivating others to become actively involved in the Sokol organization, and leading by example. Sis. Riddle is a true Sokol, dedicated to all the Sokol ideas and a great mentor and role model that we always consult for guidance to this day.

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**Florence Palas**  
**Sokol Los Angeles - PACIFIC DISTRICT (1911-1966)**

Sis. Palas was the daughter of Sokol Los Angeles founder Adolf Lešovsky and was a lifelong Sokol Los Angeles member. With the strong support of her husband Karl Palas, also a Sokol, she contributed greatly to the promotion of the Sokol ideals not only within the Czech community but to the general public as well, and was one of those instrumental in the promotion and recognition of women's gymnastics as a sport on an international level. Sis. Palas was a member of the historic Sokol Los Angeles Women's Gymnastic Team whose demonstration performance in the 1932 Olympics brought official recognition of women's gymnastics as an Olympic sport. A very competent gymnast, in the 1950's she became Women's Pacific District Gymnastics Chairman for the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), and in this capacity was a judge in women's gymnastics Olympic trials throughout the 1960s. She was also the Unit's načelnice (Women's Physical Director) for many years. She became a well-known gymnastics and fitness authority in Southern California and in 1970 she was asked, by then Los Angeles mayor Sam Yorty to start a physical fitness program for seniors and she responded by implementing the first every swimming pool exercise program for seniors at East Los Angeles College, long before this type of exercise became popular with the general public. Throughout her life, Sis. Palas was a dedicated Sokol whose leadership was instrumental in helping Sokol Los Angeles prosper. She was also a pioneer in the field of physical fitness decades before it became a recognized concept and her passion and discipline brought awareness and recognition to the sport of women's gymnastics which is now a universally recognized and respected sport worldwide.

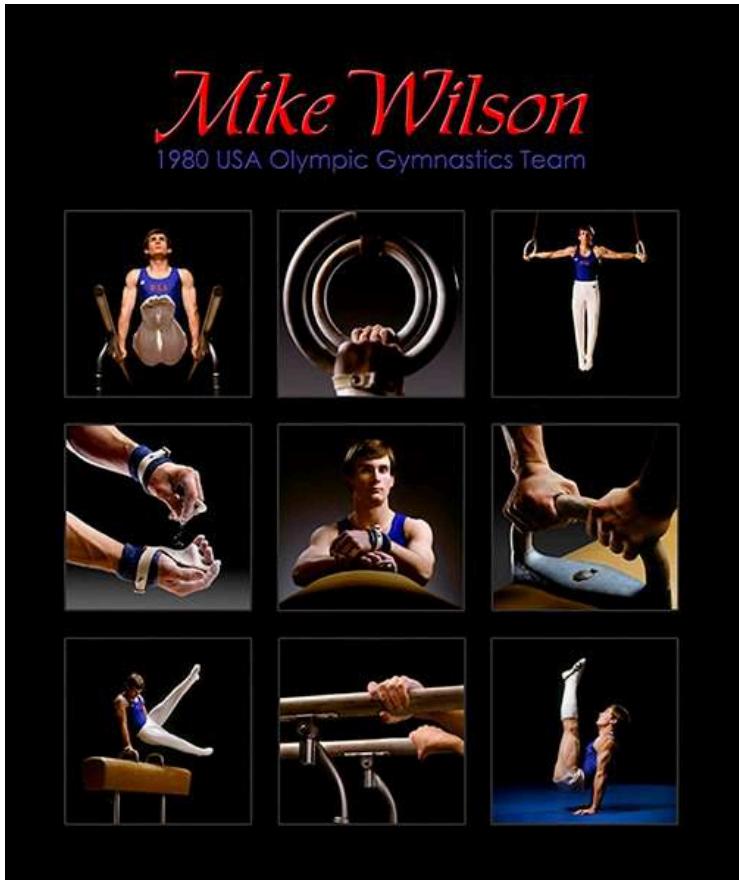
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**Joe Kos**  
**Sokol Houston - SOUTHERN DISTRICT**

In 1883 the American Sokol Union convention saw a need for European traveling Sokol instructors. The convention met this need by voting to pay traveling instructor \$50 a month plus living expenses. Joe Kos was a result of that program. He was a traveling instructor who came to America, inspired by this financial opportunity. Joe Kos had stints in several Districts and inspired many units along the way. When he came to the Southern District his inspiration influenced many young students. He touched the lives and was mentor for many unit leaders. His methods developed structure, direction, gymnastics training in many young Southern District units of the time like Fort Worth, Ennis and finally he loved Texas so much he settled in Houston and devoted years of service to the members there. In the Southern Districts opinion he is a Sokol icon and a Hall of Famer.

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**Mike Wilson**  
**Sokol Žižka,Dallas - SOUTHERN DISTRICT**



Mike Wilson began his Sokol training at a young age along with his sister Cathy. They were both so talented in their gymnastics abilities. The rigorous Sokol gymnastics program under Walter Hosek and Bill Willis that expected perfection led them both to be top Gymnasts in North Texas. Mike Wilson was so inspired in his Sokol training that he wanted more and pursued High School gymnastics at Garland as well as the newly formed USGF Junior Olympic competitions with the Garland based Flippers. Mike's sister Cathy competed with Sokol for many years while Mike continued with a college scholarship to Oklahoma University in 1975 to 1979 where he contributed to many National NCAA Championships. Mike made the US Olympic Gymnastics Team in 1980 in his pursuit to perfection.

After Mike's Gymnastics career he progressed on founding several highly successful businesses in the Healthcare industry. His success has moved him towards building charities and nonprofits which raise money for good causes. Mike's visibility in philanthropy has moved him to be a Rock Star in the world of Charity. He is an example that Sokol can be proud and our young gymnasts can model. This make Mike Wilson a Sokol Icon and an inspiration for others.



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**Ed & Bea Pavoucek**  
**Sokol South Omaha - WESTERN DISTRICT**  
**Award Sponsored by the Western District**



Bro. Ed Pavoucek, a 52 year member of Sokol South Omaha, came from a Sokol family and was a gymnast from age 5 until he went into the Service. As a junior gymnast, he was chosen to attend many District & National competitions. When he returned from the Service, because of a service disability, he could no longer actively participate as a gymnast so he gave a more concentrated effort to help the administrative end of Sokol.

He served as Unit President from 1961-1972. Under his leadership, meetings were conducted in English rather than Czech and membership grew from 90 to ~400. He translated the Unit Bylaws into English and then gave them a much-needed updating. He served on the Sokol South Omaha Park Board for 9 years & was later made an Honorary Member of that Board. He served as Western District Vice-President in 1964 and President from 1965-1982. He helped obtain the USPS Special Sokol Commemorative Stamp in 1965 and was part of the Official Ceremonies in Washington, D.C. when the first day of issue was made. He attended a number of American Sokol National Conventions either as a delegate from Sokol South Omaha or the Western District and was elected American Sokol Convention Chairman in 1970. He was an Honorary Member of Sokol South Omaha.

Sis. Bea Broz Pavoucek, a 44 year member of Sokolice/Sokol South Omaha, was not known so much for all the offices & chairmanships she held, but for the work "behind the scenes" she did for numerous Unit & District officers & committees. She was always Bro. Ed's co-officer or co-chairman, even though she didn't officially hold the title. She represented Sokolice South Omaha at numerous American Sokol National Conventions. She was an Honorary Member of Sokolice/Sokol South Omaha & the first recipient of the Western District Ed Pavoucek Outstanding Sokol Service Award in 1998. Sis. Bea passed away in 2006.

Bro. Ed & Sis. Bea helped start the Sokol South Omaha Gym Club so all the junior gymnasts could travel to the Sokol Slets and they served as the Club Counselors for many years. They started the monthly Sokol South Omaha newsletter - serving as editor for 14 years, and were instrumental in getting two Sokol South Omaha *SOKOL SPECIALS* cookbooks printed. They were the force behind establishing a Sokol South Omaha Honor Roll plaque (displaying the names of each of our deceased members), forming the Honor Guard Committee (which gives a final tribute to our deceased members at the mortuary), and forming a committee to place American flags on the graves of our deceased members for Memorial Day each year. They helped start the annual South Omaha Sokol Day - the forerunner to the Sokol South Omaha Czech Festival, which they chaired for 3 years. They were chairmen of the Building Fund for Sokol South Omaha's new hall after fire destroyed the original hall and accomplished paying off the Unit's mortgage in an amazing 8 years. Their final legacy was the establishment of the Sokol South Omaha and Czechoslovak Museum. They wanted to preserve our Czech & Sokol heritage for future generations. Sis. Bea worked tirelessly to continue this dream after Br. Ed died in 1997.

Bro. Ed & Sis. Bea were two of our most outstanding Sokol leaders and their love of Sokol & willingness to help out in ways we couldn't even think of will forever be their legacy.

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**Vojmir "Bud" & Sandra Benak**  
**Sokol South Omaha - WESTERN DISTRICT**  
**Award Sponsored by the Western District**



Bro. Vojmir "Bud" Benak, a 57 year member of Sokol South Omaha, came from a Sokol family and was a gymnast from the earliest age. He participated in 4 COS Slets, 13 national Slets & many Western District Slets. After his father, Vojmir Sr., died, he became Sokol South Omaha's Director of Men & Head Instructor, serving for 57 years. On the District level, he served as Director of Men for 18 years. On the National level, he served as the National School Board Chairman from 1986-2005 and taught at numerous National & District Kurzs. He received the Western District Ed Pavoucek Outstanding Sokol Service Award in 2017.

Sis. Sandra Benak is a 50 year member of Sokolice/Sokol South Omaha, becoming involved when she married Bro. Bud. Ever since, she has been the "behind the scenes" driving force for him. She has participated in Prosna in 4 COS Slets and numerous National & District Slets. On the Unit level, she has served as Director of Women for 31 years and taught Tots & Class I Girls for 30 years. On the District level, she served as Director of Women for 13 years. On the National level, she has served as Secretary & Treasurer at 8 American Sokol Instructor Schools. She received the Western District Ed Pavoucek Outstanding Sokol Service Award in 2013.

Together, Bro. Bud & Sis. Sandra have been co-chairmen (officially or unofficially) of Sokol South Omaha's Mortgage Burning Celebration, 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration, Czech Festival (2 years), Gymnastics Invitational (longest running annual meet in Nebraska), Vecirek (annual Fun Night for members), and numerous Gym Club Fund-Raisers.

Bro. Bud & Sis. Sandra have spent their lives in service to Sokol and their contributions are a testament to their "team" effort.

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