



AMERICAN SOKOL NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2023



Welcome to American Sokol's Newsletter!

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A Note from the President

“There are only two seasons: winter and baseball.” – Bill Veeck, Jr.

Dear Brothers, Sisters, and Friends of Sokol,

As a native to suburban Chicago, winter is the most dreadful of seasons, but now that spring is here, I'm excited for the beginning of baseball season! This year we got a special treat, before the Major League Baseball season, to see some of baseball's best players in the World Baseball Classic. The United States came SO close to victory, and the Czech Republic even made a splash with a win on this world stage for the first time!

Many of you know that I'm a proud Cubs fan and I love the game of baseball. For me, the next best thing to playing baseball is playing softball, and one of the highlights of my summer is playing Chicago Style 16" Softball with my fellow Sokols. For those who aren't familiar with this unique pastime, check out the linked video above to learn more about this barehanded tradition.

Softball may not sound like a traditional Sokol activity, but the beauty of Sokol is that we can engage in fitness at a community level. In the Central District, members from four Chicago area units collaborate to make up our “American Sokol” Softball Team. We picked the American Sokol name since that's the banner that unites all of us, and it's a great way for Sokol to be visible and engaged in our community.



We are proudly part of the Sokol movement. Sokol isn't just a building or a social group, rather it's a shared commitment to a “sound mind, in a sound body,” and our impact is made in how we share Sokol in our communities.

What is your unit doing, beyond your physical classes, in your community? Please share your activities with the American Sokol on social media: follow our Facebook page, join the American Sokol member group, or tag yourself out in the community using #sokolbeyond!

If you're in Berwyn over the summer, you can find our Chicago Area Sokol team representing Sokol in our community on Monday and Wednesday nights. I can't wait to continue playing softball and I love the chance to share with my community some of what Sokol is all about!

Nazdar!

Bro. Adam Wilt



American Sokol Town Hall Meetings

Since our last newsletter, there have been two (!) American Sokol Town Halls! On January 30, we discussed Non-Gymnastics Fitness programs and ideas, and on March 30, the focus was Membership and Social Engagement. In Case You Missed It (ICYMI), check out the discussions on our YouTube channel! They're also available by navigating to the videos section of American Sokol's Facebook page!

Future topics will vary as we continue to feature the work of our Sokol units in a forum for idea-sharing and discussion. Please save these dates and note the featured topics. In addition to being available via Zoom (info below), they will also be live-streamed to Facebook.

Next Town Hall Meeting

- Tuesday, May 30, 2023 - Recruitment

Zoom Info: Meeting ID - 850 5541 9346; Passcode - falcon

2023 Town Hall Meetings

- Monday, July 31, 2023 - Education
- Wednesday, September 27, 2023 - Sokol Facilities

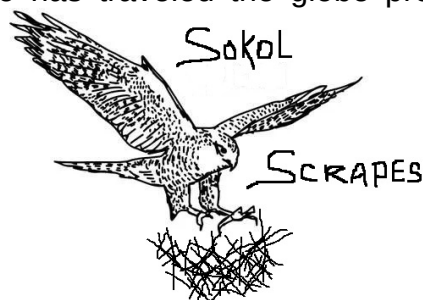
Thursday, November 30, 2023 - Passing the Torch to New Leaders

Sokol Scrapes Education Series

Our third installment of Sokol Scrapes showcased the Sokol Museum and Library, presented by Professor Robert Tománek. Then, on Sunday, April 16 - "Plzeňský Sokol Lives On!", was our fourth Educational showcase! Navigate to our Youtube page or our Facebook videos to check them out! Here's a quick synopsis of Plzeňský Sokol Lives On:

Do you wonder what ever came of family members that once were members of Plzeňský Sokol? On September 5, 1935, Charles J. Vopicka, a Human Rights advocate and Czech immigrant turned US Minister in Romania, Bulgaria and Serbia appointed under President Woodrow Wilson, laid in state at Plzeňský Sokol before his body was laid to rest at Bohemian National Cemetery in Chicago. Vopicka's last living grandson is a Catholic Priest who has traveled the globe promoting World Peace and Human Rights.

Sis. Anna Cooková - Educational Director



Czech Sokols in World Wars I and II

The determination and sacrifice of the Czech people in Bohemia and Moravia (the Czech lands) during the two world wars demonstrates their resilience. However, the impact of the leadership and sacrifice of Sokols has been often overlooked. In 1914, the onset of World War I, Czech men were required to join the Austrian-Hungarian Army because Bohemia and Moravia were under the rule of the Austrian Habsburgs. Fighting in this army, along with its allies, Germany, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire, required them to fight against the armies of Great Britain, France, Italy, Russia, and later, the US. Future Czechoslovak President Tomáš Masaryk, a Sokol member who was in exile, worked to develop a Czech Brigade (Česka Družina) or fighting force. He called on the Sokols to help in the effort, and Sokol President Josef Scheiner provided funds for the brigade. A Czech Brigade was realized in 1916, and its core and leadership were Sokol-trained men, because they were able to fight against difficult odds. Later, these groups of men, known as legionnaires, formed the Czechoslovak Legions. They fought in France, Italy, and Russia. Most were men that left the Austrian army. In 1917, the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia and made peace with Germany, but the legendary Czechoslovak Legion, consisting of as many as 85,000 warriors in 1918, made a trans-Siberian journey, defeating the Bolsheviks. At the end of the war, President Masaryk said, "Without Sokols, there would be no Legions, and without Legions, there would be no Czechoslovakia."

With the establishment of the new country, Sokols answered the call to act as security agents for the purpose of maintaining law and order. From 1918-1922, Sokol guards were posted at Prague Castle, a tradition that was adopted by the government and continues today. Moreover, Sokol "soldiers" defended Slovakia which remained under Hungarian aggression.

During World War II, Bohemia and Moravia were occupied under a German Protectorate that began on October 4, 1939, and within two years, Sokol was banned. In a single day (October 9, 1941), 900 Sokols were arrested, most of whom were in the organization's leadership. Sokols began a resistance movement called Jindra, a group that contributed to the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, the ruthless Nazi ruler of the Protectorate. Heydrich died after Jan Kubis, a Sokol member, threw a bomb into his automobile. Sokol members were a clear target of the Nazis as evidenced by the imprisonment of 8,223 Sokol members and the fact that almost 5,000 were executed or died in concentration camps. Among that number were Sokol President Bukovský, 1928 Olympic gold medalist, Ladislav Vácha, two-time world gymnastics champion, Jan Gajdoš, Director of Men, Agustin Pechlát, and František Erben, a famed gymnast and teacher of gymnastics and the Tyrš system.



...World Wars I and II (continued)

Though some Sokol leaders were active in the resistance organization, many were imprisoned or executed solely because they were Sokols. This history reveals the courage and dedication of Sokol members to democracy and nation.

For more information on Sokols in the World Wars, head to the sokolmuseum.org!

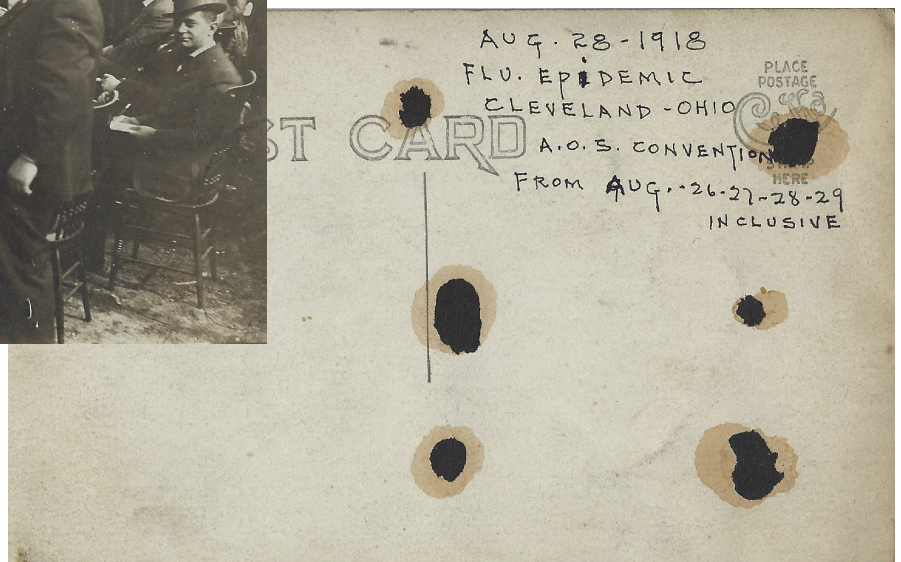
Bro. Robert Tománek - Sokol New York & Sokol Historian/Education Committee

Pre-Zoom Pandemic

Going through some old family photos, I came across this one of some kind of outdoor meeting. Standing at left with gavel is Joseph Placek, Sr., American Sokol President during 1919-1927 - my Great-Grandfather. I remembered seeing this picture before, but in all these years, nobody ever thought to look at the back - until I laid it face down to be scanned.

It clearly explains what the meeting was, where, and most important, why they were meeting outdoors. 100+ years later history repeats itself.

Bro. Joe Placek - Sokol Tabor



2024 Sokol Slet Tours

Thinking about going to Prague next summer? Want to start making plans but not sure about hotels, side trips, etc? We have you covered!

Can you believe the 2024 Slet will be the 30th anniversary of our return to participating in these Slets? American Sokol is putting together plans for Pre-, Post-, and During tours as a fundraiser for our Future Sokol Leaders Fund (FSLF) which

- supports our National Instructor School (leaders for tomorrow),
- provides Merit Awards to our members to further their education after high school, and
- allows us to publish original Sokol works in English based upon the Sokol idea and ideals (just to name a few)!

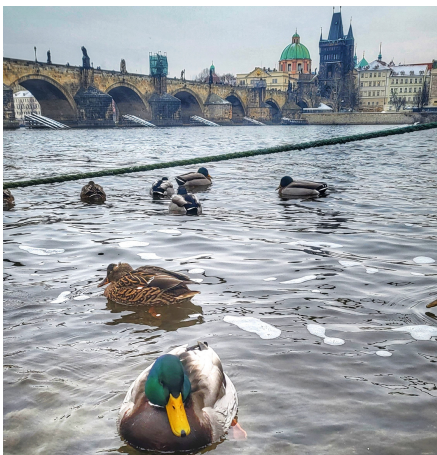
What we are putting together will be a full package covering: hotels, tickets to Slet events, your choice of all day, half-day, or sightseeing trips around Prague, registration for Slet events, and more! If you're planning on participating in this Slet, please let your Unit President know and ask that they support our 2024 COS Slet Tour fundraiser. Hotels we are looking at include: Kampa Garden, Old Armoury, and Roma.

More details will be forthcoming. We hope that you and your unit will support our fundraising endeavors by planning your trip with us. Have tour suggestions for us? Contact me at mfiordelis@yahoo.com.

The Česká Obec Sokolská (COS) Slet dates are June 30 to July 5, 2024. We're looking forward to having you join us!

Sis. Maryann Fiordelis - 2024 COS Slet Tour Coordinator

PS - Here are some pictures taken by our very own AS Board Member, Sis. Dáša Měrková, on her visit in December!



Hrát míč!

(According to Google, that's how you say, "Play" and "ball" in Czech, which certainly is NOT accurate in this context.)

If you follow baseball, it's quite likely that you heard the buzz about the Czech National Baseball Team at the World Baseball Classic (WBC) in March. They qualified for this worldwide tournament by winning their qualifier tournament, beating France, Germany, and the heavily-favored club from Spain. MLB.com featured the team in an endearing lead-up to the WBC.

Firefighter. Neurologist. Salesman. Financial Analyst. Geography Teacher. Real Estate Agent. Media Coordinator.

Those are the full-time jobs listed for some of the Czech team, which has never produced a Major League Baseball player from modern-day Czechia. (One player actually had a 2 at-bat cup of coffee in 1952, but the geographical lines were blurred back then.) They did have Eric Sogard on this WBC team, a former major league utilityman, but he was not born there, only having Czech citizenship. All this is to say that the odds were long, even more so than their qualifier tournament. And what did they do in their first WBC game ever? Only keep me up WAY too late, relinquish a lead, then have Sokol save the day in the 9th inning! Martin Mužík, of the Sokol Hluboká Extraliga team, played hero, blasting the game-winning home run!

Alas, that was their only win of the tournament, but it sure was memorable. They did make a friend in Shohei Ohtani, Japanese and Major League superstar, and arguably the best player on the planet. Shohei, too, was enamored with the heart and hustle of the Czech team, so much so that he was spotted wearing the official "ČR" hat of the WBC team, which promptly sold out at all online retailers!

But, going back to the jobs, my very first thought was that someone could easily start making Village People references with a firefighter, a neurologist, etc. I have also wanted to tinker with using ChatGPT, the new AI tool that's creating comedy and chaos in the world. So, I asked ChatGPT to write a story about an underdog Czech baseball team, their silly uniforms, and a Japanese superstar. (To check out what it had to say, you'll have to go check the e-version of this newsletter!)

Bro. Matt Carlozzi - ASO PR Director



Sokol Rocks



Have you ever been out and about and found a painted rock? Have you ever heard of a Kindness Rocks Project? There is a small group of Sokols who paint and hide rocks for others to find and bring a smile to the faces of others or provide them with a little inspiration. There are many groups that paint and hide rocks. Within the groups, there are many painters who paint rocks from beginners to advanced painters; the latter paint elaborate designs on their rocks. Painters of any skill level are welcome to join in the fun. Let's turn this small group into a big one!

Rock painting is an enjoyable activity - gather a group of friends together to paint your rocks. It is a great crafting opportunity and then a great chance to get out in nature when hiding or hunting for rocks.

The back of the rock is marked with how to find our group and then the rocks are hidden for others to find and enjoy. The back of the rock indicates the Facebook symbol, the group "Sokol Rocks" and instructions to Post, Keep, or Rehide.

Sokol Rocks is a free, anyone can join the Facebook Group, which hosts the hiding and finding of your painted rocks. Find us here or test out the handy-dandy QR code in the pictures below!

If you have any questions, or want to know how to get started, contact Marla Breidenbach at mabreiden@gmail.com. Perhaps we can schedule an ASO Zoom call with some tips to get started!

Join the fun, paint some rocks, and hide them today!

Sokol Rocks Rockpainters



The Czech word for bonspiel is... bonspiel

Sokol has its own unique terminology, but once a year Central District adds some new and rather peculiar jargon. Talk of bonspiels instead of competitions, skip rather than captain, hard sweeping, a draw to the button, having hammer, and a team exulting over a steal of five points in the first end. The language of curling.

February 4 was the annual Central District excursion to the Waltham Curling Club in Triumph, a one-horse farming town in north central Illinois, notable for its huge grain bins looming over the club - and little else. Under the guidance of several club members, 25 Sokols and friends hit the ice. Maybe hit it a little hard a couple times, but years of Sokol gymnastics taught us something about falling.

Why would we spend a Saturday morning on ice shoving 40-pound rocks around while teammates vigorously sweep ahead of the sliding rock according to the skip's shouted instructions? Mainly because it's such an unusual sport combining athleticism, skill, and chess-like strategy that it becomes addictive. Playing on ice is a lot different from a gym floor. And after a short training session with the experts, most can play well enough to have a good time.

Strategy is key - throws are carefully planned to get the best scoring position and/or prevent the other team from scoring. Of course, when you play once a year the rock usually goes where it wants to go, but the intent is there. "The ice was very fast this year." (There's your excuse if you didn't do too well!) Curling rocks, to throw in a little educational material, are called that mainly in North America. Elsewhere they're "stones." The best rocks come from quarries in Scotland and Wales, made from about the hardest granite in the world. Quality stones cost over \$1,000 each!

Thanks to District VP Matt Carlozzi for organizing and running the excursion. We'll leave you with one more singular (and important) curling idiom: broomstacking. That's when teams arrange their brooms into a teepee-like array and head off the ice to the clubroom for a refreshment break. (Matt Carlozzi's favorite part...) The other stuff above you'll need to look up yourself. Or just join us next year.

Curling as an event at the next National Slet? Could be. There's a club in Chicago that stays open through June.

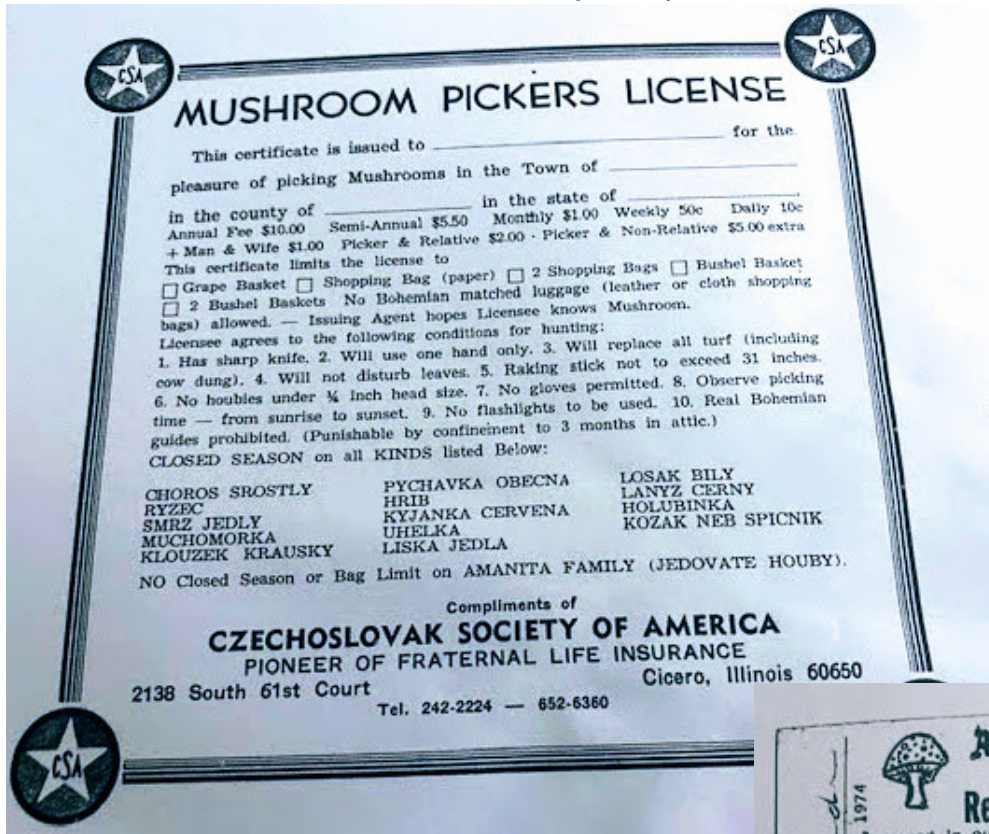
Good Curling!

Bro. Joe Placek - Sokol Tabor



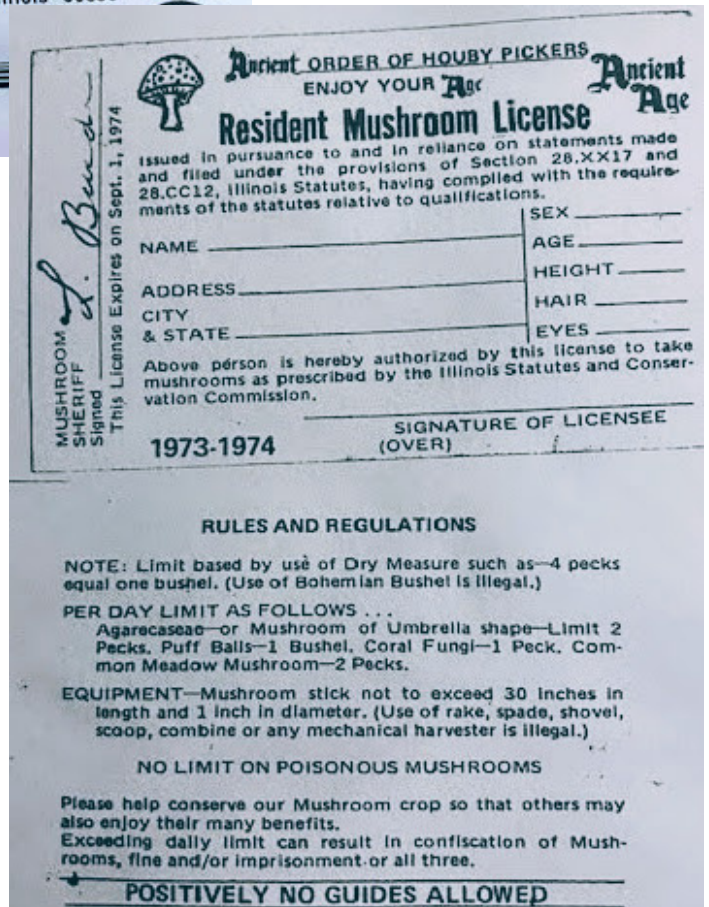
The Ancient Order of Houby Pickers

How serious was mushroom picking in Illinois in 1973? You better have a license, or risk being detained by the Mushroom Sheriff! Our friend, Jim, who took us on a Midwest Czech tour in the last issue, is back! Here's some commentary and pictures of some old documents from Jim:

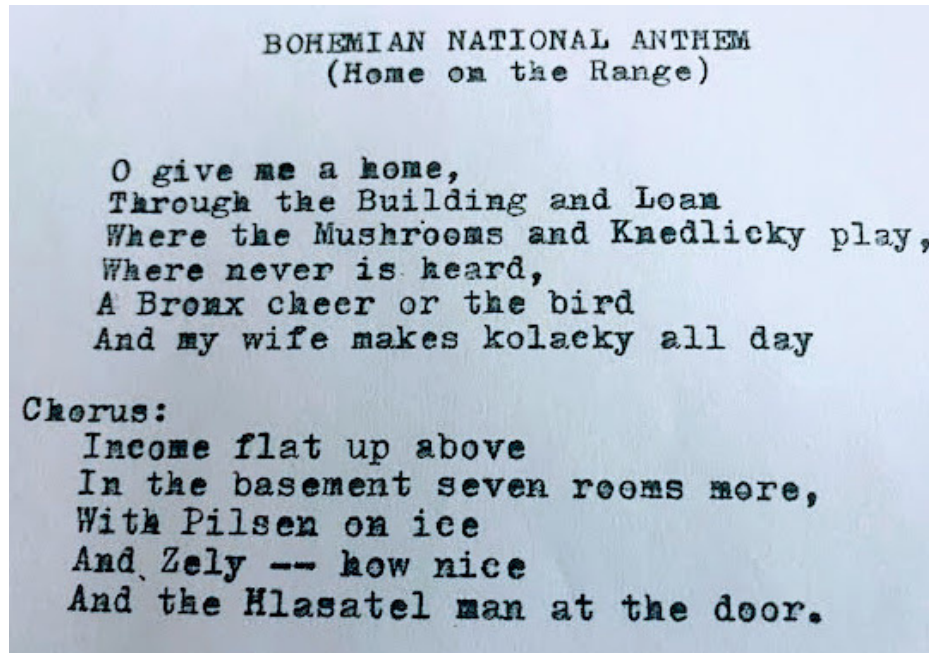


The best guess is that this license on the left is from at least the 50's or 60's because I remember seeing it as a kid. One interesting thing is that there are no area codes with the phone numbers. Someone with good CSA history knowledge would know when they were based in Cicero.

I love the line stating "No Limit On Poisonous Mushrooms" and the fact there was a "Mushroom Sheriff." In the 60's, my family would go to Braidwood (aforementioned with Sokol Hornik photo in Coal City) to go houby hunting, usually in the forest behind their Bohemian National Cemetery. My grandfather was the pro and would know which mushrooms were good and which to avoid. My brother and sisters were not allowed to pick any mushrooms, we were just there to carry the houby sacks, which were Kroger or A & P shopping bags.



Houby Pickers (continued)



A song with Chicago roots, my mom probably typed this on an old Underwood typewriter which we had. These are the typewriters you'd see in movies from the 40's and 50's. There were no keys for Czech accent marks on those typewriters, duh!

The last line mentions the "Hlasatel man at the door." The Denní Hlasatel (Daily Herald) was a Chicago area Czech language newspaper which ran from the 1890s until the 1990s. I remember seeing it in our house as a kid and wondered why I couldn't read it!

Bro. Jim Hantak - Sokol Spirit

Those who have shaped my Sokol Journey

This month I'd like to say thank you to the man who coached me as a boy, and who taught me how to play "Bohemian Baseball*" as a first class boys participant. Thank you to Bro. Ray Lutha for helping me on my Sokol Journey, for introducing me to one of my favorite young Sokol memories of playing in our annual Bohemian Baseball World Series', and for instilling in me true Sokol values at a young age. Thank you Bro. Lutha!

Bro. Adam Wilt - President

*Bohemian Baseball is similar to the game Punchball, but with a Pitcher throwing the ball with a bounce before crossing home plate.



Instructor School Adoption Campaign

The 2023 American Sokol Instructor School is quickly approaching and the chance to inspire and cultivate our future Sokol leaders is now! The school strives to develop its students into skilled, confident, and energetic coaches, something many of Sokol's Units are currently seeking. In order to grow the coaching pool of Sokol while keeping the school fees affordable, we are asking you to invest in the future of your Unit and American Sokol by "adopting" a student, class, or outing.

- **Adopt A Student:** Show an individual student your support by sponsoring their education. Besides supporting the school, you will receive a picture of your student at the School and a thank you letter.
- **Adopt A Class:** Show your support for a class that is near and dear to your heart or just learning in general. Besides supporting the school, you will receive a picture of the class in session and a thank you letter.
- **Adopt the Outing:** Show your support for Sokol's Youth while they build memories and friendships to last a lifetime. Besides supporting the school, you will receive a picture of the students at their social outing and a thank you letter.

Adoption of a Student, Class, or Outing starts at a suggested donation of \$50. You can adopt one or multiple aspects of the school.

You can fill out the form and donate online by navigating to the BOI backroom on the ASO website or by following the QR code below.

Or, please fill out the paper form with all of your information. Then, send the form and a check made payable to American Sokol to:



American Sokol
"Instructor School Adoption Campaign"
9126 Ogden Avenue
Brookfield, IL 60513

Nazdar and thank you for your support!

The American Sokol National School Board



In Memoriam - Annette Schabowski

Sister Annette Schabowski of Berwyn, IL, **curator of the American Sokol Library, Archives, and Museum for over 30 years**, passed away January 31, 2023. She was married to William "Bill" Schabowski for 62+ years and was a dedicated Sokol member giving hundreds of hours organizing Sokol and Czech memorabilia. Her intense devotion was well known to all Sokols.

Annette was a Sokol member for 80 years beginning at Sokol Town of Lake in Chicago and volunteered as a counselor and cook for many years at Sokol Camp in Willow Springs, IL. She organized camp reunions for many, bringing members together from all local units and was part of a team responsible for the Forest Preserve relocation of a large camp stone to a more secure location with a new bronze plaque at the Children's Camp in Willow Springs.

Annette competed and performed at exhibitions and Slets, representing Sokol Tabor in Berwyn, IL, where she was a championship gymnast winning numerous awards. She was drawn to the choreographed calisthenics and special numbers participating in many Sokols in the US and Europe. She also participated in the instructor school in St Louis, MO. Annette enjoyed her travels to Europe to participate in gymnastics as a member of the American Sokol team.

Annette was a tabulator at the 1979 World Gymnastic Championship, joined by her 2 daughters as plaque carriers. She gained an even greater respect for the organization in 1987 when she represented the United States at the World Gymnaestrada in Heming, Denmark as a member of the American Sokol team. Without Annette's intense desire and loyal devotion to record, preserve and display Sokol history, and its artifacts, the knowledge of this wonderful organization would be lost. She took over the reins as curator in 1981, and began to organize items that our organization had accumulated from years past. For years, Annette filed, categorized and displayed our history. She would send letters of acknowledgment to all contributors of donated items; Slet pins, photos, postcards, books, awards, uniforms, and other memorabilia. With her artistic talent, she was able to repair or restore many items related to historical events. She spent many hours and weekends preparing for the move of the Library, Archives and Museum to its CSA Building in Oak Brook, IL. Days of categorizing and inventorying items, bubble wrapping and taping resulting in over 165 boxes for the move, not including display cases, equipment, and furniture. She retired from the National Sokol Office Feb 2016.

Sis. Deanne Kearney - Sokol Ft. Worth



American Sokol Donations

Seals

David E. Bilek
Marilyn A. Cerny
Gerilyn Donnell
Joe Dusek
Ivana Dwulet
Robert Egger
Allison Gerber
John A. Kuba
Karen Miller
Anna-Marie Moncrief
Gerald Novotny
Robert & Diane Podhrasky
In Memory of our Mom Marie Ptacek - From
Jacquelyne R. and B.A. Rada
Mildred Raper
Jan F. Schatz
Andrea Scheirer
Sokol Naperville Tyrs
Shannon M. Stefanko
Gregor Wynnyczuk
Norma Zabka

Endowment Foundation Fund

In Memory of Vladislav Slavik - From Julie V.
Conklin

Future Sokol Leaders Fund (FSLF)

In memory of Charlie & Marie Bouska - From
Loraine Bouska
In Memory of Marie Ptacek - From Jan &
Chuck Kalat
In Honor of Annette Schabowski - From
Sokolice Tabor
In Memory of Annette Schabowski - From
Darrell & Gay Williams

FSLF (continued)

In Memory of EllenJeanne Schnabl - From
Jan & Chuck Kalat
In Memory of EllenJeanne and Edward
Schnabl - From Diana Rhoades & Anita
Skotnicki, daughters
In Memory of EllenJeanne and Edward
Schnabl - From Doug and Anita Skotnicki
For Good Work - From Jerry & Shirley Taylor

Gateway to the Future

In memory of Charlie & Marie Bouska - From
Loraine Bouska

American Sokol Operations

Anonymous
In Memory of Rome Milan, 150 ASO
celebration painting - From Pauline Milan and
family
In Memory of Marie (Kreibich) Ptacek - From
Jacki Ptacek-Rada; Lynne Ptacek-Goodridge
& Richard R. Ptacek
In Memory of EllenJeanne Schnabl - From
Ellen Duvall. Downers Grove School District
58, Lester Elementary Social Committee
where Diana Rhoades, her daughter taught
for many years

American Sokol Restricted Fund

From American Sokol Little Ferry, Inc.

American Sokol 2022 Development Conf

From Sokolice Tabor
From Sokol Spirit
From MaryAnn Fiordelis



In Memoriam - Chuck Borvansky

Former American Sokol President, Charles R. "Chuck" Borvansky, age 84, passed away on Monday, January 30, 2023. Chuck was born on January 4, 1939, in Chicago, Illinois to his parents Marie and Charles Borvansky. His family relocated to Forest View, Illinois where he attended Morton East High School, played soccer and became an active member of Sokol Stickney.

The American Sokol Organization was a central part of Chuck's lifetime. As a young member of Sokol Stickney, he participated in gymnastics, attended classes, and then became an instructor himself. He later became the Sokol Stickney Unit President, eventually the Central District President, and finally the **President of the American Sokol, from 1990 - 1995**. Chuck's participation on the men's volleyball team for Sokol Stickney always brought back great memories for him and he enjoyed the lifelong friendships he made as a part of the Sokol community.

How much did Chuck love Sokol? He sailed his own boat, named The Sokolice.

Editor's Note

- Reminder: all the cover photos have been taken by Sokols. But, I need your help. If you have photos you'd like to share for potential future use in ASO Public Relations-related material (like this newsletter, social media, etc), please share them. This includes, but should not be limited to, photos of: Prague, selfies with Czech celebs, group cal's new and old, gym action shots, former Sokol buildings, random Czech things in everyday life, an old recipe in action, etc. ANYTHING that strikes you as being relevant to being a Sokol. (Captions help, not required.)
- Please consider opting into *only* emailed issues - contact me (or your unit) to coordinate
- Deadline for material for next issue: June 16, 2023
 - Note on material: feel free to get creative - not everything has to be a straightforward article
 - I will try to squeeze everything in, but there is a limit for our print version
- I am looking for Communication/PR Team members, who are willing and able to any of these:
 - Host Zoom meetings/monitor chat as needed, but only a few times per year - you'll be in the background helping out, not presenting!
 - Create flyers, posters, etc. for ASO
 - Help with website updates
 - Create social media content

Is there something you want to see in the Newsletter? Do you have positive and/or constructive feedback about this one? If so, please contact PR@american-sokol.org with all thoughts and ideas!

Bro. Matt Carlozzi - PR Director



2022 - 2026 Executive Board

Adam Wilt - President
Marla Breidenbach - 1st Vice President
Nancy Sijansky Hellegers - 2nd Vice President
Andrea Scheirer - Secretary
Bob Barcal - Treasurer
Allison Gerber - Financial Secretary
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Kathy Barcal - Membership Director
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Meribeth Tooke - Foundation Director
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Shelley Cairns - Board Member
Dáša Měrková - Board Member
Joan Sedlacek - Board Member
Rhonda Liska - By-laws Chair

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admin@american-sokol.org

Visit us at www.american-sokol.org or our Facebook page for more information!

