

Zarja

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The Dawn



**Gorazd Žmavc, Minister for Slovenians Abroad,
recognized and awarded the Slovenian Union of America
on celebrating their 90th year - 1926-2016!**

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Communications for the next issue of publication

Do you have something you would like to share with readers? We would love to hear from you! Please e-mail the editor at wprokup@aol.com. We reserve the right to edit any article submitted. Articles must be related to Slovenia, SUA events, or members. The deadline for articles is the 10th day of the month, two (2) months preceding the issue. For example, articles for the November/December issue must be received by September 10. Thank you.

Submission Guidelines

E-mail your photos attached as jpeg files. If you have an old photo that is irreplaceable, please make a good-quality copy to share with us. (Scanned copies must be a resolution of 300 or higher.)

By submitting material for publication, you grant the Slovenian Union of America the use of the material, including your name, hometown, and state. We may modify, reproduce, and distribute it in any SUA authorized medium and in any manner or appropriate place.

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Letter to the Editor

I am hoping I can get this question out to some of the wonderful genealogists in the SUA! My grandmother, Antonja Horvath Zupan, was a longtime SUA/SWUA member, beginning about 1930! I am trying to follow the very few and far between genealogical crumbs of my grandfather's ancestors. Anton Zupancic immigrated to Colorado in 1900. On his WWI and WWII draft cards his birthplace is listed as Hotic, Litia, Austria. He always said he was Slovenian. So, is it likely that this town is now Hoticna in the Littoral region of Slovenia, or is there another possibility? - Many thanks, **Michelle Zupan** zupanm@att.net
706.829.5394

P.S. I just received my SUA's, *The Slovenian-American Table*, cookbook. It's going to be a great companion piece to my grandmother's SWUA cookbook from 50 years ago!

I received the July/August *Zarja* and the tribute to our mom, Mary Vertacnik Fon; looks wonderful! We know she would have loved it as she always read the *Zarja* from cover to cover. Her favorite parts were the stories about people and their families. This issue dedicated to Slovenia's 25 years of Independence was the perfect one to have mom's tribute included. Also, the cover photo shows the Franciscan Church of the Annunciation and Monastery in Ljubljana where mom's dear friend and distant relative, Father Christian Gostečnik, resides. Thank you for your assistance in printing this in mom's favorite magazine! - Sincerely, **Linda Fon Rusie**

President's Message...

I believe this is a true understanding of the relative importance of the number 90 - Godiva Chocolate, Toastmaster International, *The New Yorker*, Le Creuset, Scholastic Books, and the Slovenian Union of America are all celebrating 90 years!

Dalmatinova biblija

From the desk of Slovenian Consul Dr. John Vidmar:

Luka Zeleznik, Director of the Slovenian Studies Program at Cleveland State University, has discovered two rare copies of the famous *Dalmatinova biblija** at the Newberry Library** in downtown Chicago.



Jurij Dalmatin, a Slovenian Lutheran minister, translated the bible into Slovene. It was published for the first time in 1583. Despite the two copies coming from a later printing, they are a critical part of the Slovenian cultural, linguistic, and religious history.

*The original title of Dalmatin's translation was *Bibili-ja, tu je vse svetu pismu stariga inu noviga testamenta, slovenski tolmačena skuzi Jurija Dalmatina*[6] (The Bible: That is, the entire Holy Scripture of the Old and the New Testament, Translated into Slovene by Jurij Dalmatin), and printed in the Bohorič alphabet.

**The Newberry Library is an independent research library, specializing in the humanities and located in Chicago, IL, that has been free and open to the public since 1887. The Newberry, 60 West Walton Street, Chicago, IL 60610, Tel: 312.943.9090.

I just happen to be reading *Four Hundred Years of the South Slavic Protestant Reformation, 1584-1984*. This 1985 publication by The Society of Slovene Studies marked the quarter centenary of the Bible in Slovene, and the first grammar of the Slovene language by Jurij Dalmatin and Adam Bohorič. It was also the 10th consecutive year in which the Society had issued a scholarly journal. While I found portions difficult to understand, it in no way stopped me from reading, as I find the history of how a language came to exist fascinating. Slovenia had many regional dialects; just ask yourself, how could a spoken and written language come to be? If anyone has read this publication, please contact me. ottolou@gulfel.com

SUA: Coal Mining Archives

Nancy Svet Burnett has bequeathed her collection of archives to the SUA Heritage Museum. Included in her collection is her doctoral thesis, "Slovenes In Rural Appalachia: An Oral History," and photographs of life in the early logging and coal mining days. Nancy was born and raised in Richwood, West Virginia; she now resides in Washington state. Also in our archives, *Yugoslav Fatalities in Colorado Coal Mines, 1884-1979*, by Joe Drasler, a copy which is in the Minnesota Discovery and Research Center in Chisholm, MN, and *Trapped: The 1909 Cherry Mine Disaster* by Karen Tintori.

A synopsis from "Slovenes in Rural Appalachia: An Oral History," doctoral thesis by Nancy Svet Burnett:

From the early 1900s to the 1930s many Slovenes left the Cerknica area for America. Richwood, West Virginia, beckoned; there were jobs in logging and coal mining. When lumber ceased to be the major industry, many left to work in the factories in Ohio, Michigan, and Pennsylvania.

The Bartol, Logar, Prelaz, Svet, Urbas and Wise families stayed in West Virginia. The 25 page thesis is the basis for this oral history - their arrival, their work in the lumber and coal camps, and their assimilation into the American Culture.

Among the archives are two letters written to the parents of Nancy, Frank, and Frances (Fanny) Cimperman Svet from relatives in Yugoslavia after WWII. They hold descriptions of what families endured during the war and its aftermath in the small village of Cerknica.

A synopsis from *Yugoslav Fatalities in Colorado Coal Mines, 1884-1979*, by Joe Drasler:

The 104-page project is a detailed compilation of Yugoslav men who sacrificed their lives in the mines of Colorado. The statistics are taken from the State Mine Inspector Records on file in the Colorado Bureau of Mines; they are identified by name and heritage.

Hearing of jobs brought an influx of immigrants. The six page introduction by Drasler is a very sobering read. Each page lists statistics by nationality, which can be an eye opening, tear jerking experience for the reader.

A synopsis from *Trapped: The 1909 Cherry Mine Disaster* by Karen Tintori:

In 1909, 459 miners lost their lives in a devastating fire in the Cherry coal mine in Cherry, IL. Inspired by the survival of Tintori's grandfather, she began a search for her family's role in this tragedy. What she discovered were the vast stories and accounts of this tragic day, about the victims, and the townspeople. From this, a book was born.

These three studies make for a tremendous resource on mine studies.

From the SUA Archives

Quintain (Slovene: *štehvanje*)

In the SUA archives is a print that certainly causes wonderment - what could it be all about? The iPhone camera captured the photo and off it went to the NUK in Ljubljana. SUA was notified that we have in our possession a print by a famous painter, Slavko Pengov. The original is in the *Muzej novejsje zgodovine*/National Museum of Contemporary History in Ljubljana. Pengov is known for his monumental opus of murals in the National Assembly Building in Ljubljana and the massive mural at Tito's Villa Bled, telling the story of Tito's partisan defeat of the German army from 1941-1945.

The print in our possession captures the old Slovenian folk game, quintain (*štehvanje*), mostly known and preserved

among Carinthian Slovenes. It is not a ritual, but a kind of rustic sport. The unmarried, young man, dressed in national costume, and riding a Noriker* mare, rides at a high speed toward a barrel on a pole. The barrel is held together with hazel rings (staves). The object is to hit and break the barrel with a bat, catch the hazel rings, all while riding. There are



Print by Slavko Pengov, Štehvanje

rules. The rider must ride bareback; sitting on a blanket attached with a belt is allowed. The mare's mane and the tail can be embellished with colored ribbons. The metal bat must not have sharp edges.



Štehvanje 2015



Štehvancje 1951

Preparation begins weeks earlier; riders practice the proper start and the final stop with their horses. The *štehvovec* chooses a companion, called a *dečve*. On the day of the competition, there is a procession through the village, led by the accordion player with the *štehovci* on horseback, riding in the order they will compete. Once at the arena the competition begins. The winner who catches the most rings gets to keep a gold transient bat for one year; he also receives a wreath of flowers and a corsage for his *dečve*. After the competition, the horse is taken home and the rider returns to the festival. The winner gets to have the first dance with his *dečvo*. Today the game is registered as an intangible cultural event.

*The Noriker horse is considered indigenous to the central Alpine region, a region once known as Noricum. The breed played an important role in the transportation of goods through the Alps, carrying salt, gold, and Celtic iron, and on the return journey bringing wine and spices.

All photographs from the Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana.

Materam, by Dr. M. Justin

The date was April 16, 2016, and a discussion about a 3 x 5 inch booklet, *Materam*, by Dr. M. Justin, published in Ljubljana in 1938. It was found in the basement of our 105 year old Stonich Building in Joliet, among unidentified books. The question was how to display it in the main floor Heritage Library. A scanned photo to Helena Janežič at the National and University Library in Ljubljana was sent. Several hours later came the answer!



“Mary Lou, what a coincidence! I’ve just written an article about Dr. M. Justin for a scientific magazine. (See below) He was a very well known doctor from Ljubljana, and he also wrote some practical guides for mothers-education, and about medical plants. If you organize your Library, this booklet will go under education tips. I am not sure what you would like to do with it?”

WHO WAS DR. MATEJ JUSTIN, AUTHOR OF BOOKLET FOUND IN THE ARCHIVES OF SUA

by Helena Janežič

Matej Justin was born on September 11, 1886, in Lesce near Bled. His dream was to become a doctor. In Vienna he specialized in surgery, internal medicine, and infectious diseases. When World War I began, he was sent to the battlefields in Galicia and Carpathians, later to Gorizia and Tyrol.



Dr. Matej Justin (wears the uniform on the right) with some members of his family.

Luckily he survived, however, his pregnant wife, Malka, died from the Spanish flu in 1919. Dr. Justin was sent to Carinthia as a military doctor, where he met his second wife, Anica Pintar. She had been determined to become a nun; there is a beautiful story about how they fell in love. After the marriage his military career heightened and he was sent on to Maribor, Ljubljana, and finally to Kragujevac in Serbia as a colonel. There he retired on his own wish. Together, he

Anica Pintar became Dr. Justin's wife in 1920.



The cover of booklet “Materam” (To the mothers) written by Dr. Justin in 1938.

and Anica returned to Ljubljana. They built a big house in Vižmarje, northwest of Ljubljana, where he began his own medical practice. He bought an X-ray apparatus and remade a car into an ambulance truck. He and Anica wanted to have many children, at least twelve. When years passed without children, the couple brought nephews into their home and helped them receive a good education.

Dr. Justin became a very popular doctor in Ljubljana and the surrounding areas. Prior to WWII he wrote several booklets with advice to mothers on how to raise children, about cleanliness in the home, and a booklet about medical plants. He was a very good diagnostician, preferring natural treatments. He was able to explain the disease and the treatment in a simple way. People liked him very much. Then WWII started. Dr. Justin was faithful to the Hippocrates oath and treated everyone who needed help: partisans, Germans, members of anti-communist forces, and ordinary citizens. He risked his life many times.

The end of the war did not bring relief for Matej and Anica. They watched with fear, columns of people coming through Vižmarje on their way to Austria, fearing the oncoming communist army. They anticipated the storm that was coming, and it came very soon. Two men in partisan uniforms knocked on the door and took the X-ray apparatus and ambulance truck. The following years were full of fear, but Dr. Justin continued his practice as a doctor. The culmination of the storm came in 1949. The authorities arrested Anica in March and Matej in July. In August they accused Matej and Anica of destroying acts to demolish the FLRJ (at that time Yugoslavia's official name was Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia). They were both found guilty. Anica returned from prison after two years; Matej after a year. Their house and beautiful garden on the edge of Ljubljana had been confiscated, along with all medical equipment and books. For many years they attempted to retrieve their equipment, but their applications and letters went without an answer. We can say that the storm only



Dr. Justin's grave on the graveyard by the church in Šentvid (today part of Ljubljana).

shakes the upright postured persons, but will never break them. Dr. Justin was one of them. He was guided by faith, love, and hope; his memory is still among the Slovenian people.

Visiting Slovenia this Fall?

Helena Janežič, who heads Emigrant Publications at the National and University Library, invites you to the 2016 exhibition. NUK is dedicating the 2016 "To The Promised Land" exhibition to emigrant women who left Slovenia and went to the United States. Stories about the lives of 14 Slovenian women will contribute to this mosaic; women such as Micka Krek, Antonia Höffren, Katka Zupancic, Anna Pracek Krasna, Milena Soukal, and Mary Jugg Molek. Marie Prisland holds a special place in the exhibition as the founder in 1926 of the Slovenian Union of America, formerly the Slovenian Women's Union of America. The exhibit runs until November 26, 2016.

Technology

Great News! Meet the new SUA Webmaster, MaryAlice Schwanke, Branch 109 - Twin Cities, MN. Her duties: revise web pages, maintain the website, ensuring the servers and hardware and software are operating accurately! Check it out: slovenianunion.org

It's amazing to check out the SUA Facebook page. Never knew so many people would read about the merger of Slovenian's biggest breweries, Pivovarna Union and Pivoarna Laško beer!

Chicken Soup and Wine

On June 5 my husband, Gene, and I attended the Slovenian Mass at the chapel in Lemont. It meant following along in the missal, praying the Mass in Slovenian. Actually I did quite well. After Mass it was the traditional Sunday dinner, soup, fried chicken, Slovenian fried potatoes, and of course *solata*. Corinne Leskovar and Bill Zerial sat with us. Bill left the table and returned with a glass of red wine, only to find out it was not to drink, but to add to his soup.

Mary Lou: "Bill, what are you doing?" Corinne: "Oh, that's a Cleveland thing!"

I got to thinking, wine is always paired with food! So I tried it, and yes, I liked it. In the bowl of soup seen here, I added a shot glass amount. I am guessing how many will try this, perhaps Campbell's Chicken Noodle Soup could stand added flavor?

to je to,

Mary Lou Deyak Voelk



Zarja - The Dawn

To a woman whose energy and dedication knows no bounds.

- William Arthur Ward



Pictured left to right: son, Michael, Mary Lou, son, John, husband, Eugene, son, Thomas, and daughter, Deborah.

Pictured left to right: son, Michael, Mary Lou, son, John, husband, Eugene, son, Thomas, and daughter, Deborah.



In the 90th (Nonagesimus*) Year of the Slovenian Union of America

**The Latin Translation*

It was June 7, 2016, in the 90th year of the SUA/SWUA when Gorazd Žmavc, Minister for Slovenians Abroad, and Dr. Zvone Žigon entered the doors of the Slovenian Union of America's main office, Heritage Museum, and library in Joliet. The dignitaries were given a historical update of the neighborhood area, once called Slovenian Row, pointing out a street banner with the SUA symbol, in recognition of the rich history of the Slovenians in Joliet.



Other projects:

The Main Library and the Masa Grom Library.

Digitized Music Collection.

Online Cemetery Locations.

Wedding picture collection.

Forget-Me-Not children's flip books in Slovenian and English.

Scanning of Applications for Membership, ongoing for the past 10 years.

Zarja - The Dawn, bound volumes, off-site, climate controlled storage, indexing, and online from the National

and University Library in Ljubljana.

World War II Battle Front and Home Front Survey Collection.

Cookbooks issued throughout the years and the current *The Slovenian-American Table*.

Then down to the basement to point out the numerous file cabinets, holding 15,000 to 17,000 Application for Membership forms, a holding of every person who at one time belonged to the SUA/SWUA; *kolendars*, and booklets dating back to the late 1800s and early 1900s; Branch archives; Heritage Museum artifacts.

Then the climb up the 25 steps to the second floor's spacious, 4-bedroom apartment. Could it house a visiting archivist and interns from Slovenia?

An insertable 16-page pocket notebook, including all the projects, was presented to Minister Žmavc and Dr. Žigon. Also included, a copy of SUA's newest cookbook, *The Slovenian-American Table*.

The tour continued across North Chicago Street to the St. Joseph Church, celebrating their 125th anniversary, and the adjacent building, St. Joseph School, now Ancel Center school. Both are testimony to the Slovenian presence in the area. Onward to visit the financial institution KSKJ, established in 1894. KSKJ remains active in preserving Slovenian culture.



The building tour began on the main level. All preservation projects, those accomplished and those in the making, were presented. It began with The Honor Book, begun in 1931 by Marie Prisland, handwritten in Slovenian and updated as each new Branch was formed. The book is in need of translation.





**Honorary Consul
Dr. John Vidmar**

they strongly advocated the continuation of a unified Yugoslavia. In retrospect, Vidmar's speech should have been recorded, enabling fellow Slovenian-Americans to hear of this involvement. A choir of voices followed it from the Slovenian Community of Lemont.

It was a historic event, with four Slovenian groups being recognized by Slovenia. Minister Žmavc recognized and awarded: St. Joseph Parish celebrating 125 years, the KSKJ in Joliet celebrating 120 years, KSKJ of Pueblo, CO, cele-

The evening ceremony at the Slovenian Catholic Cultural Center in Lemont began with the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Independence of the Republic of Slovenia. Honorary Consul Dr. John Vidmar spoke of the fateful week in 1991, during the 10-day war, sometimes called the Slovenian War. On the diplomatic front, neither the European Community nor the United States were willing to recognize the independence of Slovenia;



St. Joseph Church: Mary Lynn Bruno, Mary Petrella, Lillian Cepon, Minister Žmavc, Mike Vidmar, and Mark Cepon.



Slovenian Catholic Cultural Center: Slavica Sovan, Minister Žmavc, and Martina Hozjan-Ruda.

brating 110 years, the Slovenian Union of America celebrating 90 years, and the Slovenian Catholic Cultural Center in Lemont, celebrating their 20th anniversary.

Joining the evening dinner and program was a tour group from Slovenia who



KSKJ Joliet, Illinois: Minister Žmavc and Debbie Zelinzki.

**Photography
courtesy of
Reza Rozman.**

were on their way to Baraga Land, Marquette, MI.

Gratitude goes out to Fr. Timothy Andres, Sandy Artusa, Sonya DePratt, Nancy Henkel, Jana Hlade, Diane Hohenwater, John Lukancic, Micka Mavec, Norm Setnicker, Carole Terlep, John Vidmar, and Bill Zerial for a memorable day.



KSKJ Pueblo, Colorado: Minister Žmavc and Tony Mravle.



Dr. Žigon, Gregory Rozman, and Minister Žmavc.



Post Note: When arriving back home, I received an e-mail from Slovenia. It was a press release submitted by Minister Žmavc, showing volunteer Carole Terlep, of Branch 20, Joliet, scanning SUA documents at her desk.

Donations

Hvala lepa - Thank you!

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Anton Gorenc, 43, Honor of Gorenc Family

\$50 Donation

Judith A. Rechlit, 43, +Raymond J. Delopst

\$25 Donation

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Charlotte Russ, 35, +Jennie Tassmelli &

Jennie Pucelj

\$5 Donation

Nancy Wimber, 3, Zarja

New Members

Welcome - Dobrodošli

3, Popish, Dominic

3, Wimber, Nancy

24, Brust, Gloria

24, Dawe, Patti

24, Sawicki, Ruth

24, Simcich, Phyllis

43, Marinello, Dominic

43, Markelc, Frank

50, Hrovat, Allison M.

50, Hrovat, Jennifer A.

99, Ekerman, Brian

99, Ekerman, Daniel

99, Lowry, Rosemarie

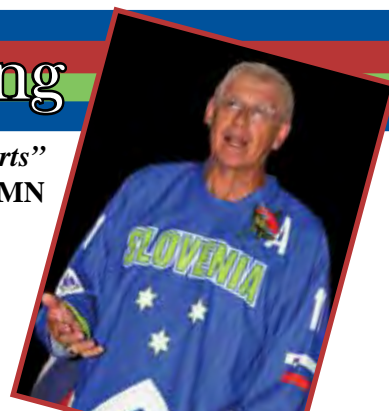
99, Manley, John

108, Ocepek, Karl

VP of Marketing & Fund-Raising

Norm Setnicker, "Born in America with Slovenian Parts"
Branch 109 - Twin Cities, MN

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"SUPPORTING SLOVENIA"

A Bit of History... Celebrating 25 Years of Independence

*June - July 1991
Southern California*

In June of 1991 Slovenia was fighting for its independence in a 10-day war. My late husband, Frank J. Vidergar, a Slovenian-American, and at the time a Vice President of the SNPJ, felt compelled to draw attention to the need for the United States to officially recognize an independent Slovenia. As lifelong supporters of Slovenia, we had been watching the news from Slovenia unfolding daily on CNN.

On Sunday morning, June 30, he made several phone calls and initiated a "telephone tree" in order to convene a special meeting at the Slovene Hall in Fontana, California. Three hours later approximately 50 people showed up from throughout Southern California to participate. Representation included members of several Slovene fraternal organizations (SWUA, KSKJ, SNPJ), as well as numerous other individuals who wanted to lend support.

During that meeting, suggestions and plans were made on how best to proceed. The consensus was that we needed to publicize our efforts by organizing a peaceful demonstration as well as asking the present U.S. administration for recognition by mailing individual postcards to the President and Secretary of State.

Five hundred dollars was immediately contributed from those present in order to defray expenses for poster supplies and to purchase postcards for printing and mailing to Washington, D.C. Several hundred dollars in additional donations was forthcoming from many others throughout Southern California who also wanted to support the cause. These additional funds allowed us to maximize our impact by enabling us to purchase additional supplies. More than 3,000 postcards were purchased, printed, and mailed. Later, we learned that other Slovenian-American communities followed the idea of our postcard drive.

The following evening, over 40 people gathered at the nearby Slovene Rest Home to make dozens of posters to prepare for a march at the Downtown Los Angeles Federal Building a few days later. At the request of a Los Angeles television station, a prominent reporter and crew drove out 50 miles to do interviews and capture the poster-making on film.



Frank J. Vidergar

On Wednesday, July 3, the day of the march (and after the proper permits were obtained) several hundred persons came to participate - many were Croatians who were seeking recognition at the same time. This demonstration had extensive media coverage by almost every Los Angeles television channel (CBS, KTLA, KABC, KHJ, KTTV), CNN, plus KFI and several other radio stations and newspapers. A few weeks later many local Slovenes joined in with another demonstration led by Los Angeles area Croatians. This one was held at the West Los Angeles Federal Building and brought out several hundred Slovenes and Croatians from around Southern California. The movement was growing!

Most of us had never been involved in a demonstration before, but we felt a sense of pride and purpose to be marching, in order, in some way, to offer assistance to our ancestral country.

Our son, Frank Jr., lived in Boston, Massachusetts, at the

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time. On the 4th of July he decided to help in his own way. He prepared a petition and obtained signatures from those awaiting the fireworks display on the Charles River. He mailed that petition with over 400 signatures to the White House.

Almost one year later the United States of America began to recognize Slovenia's plight. Finally, on April 7, 1992, President George Herbert Walker Bush recognized Slovenia as an independent, free, democratic, and sovereign nation.

In June 1992, commemorating the one-year anniversary of the Republic of Slovenia's declaration of independence (which occurred on June 25, 1991), a festive, sold-out celebration - dinner, program and dance - was held at the Fontana Slovene Hall.

It hardly seems possible that 25 years have passed. The memories are still so vivid. It is gratifying to know that we in Southern California played a small part in supporting Slovenia in fulfilling its dream.

Zivijo Slovenia!

Mary Lou Videgar
SUA Branch 100 - Southern California
videgar@hotmail.com



Mary Lou Videgar participating in downtown Los Angeles Federal Building demonstration.



West Los Angeles Federal Building demonstration.

The Tailor's Magic Pipe

A short story remembering the Old Country

by Tom (Toma) Klobucher

Branch 24 - LaSalle, IL

Toma, the five-year-old son of an immigrant Slovene tailor, had been watching his dad carefully cleaning his well-worn, crusted briarwood, smoking pipe. Toma was the nickname that Tom's father gave him when he was born. His father, the tailor, was sitting in his favorite, heavily-upholstered, arm chair, alongside an antique, (well-used) pipe cabinet, which sat in a corner of the family living room, just steps away from the decorative door that led to the tailor shop. The chair itself was upholstered with a patchwork of fine old samples of suiting wool, each one carrying a story of one of the tailor's satisfied customers. The

cover itself was sewn together by his wife, Rose Ann, Toma's mother.

The acrid smell coming from the scraped ash from the pipe's briar bowl had a strange, almost intoxicating aroma that filled Toma's sensitive nose with smells from times past, some of which he didn't even know. Toma was a boy of few words, but he was a thinker - one who always knew everything that was going on around him. (Sometimes that got him in trouble.) He was the middle son in a family of five children born to his tailor dad and his lovely wife. This family of seven lived behind the tailor shop - Klobucher's Klothes - on Joliet Street in LaSalle, Illinois, a small town near the Illinois River.



As Toma's father passed a pipe cleaner through the pipe stem for the last time, Toma made his move, swiftly climbing up onto his father's lap and promptly asking, "Daddy, would you tell me a story?" Toma greatly admired his father and watched his every move... hoping that someday, somehow, he could grow up and be just like his dad. His father chuckled with a happy laugh - more like a "Ho, ho, ho!" - and asked his son, "What kind of story do you want to hear?," as he finished packing some rich-smelling tobacco into his favorite briarwood pipe, which had been hand-carved in his homeland of Slovenia. With that, Toma snuggled into his father's lap, and with a smile on his face, replied, "A story about when you were a little boy like me in the Old Country."

Toma's father loved to tell stories, and Toma was his biggest fan. As his father struck a match, a flash of spark and flame, and drew several perfectly spaced puffs on the old pipe, the sweet-smelling smoke began to envelop both father and son. It was then that Toma noticed the faraway look in his father's eyes as he pulled up memories of the far distant past - of his childhood times in the Old Country. As the lacy, white plumes of smoke curled around them both, the story began. For this young boy of only five years of age, these magical stories of olden times were to become legendary, and would mark and inspire him for generations

to come, as the boy himself became a storyteller, an author of five books, and a pipe smoker.

Toma's father has since passed away, and the boy now has his father's cherished collection of old pipes. The tailor told his tales well over 50 years ago, but the magic of his stories still comes alive as his son holds one of his well-used pipes in his hand and smells the rich aroma of tobacco smoked long ago. As the years continue to pass, Toma relishes retelling his father's stories to his own children and grandchildren. They all enjoy the tailor's magic pipe!



Tom Klobucher

Tom Klobucher has written a moving account of his father's emigration from Slovenia to America - and of the transformations, some of them sweet, others very difficult, that he and his father experienced during the course of their relationship. The book is called, *The Tailor's Son*.

Tom traveled to Slovenia this past spring on a book tour to introduce people to the new Slovenian-language edition of *The Tailor's Son*, which is now available there.

More recently, Tom and his wife, Carol, enjoyed a delightful evening picnicking with fellow members of the LaSalle, Illinois Branch of the Slovenian Union of America, who were wonderfully warm hosts. As Tom signed copies of *The Tailor's Son*, he was delighted to trade tales with these lovely people, tales that spoke of family, and of the vibrant ties that continue to bind the Slovenian-American community to the Old Country.

Tom invites you to connect with him through e-mail at tomk@thomasinterior.com or by visiting his author website at www.amazon.com/author/thomasklobucher.



Debbie Pohar, Zarja Director of Design, Carol and Tom Klobucher, and Bonnie Pohar Prokup, Zarja Editor, at Branch 24 - LaSalle's summer picnic.

Wisconsin's Triglav Park & the Slovenian Cultural Society Triglav

Staff writer, David Sodac

Branch 89 – Oglesby, IL, E-mail: bdsodac@gmail.com

The Slovenian enthusiasm for life is embodied in its music, dance steps, sporting activities, food choices, and just in the sheer enjoyment of coming together! This same celebration of life can be experienced in Triglav Park, located in the Town of Norway in Racine County, Wisconsin. Triglav Park has become the social heart of a heritage group of Slovenian friends and descendants of a society that was originally founded by Slovene political refugees that had been offered haven in Milwaukee County back in 1950. The society's name is the Slovenian Cultural Society Triglav. Today, Triglav Park is alive with scheduled social activities, music, ethnic food, and recreational opportunities.

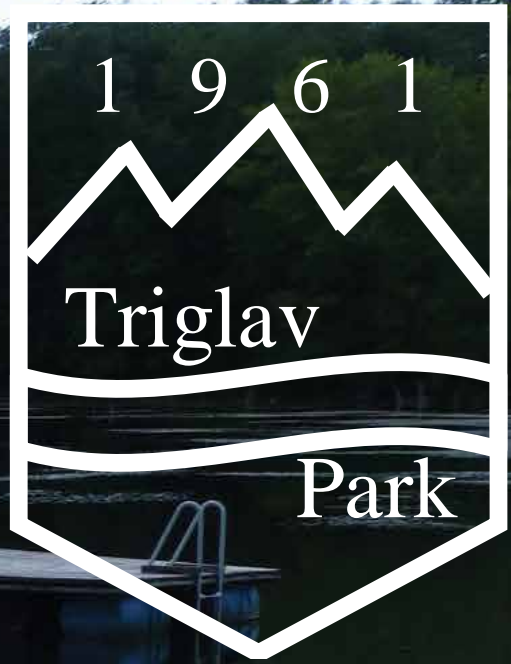
I stumbled upon Wisconsin's Triglav Park when talking to fellow SUA member, Mary Artac Urban* of Branch 102 - Willard, WI. She's lived in southeast Wisconsin for many years, but had never been to Triglav Park, until last summer. Mary expressed that it is a very impressive park.

She added, "They really draw a crowd. It is a beautiful park that overlooks a small lake. It was a real joy to sit in the shade looking out over the lake and listening to the music." Coincidentally, that day one of her hometown friends from Willard, WI, Dave Pakiz, was there and sat in with the Ansamble Veseljaki Band for a few songs. Of course, subtly letting me know, that not all polka bands come from Ohio, an inference to the article on polka enthusiasts in the

July/August 2016
issue of *Zarja*.

She also promoted the Richie Yurkovich Band, who were also from her hometown. Consequently, she peaked my interest in researching both Wisconsin's Triglav Park and their polka bands!

**Mary Artac Urban's paternal grandmother, Ivana "Johanna" Lusina Artac, was the founder of Branch 102 - Willard, WI. Both sets of her grandparents were original settlers before 1915 in the Slovenian farming community of Willard. Her grandmothers, Johanna Lusina Artac and Marijana Remskar Gosar, were founding members of the KSKJ in Willard, and both were on the board for 50 years. Of course, Mary also promoted the annual Willard Polka Festival, a three-day event of music, food, and dancing.*



The story behind the creation of Triglav Park follows the tragic aftermath of WWII in Slovene history.

In May of 1945, thousands of Slovenians fled from their villages with the approaching devastation of the Red Army and Communist Partisans. The escaping Slovenes had been engaged in fighting against the communist onslaught of their homeland, but escaped over the border mountains into neighboring Austria. They set up makeshift shelters hoping to find an eventual free existence. Due to a tragic misinterpretation of the Yalta Agreement, the British Command drove many of these approximately 12,000 anti-Communist fighters, called Domobrancí (Slovenian Home Guards), back into the awaiting hands of Tito and his soldiers. They were all unmercifully massacred. Many of the civilian escapees were spared their lives, but placed in sad living conditions in Austrian, British, and Italian refugee camps. In 1949, after four difficult years existing in these camps, the detainees were finally permitted to be shipped to the United States following the enactment of the Displaced Persons (DPs) Act. Near the end of 1947, a U.S. emigration bill required every displaced refugee emigrant to have a sponsor in the U.S. When not enough sponsors were found, in June 25, 1948, Congress passed Public Law 774, the Displaced Persons Act, which provided for more than 200,000 DPs to enter the U.S. over the next few years.

Many of the Slovenians in these refugee camps were directed to the Wisconsin cities near Lake Michigan (Milwaukee, Sheboygan, and West Allis). Some went inland to Central Wisconsin, particularly Clark County's farming areas around Willard. Most of the refugees in the Milwaukee County area quickly found work and attempted to carve out a new life in a free

country. They slowly made their adjustments to their new surroundings, but struggled with overcoming their homesickness. Having all experienced the same atrocities and displacement, they strove to find a way to keep in touch with each other. On November 17, 1950, Janez Grum, Franc Rozina, and Ivo Kunovar called the first meeting of the newest political refugees in the church hall at St. John the Evangelist, located in the midst of a once thriving Slovenian community on the south side of Milwaukee. They eventually formed a society of over 30 families and named it the "Slovenian Cultural Society Triglav." The Society continued to hold monthly meetings and sponsored numerous social events, plays, concerts, sporting events, and a widely known performing choir. In 1961, the society continued its membership growth and began searching for a convenient, fun, recreational space where members could come together on weekends.

Helen Frohna of SUA's Branch 43 - Milwaukee, WI, a life-long member of the Society, offered some background information on the park. Helen, who is the Cultural Director of the Society, is the daughter of Mici (Mejač) Coffelt, a political refugee who settled in West Allis. She shared that her uncle Franjo Mejač and Franc Rozina located that idyllic land in the quaint Town of Norway (near Wind Lake), Wisconsin, that offered 15 acres of overgrown woods and the small Lake Bisana-bi. On March 25, 1961, they signed the deed to their little paradise. The Society selected "Triglav," both in its society's name and its recreational destination of

Triglav Park. It was named after Slovenia's staggeringly beautiful, three-peaked Mount Triglav, the highest mountain in the Julian Alps that prominently protrudes as the centerpiece of Triglav National Park. The Triglav representation has become the much-loved symbol of Slovenia and of Slovene character, and is depicted in the Slovenian coat of arms and national flag.

The Society's vision for Triglav Park was to become a second home to the many Slovenian refugees who came to Wisconsin. Since its purchase, the land has been carved and shaped into a vibrant, recreational, and social gathering grounds. In remembrance of their



Slovenian homeland, the developers of the acreage intended to replicate the look and feeling as much as possible of their revered Mt. Triglav. The President of the Society at that time, Jože Kunovar, along with fellow members and skilled laborers, built a small-scale of Lake Bled's island pilgrimage church (The Church of the Assumption) to be lovingly erected on a small island in the middle of their lake. Unknowingly, their plans had to be revamped as the lake's waters ebbed and flowed and eventually could damage the chapel. The chapel was then relocated to the nearby hillside overlooking the lake and near well-maintained flower beds. The replica church contains commemorative plaques as a memorial to deceased members and the refugees who founded the Society and Triglav Park.

Meagan Strmsek, another SUA member of Branch 43 - Milwaukee, also has been a life-long member of the Society and currently serves as their Corre-

sponding Secretary and Membership Chairperson. Meagan shared information about her grandparents, Anton and Darinka (Dari) Strmsek, and their 17-month-old son Karol (Meagan's father, known as Karl/Charlie), who came to Milwaukee as sponsored refugees in 1950. Anton became one of the founding fathers of the Society. Their granddaughter is proud that their family has been actively involved ever since. Meagan became animated in conversation when describing how beautiful and functional the park is today. She lives about 20 minutes away, and loves to walk her dogs around the lake. She shared that the grounds house the beautiful Chapel of Saints Cyril and Methodius, where three of the four summer picnics start

with an outdoor Mass. The park also offers its members a screened-in shelter with card tables, an all-season pavilion building, nostalgically referred to as their "*Dom*," used for small wedding receptions, parties, and Society-sponsored activities. There is an inviting children's playground area, as well as two well-used courts for playing the Slovenian sport known as *balinanje* (*balina*) or "playing *boče*," similar to bocce/bocci ball. The park offers Lake Bisanabi with a beach for swimming, complete with a diving dock, as well as a fishing dock. As was mentioned in the opening paragraph, Slovene's zest for life includes their love of food. For the four main picnics scheduled each year (entrance to the park is free), the kitchen cooks prepare chickens roasted over coal spits, and Slovenian sausage sandwiches or sausage dinners. You don't have to pack a picnic basket for these outings; the delicious food is available for all and reasonably priced. Of course, they also offer refreshments of Slovenian wines and lots of chilled *pivo* to quench your thirst!





It is said that a person of true Slovene heritage is expected to climb Mt. Triglav at least once in his or her life. If you don't see Eastern European travel and Mt. Triglav National Park in Slovenia in your foreseeable future soon, then at least

members only. However, if you are truly curious, you can easily join in on the fun for any or all of the four open to the public scheduled picnics. For specific information for this year's last picnic, next year's dates, directions, and activities go online to www.triglavpark.com.



visit Wisconsin's scenic Triglav Park near Wind Lake. Embrace your heritage and travel there for one or all of their Societies four picnic celebrations and sample their authentic Slovenian dishes. Three of the picnics begin with a Mass celebrated at 11:00 am, followed by an enthusiastic day of eating, music, dancing, and friendship.



The last public picnic this year will be the *Vinska Trgatev* (Wine Festival) on September 11, (no Mass at this picnic) with lunch beginning at noon. Music by Grant Kozera and the Brewhaus Polka Kings starts at 1:00 pm. Come on out!

If interested or have any questions about the picnics, e-mail Meagan at strumm19@gmail.com. As Triglav Park is a privately owned park, it does have closed functions for

A related story of Slovenian refugees, Anton Žakelj and his family, as told through his diary and translated by his son, John Žakelj, can be read on page 18 in this issue of Zarja. John is president of SUA's Branch 109 - Twin Cities.



STARTING

Over In

AMERICA

By John Žakelj, Branch 109 - Twin Cities, MN - zakelj@cs.com

With introduction by Staff Writer, David Sodac

Not all the Slovenian refugees who came to Wisconsin during the years following WWII were directed to cities near Lake Michigan (Milwaukee, Sheboygan, and West Allis). Some went inland to central Wisconsin, particularly Clark County and farm areas around Willard. Anton Žakelj, his wife Cilka (Cecilija), and their 16-month-old son, Janez (John) (Johnny), were one of the many refugee families who were brought to farm in Willard through a sponsors program.

Anton had kept a diary since he was 18. His entries were amazingly insightful; they told the tragic tales of escape into Austria, the years spent in refugee camps, their immigration to America, and early experiences of farming in Wisconsin. In later years, Anton and his son, John, were to spend long and detailed conversations when translating his dairies into English. Today, John Žakelj is an active SUA Branch 109 member, living in St. Paul, MN. John was cajoled by this staff writer into sharing his family's story for this issue of Zarja. - David Sodac

In the 1990s, my father, Anton Žakelj, and I begin translating parts of his diaries for publication in Slovenia, and then translating into English for publication in America. At the same time, we sorted through a collection of photos and aligned them with his stories. The *Ameriška Domovina-American Home*, a Slovenian-American weekly in Cleveland, began publishing excerpts each week, covering the years from 1943-1957. In Slovenia, the journal *Žirovski Občasnik* published in Slovenian many of these same years. In fact, it was Miha Naglič, the editor of the *Občasnik*, who originally inspired and encouraged us to publish the diaries. Many of the years still remain to be translated, edited, and published.

My father was born in June 1907 in Žiri, Slovenia, a village nestled in the green foothills of the Julian Alps, about 30 miles west of Ljubljana. He began his diary when he was 18, and wrote for almost 80 years. He died peacefully in January 2006. For about the first 30 years he wrote in Esperanto (*an artificial international lan-*

guage based as far as possible on words common to the chief European languages), because he liked the language and partly to protect the information. There were years when people were jailed for simply thinking the wrong thoughts. In America, during the 60s and 70s, Anton began writing in Slovenian. During the 80s and 90s, he translated his earlier diaries into Slovenian and added memories. He had a near photographic memory and an amazing ability to connect events in his life with major events in world history.

In Slovenia, my father was the manager for a shoemakers' cooperative; my mother was a seamstress and lace

maker. During World War II, the Germans had occupied Slovenia, which was then part of Yugoslavia. At the same time, a civil war was raging, with a number of groups fighting each other for post-war control of Yugoslavia. When the Allies defeated the Germans, the communists took over Yugoslavia, taking revenge on anyone who did not support



Refugee camp wedding of Anton and Cecilija Žakelj.



1949 John Žakelj with his mama in camp.

to immigrate to America. On June 6, 1949, Anton received the good news - John and Mary Brezic of Willard, WI, agreed to be our sponsors in America. John and Mary were in their 60s, and had come to America, John in 1907 and Mary in 1910. They had created their farm out of a logged-over wilderness. They had adopted one daughter, Helen, who was married and living on a nearby farm with her husband. John needed help on the farm, and perhaps someday, someone to take over the farm. In the following months, there were many forms to fill out, multiple medical exams, vaccinations, and long waits for official approvals.

them. The communists drafted both Anton and Cilka Žakelj at gunpoint, Anton in 1943 and Cilka in 1944. They did escape, but left everything, knowing if they were to return they would face death or prison. Anton and Cilka became refugees, living in temporary camps for the next five years. In 1946, they were married in an Austrian refugee camp. I was born in one of those camps in 1948. After three years in a refugee camp, permission was given



1949 Anton, Cecilija, and John Žakelj in refugee camp just before they left for America.

On November 16, 1949, the American consul informed Anton that their application for immigration was approved! On November 24, 1949, Anton and Cilka said farewell to friends who were still at Trofaiach. Together with the Cerar, Srsen, and Rihtar families, they boarded a train to Salzburg, Austria. In Salzburg there were more questioning and medical exams. Two days later they were on a special IRO (International Refugee Organization) train, headed for Naples, Italy. There were more medical exams and more waiting in a camp near Naples! On December 11, 1949, the family boarded the special United States Transport Ship "General Greeley." Cilka and Johnny were assigned to a small cabin with three Polish women. Anton was assigned to a men's dormitory, down low in the ship.

The trip began well, but soon the wind and waves picked up. People became seasick; everyone was at the ship's railing vomiting into the Mediterranean. The following night, the sea was so wild, with announcements made on the loudspeakers, telling everyone to stay in their cabins. However, it didn't seem much safer to stay in bed. In the dining room, tables and chairs that were not fastened were destroyed. In the clinic, large bottles of medicine broke. In the kitchen, hundreds of dishes broke into pieces. The following day, the sky cleared, the sea became calm, and seasickness subsided. There were more rough days and seasickness returned. Cilka and Johnny were seasick and Johnny was teething. Each day the ship's staff would announce the miles completed, usually about 400 miles a day. The entire trip was about 4,400 miles. Anton wondered if they would make it to New York alive.

On December 22, 1949, everyone was up early and on deck. At 8 a.m., through the fog, the outline of the New Jersey shore was in sight. At 10 a.m., the Statue of Liberty and the Manhattan skyscrapers came into view. Many years later, Cilka talked about the experience, seeing the

Statue of Liberty, the freedom symbol, something they had been dreaming of. It was also a symbol of how far they had traveled and the sourful fact they would probably never be able to see their homeland again.

A boat carrying a customs officer and medical officials came to the ship. Anton noted in his diary, "No need for X-rays, they could see through our stomachs." Everyone was hungry. By evening, the passengers and their luggage were transferred to busses, and then it was a train ride to New York City. At the train station, Anton looked for a loaf of bread, but all he could find were sandwiches, "so thin you could see through them, and expensive as saffron." That night, a New York Central train, with large,

Resettlement Form VI		WAR RELIEF SERVICES Identification Card	
National Catholic Welfare Conference			
RESETTLEMENT DIVISION			
149 Madison Avenue - New York 16, N.Y.			
U. S. Code No.	LC/276	European Code No.	A-X 1653
Name(s)	ZAKELJ, Anton		
	Cecilija (wife)		
	Ivan (son)		
Sponsor	John BREZIC		
Address	Rt. 3 Greenwood, Wisconsin		

This card must be carried by displaced person until arrival at final destination in the U. S.

Refugee Resettlement ID Card

shiny, new aluminum cars took them to Chicago. Another transfer awaited them, a smaller Soo Line train, which took them to Marshfield, WI. In Marshfield, John Brezic and others were waiting for them. It was 6 a.m. when the family finally arrived at the Brezic farm in Willard. Anton

large community of Slovenian immigrants, the freedom and economic opportunities provided by America, working at home on his own projects including his writing, that gave him the hope and will to live. After a number of years as a machinist, he became a factory janitor, which he found

It is my hope our story will give light to what really happened, to learn from history, and for others to be inspired by their parents' faith, hope, and values.
- John Žakelj

and Cilka were tired and hungry, but too polite to ask for food. When they got to their bedroom, Johnny, who had been sad for weeks, suddenly became so happy and excited, that Anton and Cilka just laughed and cried for joy. And so they began their new life in America.

The Wisconsin farm turned out to be too small to support the entire family. After six months, we moved to Cleveland, OH, where there were jobs and a large Slovenian community. My father's first regular job in America was manual labor in a metalworking factory, lifting heavy steel parts and cleaning up oil and metal shavings, sometimes in extreme heat. He was not a large man, and more use to management and accounting. I remember him coming home, exhausted, with oil-soaked hands and metal slivers embedded in his fingers. To earn a higher pay for our family, he attended evening school to become a machinist.

As a machinist he found the job to be too stressful. Heavy steel parts had to be drilled and shaped to the thousandth of an inch. Machinery often broke down and expensive parts were wasted, usually with little understanding from the bosses. He became more anxious, sometimes to the point of being unable to work. He was hospitalized a number of times with specific physical illnesses. In 1956, he wrote, "May God help me regain my health, keep me out of the insane asylum, and not let me die insane!"

I believe these episodes of anxiety were not just job related; they were the effect of the war and the refugee experience. My father wondered why he lived when many others died. He questioned the choices he had made. He mourned his mother's death in 1954, without him being at her bedside. He worried about the brothers and sisters who stayed behind in Slovenia, most of them in prisons and labor camps for many years after the war, and then mistreated after their releases. All these things ground him down. It was his wife Cilka, his children, his church, the

to be less stressful. Later, he wrote in his diary, "I am still happier being a janitor in America, than a slave in communist Slovenia."

When we came to America, I was their only child. In 1952, my brother Tony was born. It was two years later and Joe arrived; two years later sister Mary arrived. My mother was busy as a homemaker and raising children, but she managed to find time to go door-to-door selling her lacework. Later, when we children began attending school, she worked as a part-time cleaning lady for wealthy people and in professional offices. My mother provided the positive, selfless spirit that kept our family together and thriving through many difficult times. After she died in March 2004, my father missed her greatly.

When my siblings and I were growing up, my parents skimmed on everything to make ends meet, but not on books and education for their children. Twenty years later, they were very proud when we graduated from college. I obtained a degree in languages and psychology; my brothers obtained multiple degrees in mathematics and computer science, and my sister became a pediatrician. It was the achievements of their children that helped my parents feel more positive about leaving their beloved homeland and families in Slovenia. The communists had tried to destroy them, but my parents prospered and thrived. Despite all these achievements, one nagging issue continued to gnaw at my father's insides; it was the historical record and how he and the other refugees were perceived.

When we first came to America, my father found many people who chose not to listen or understand his side of the story. The Yugoslav government had spread lies about how the refugees had collaborated with the Nazis. Many Americans believed those lies; we were called traitors and collaborators. This was extremely hurtful to my father. It is difficult to express how important it was for him to set the

record straight, but it was not until his articles were published in America and Slovenia, 40 - 50 years later, that he felt some balance had been restored. In that decade before he died, he achieved a measure of peace and satisfaction.

In 1949, when I was less than a year old, my father often carried me in his arms on frequent walks in the pinewoods near the refugee camp in Trofaiach, Austria. Fifty-seven years later, when he was 98, I pushed his wheelchair on walks around the nursing home near Cleveland, OH. He loved walks and so do I. We took many walks together during those 57 years. I came to know my father as we worked side by side on the publication of his diaries during the last 14 years of his life. He kept a diary (not always daily) from the time he was 18, almost until he died. In those words, I found a wealth of insight and the strength of character in my father.

Working on his diaries gave me much personal satisfaction. I gained an understanding of my parents and myself, as well as a better understanding of the ways that truth can lead to reconciliation and real peace between enemies. I

came to know many fascinating people who shared these experiences, mostly children of refugees who were in the camps with my parents. Many of their parents are now dead, but the children still want to know who their parents were and what really happened. They understand that these experiences are part of their identity and they find my father's diaries invaluable. It is my hope our story will give light to what really happened, to learn from history, and for others to be inspired by their parents' faith, hope, and values. They believed that we, their children and grandchildren, could make this world a better place, a place where each person is treated with respect, where people are not punished for doing what they believe is right, where each person has opportunities and responsibilities to grow, and to make their own contribution to society.

If you would like to read more of the
Žakelj family story,
Google "*Žakelj diary*" or go to
<http://bbhhs96.dyndns.org/~zakeljdiary/>



1955 Žakelj family in America - Mary, Ata, Joe, Mama, Tony, and John.



Slovenian Union of America

Across America - Branch Reports

BRANCH 1 - Sheboygan, Wisconsin

Contact Information: Marilyn Hendricks

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The Ss. Cyril & Methodius Slovenian Festival was held on Sunday, July 10, at Deland Park in Sheboygan, WI. The park is located on the beautiful shores of Lake Michigan and the weather was absolutely perfect for the festival. Sunny and 75! What more could anyone ask for?

The festival started with a Polka Mass officiated by Father Paul Fliss. The "Jeff Winard Polka Band" led the Slovenian Singers, along with the congregation, in song. Mass was held in one of the large tents which was converted to a dance floor and bar following the service.



Fr. Paul Fliss



Jeff Wizard

Jeff Winard and his band continued to entertain the picnic-goers with polkas and waltzes until 2:30 p.m. The Kenny Saydak Band performed some

very lively, jazz music for a couple of hours after that. One of the band members, Tony Menzer, is a graduate of Ss. Cyril Grade School and loves performing at the picnic and catching up with old friends.

The customary bake sale took place and again goodies sold out early in the day. Lots of potica, strudel (apple and cherry), and other homemade goodies were sold. Strawberry shortcake and root beer floats were also available. Of



course, no Slovenian picnic is complete without *kranskis* and Slovenian potato salad. brats, hamburgers, and chicken were also available.

Games, raffles, food, beer, and other refreshments were plentiful. All had a good time!

MARY ANN SCHELLINGER

BRANCH 2 - Chicago, Illinois

Contact Information: Judy Stoll

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This report was submitted before our Zveza Day Picnic, so I'm unable to give any information about our annual event. If you didn't attend the picnic, you'll have to wait for the next issue of *Zarja* to find out. We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the success of our picnic fund-raiser by purchasing the raffle tickets that were mailed to Branch 2 members in June. As in the past, the proceeds from the picnic will be distributed to worthy causes around the Christmas Holidays.

Branch 2 members, Lorraine and Judy Ovník, told us of their brother John's first visit to Slovenia in June. This trip had been on his "bucket list" for a long time, and he was pleased that his son, Paul, was able to accompany him. They drove from Venice, Italy, into Slovenia and explored the many attractions along the way. They agreed that Slovenia was breathtakingly beautiful! Their mission was to visit the Dolenjska region, and in particular Krka and Nova Mesto, to find the birthplaces of their parents, John and Mary. They located both houses and were amazed to find them still standing. It was a joyful and emotional experience. Visits to Ljubljana, Lake Bled, Piran, the Lipizzan Horse Farm, the Postojna Caves, as well as many castles, rounded out their wonderful vacation. If you have a story to tell about a visit to Slovenia or other areas that have a Slovenian theme, please contact me so we can all share in the adventure.

Our next meeting will take place on Thursday, September 15, at 1 p.m. at the Peaches and Pears Restaurant on Archer Avenue in Chicago. Please call if you need directions. In closing, remember to keep our sick members, those in service to our country, and all first responders in your prayers.

JUDY STOLL

BRANCH 5 - Indianapolis, Indiana

Greetings Branch 5 Members! Hope you enjoyed the beautiful summer weather! Unlike last year, when it was a cool, rainy, dreary summer, this one has been sunny, with just the right amount of rain to make the gardens flourish. My tomato plants were tall and full of luscious red fruit! Cucumbers hung over their support fence, and green beans were picked by the bowlful every other day. My flower garden is a continuous display of color, transitioning from daisies and daylilies to asters and mums! Sitting on the front porch, in comfy rocking chairs, listening to the cicadas singing in the evening breeze, inhaling the flowers' fragrances...that was summer living!

In our Slovenian community of Haughville, many of the fenced-in yards butted up to alleys, making the back fence the perfect location for plants that love to climb, such as early spring peas, pole beans, cucumbers, and cherry tomatoes. My grandmother always had beautiful sweet pea vines growing along with the veggies, their pink and white blooms clinging to the tops of the wire fence. Tomatoes, staked next to the garage, and onions and garlic planted under the large tulip tree, spread rapidly in the small yard, taking advantage of every bit of sunshine. Large clay pots were on steps and porches, full of bright red geraniums, and fragrant herbs planted in available spots, to be used fresh or dried for the winter months. Grandma knew the importance of planting and preserving for the lean times, but she also knew to plant and appreciate the soothing beauty of the flowers. In our busy hectic lives, take time to appreciate the little things... smell the roses!

We had a very nice turnout for our June pitch-in luncheon; thanks to all who came! The food was wonderful, hot apple strudel, and double chocolate cookies (yum) - but the company was better! We hope that more of our members and their families will be able to join us on our Friday night dinners at the Nash (Slovenian National Home). We are also planning a Sunday, "KOFFEE AND KROFE," in October. Hope to see you all there!

Thanks to all who attended the June Slovenian picnic! Although it was a very hot day, the food and music were wonderful! Thanks to all the great people who work so hard to make this picnic a success!

Have a safe Labor Day weekend!

MARY, KAREN, & PHYLLIS

BRANCH 16 - South Chicago, IL

Contact Information: Chris Deckinga 708.224.3490 or Terri Rossi 219.588.3633 or Dolores60617@yahoo.com

Even though meetings are suspended for the summer months, bad news has a way of creeping up on us. Two longtime members have died. Evelyn Driscoll, 93, who was formerly with Branch 95 - South Chicago, died on May 14 after a lengthy illness.

Longtime Secretary of Branch 16, Gladys Buck, 97, died in Minnesota, where she had been living for the past few years. Gladys was well-known throughout the Slovenian Union of America. She was a dedicated, devoted, lifelong member of the SUA and Branch 16, and well respected as the leader of the popular SWUA Cadets marching group. Gladys is also fondly remembered, dressed in her traditional Slovenian costume, and being joyful about keeping the tradition ongoing. Since her move to Minnesota, we have missed Gladys at our meetings. Her last wishes were to be buried from St. George Church, the family parish for many years. Funeral services were held on June 13. The choir, with many members of Branch 16, sang a beautiful rendition of the traditional Slovenian hymn, *Angelsko Češčenje* (*Češčena si Marija*). Rest in Peace Evelyn and Gladys.

DOLORES KRAL FRANKO

BRANCH 20 - Joliet, Illinois

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Hopefully you are continuing to enjoy some lovely, warm weather and have many fine memories of summer experiences. As this season winds down, our monthly meeting schedule resumes. Branch members should have received tickets for our annual cash raffle. Please consider participating in this fund-raising event. You might be the winner of one of the three cash prizes!

Members in the Joliet area also receive a calendar of events listing all upcoming meetings and Branch events. Please join us for our first meeting on Tuesday, September 20, at 6:30 p.m. at St. Joseph Park Hall. Our meetings

begin with a guest speaker, followed by dessert, coffee, and soft drinks. We usually have beer and wine available as well. After refreshments, we conduct a short business meeting, and are generally finished by about 8:30 p.m. We welcome new ideas and encourage you to attend one of our meetings - feel free to bring a friend. Anyone with questions regarding our meetings should contact me.



Generation 1 - Bernardine (Cernugel) Rutkowski has been a life-long member of Joliet's Branch 20.

Generation 2 - Cyndi (Rutkowski) Karges has also been a life-long member of Joliet's Branch 20.

Generation 3 - Maggie (Karges) Watson

Generation 4 - Genevieve and twin brother Davis Watson

Also pictured is Chester Rutkowski. Bernardine & Chester recently celebrated their 67th wedding anniversary! They were married at St. Joseph's church on May 21, 1949.

Our sincere condolences go to Josephine Lustik and her family on the loss of her husband, member Walter Lustik, on May 19. Jo is one of our auditors and a most active member, and Wally joined her at all our Branch events. He will be missed. We also send get well wishes to Jonita Ruth and Sister Marlene Ambrose.

I urge anyone with items of interest to our Branch to contact me. We are always looking for new and interesting details for our reports.

DIANE HOHENWATER

BRANCH 24 - LaSalle, Illinois

Contact Information: Diane Data

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Zivijo! While looking around the tables at our Spring Luncheon in May, it struck me that we had two families with three generations in attendance - Janice Spelich, her daughter, Michelle Cinotto, and granddaughter, Chloe Cinotto, also Barb Pohar and her two daughters, Debbie Pohar and Bonnie Prokup, and her granddaughter, Barbi Prokup.



Janice Spelich, her granddaughter, Chloe Cinotto, and daughter, Michelle Cinotto.



Barb Pohar, her daughter, Bonnie Prokup, and granddaughter, Barbi Prokup.

Thank you to Barb Pohar and family for hosting our annual "Taste of Slovenia" picnic in the beautiful gardens of her home. Our members outdid themselves again with tasty Slovenian dishes and desserts. We had a nice mix of members and spouses, Branch 89 members, and prospective new members. The "Last Call Band" provided us with background music as we enjoyed the evening.





Joining us was special guest, Thomas S. Klobucher, just back from Slovenia on a book signing tour for his book, *The Tailor's Son*. Tom is the son of Slovenian immigrant parents and grew up in

LaSalle. He had books available for purchase. The book is also available at amazon.com. (See page 12-13.)



On a personal note, I am thoroughly enjoying following my friend on Facebook, Mary Risner Glaize, as she is in Slovenia taking a four-week SSL class. We met on the 2014 *Živijo, Zarja!* trip. The Center for Slovene as a Second/Foreign Language at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ljubljana offers the summer classes, as either a two-week or a four-week course. She is staying in an apartment and either walking or taking the bus to class each day. On weekends she visits with relatives or does laundry. Her fellow students vary in age and nationality. I'm putting this on my bucket list!

Enjoy the summer. *Dober dan!*

DIANE DATA

BRANCH 35 - Aurora, Minnesota

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Wow! Has anyone else ever had "computer withdrawal symptoms?" Well, we just went through three weeks of them - Bob, because he couldn't read about his "beloved Minnesota Gophers," and me, unable to get into Facebook! We are finally back on the internet today and just in time for the *Zarja* reporters' deadline. How did we ever live without this technology?

Our Branch 35 will resume business on September 11. The meeting will be a week later because of the Labor Day weekend. We will have some interesting things on the agenda.

The Biwabik/Aurora, etc. 4th of July celebration not only combined an All-School reunion, it also included several ethnic events. One exciting event was the presentation of "CLIMB EVERY MOUNTAIN," the story of the MEDVED family's escape and resettlement on the Iron Range after WWII. Frank and Miro Medved retold their family story, with slides and photos of their five years in the camps after the war, to a "standing room only" crowd in the Heritage Center in Biwabik, the city where the family relocated. This story became part of Iron Range history. The entire presentation was recorded and will be on "Youtube" at a later date. Strudel and potica made by Shelly Sherek and Marilyn Smith was served with coffee before the event. M-M-M-M good! Many thanks to David Setnikar (brother of Norm) for arranging this presentation.

On Sunday, July 3, the Singing Slovenes provided us with music for a Polka Mass celebrated by Fr. Steve Daigle. An inspiring addition was the appropriate patriotic military music to end the Mass. Fr. Steve left us this week for his new assignment in Deer River, as we welcome Fr. Peter Lambert who has been substituting in Father's absence.

Several Branch members will be traveling to Slovenia this September, including our President Veda Lanari and family. Safe travels and make "memories."

I hope the apple trees had many blossoms this year, so we all can have an abundance of apples this fall for strudels. Happy stretching! *Marija Pomagaj - prosi za nas!*

ROSEMARY RIBICH

BRANCH 43 - Milwaukee, Wisconsin

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The Members of the Year, ladies of our Branch who are in their 80s or 90s, were honored at a special dinner on May 25. Many thanks to Joan Winkleski, who made all the crowns/garlands for our honored guests, and to June Znidorka and Rose Chepeck who presented each honored guest with a red carnation flower.

Many of our Branch members enjoyed the beautiful, summer day of June 26, at Triglav Park, celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Independence of the Republic of Slovenia. The day started with an outdoor Mass and the combined voices of the "St. John the Evangelist Church Slovenian Choir" and the "*Uspeh* Chorus" leading the singing. A delicious chicken or sausage dinner, a short program commemorating the day, and music and dancing followed. Many thanks to Helen Frohna and Kathy Kaye who coordinated the Mass, program, and a delightful, children's dance performance. A big thank you to all who baked or gave donations for this event!

REMINDER: Mark your calendars for the WI Regional Convention on October 16, which will be held at Klemmer's Banquet Hall on W. Oklahoma Ave. and S. 104th St. Cocktails can be purchased at 11 a.m., with dinner served at noon. Reservations are a must and can be made by calling Jackie Smith at 262.789.0989. The business meeting and a lively program will follow dinner. Entertainment will be by the "Nightingals," - Katie Gorton (SUA founder Marie Prisland's granddaughter) and Andrea Terek, performing a variety of toe tappin' classics. WI Regional President, Jackie Smith, and her committee are planning a wonderful day and an invitation is extended to all. The cost for the afternoon is \$20. We welcome Branches 1 and 102!

ANOTHER REMINDER: Bakery is needed for the Presidential Election Day bake sale, which will be held on November 8, starting at 3:00 p.m., at the Spanish Immersion School (formerly South 88th St. School). All of the proceeds from the event will benefit our treasury. As you know, this election will be a big one, so we will need all of the bakery we can get, in addition to volunteers to help at the school that day.

ONE MORE REMINDER: Mark your calendars for November 12, 2016. All of the details have not been worked out as yet, but it's the day set for our first *Martinovanje Celebration*.

Congratulations to Branch member, Rose Chepeck, who received an award for Exceptional Leadership from the American Red Cross. Rose spends many hours as a volunteer at the Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center in Milwaukee. She was given this award for her exceptional guidance and support for other volunteers, staff, and clients served by the Red Cross. We're proud of you, Rose!

I hope you all had a great summer. Why not start out the fall by attending our meeting on Wednesday, September 28, at noon in the Constitution Room at the West Allis Library?

MARY "MICI" BREGANT

BRANCH 47 - Garfield Heights, Ohio

Contact Information: Debbie Duris

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As of this date, eight of our Branch members are planning to go on an all-day bus trip, featuring highlights of Cleveland, on Tuesday, August 30. It will be a step back in time remembering places from our childhood, along with good food, entertainment, and exploration. I am really looking forward to spending time with my members, as well as seeing all of the sights.

Our next Branch luncheon is on Saturday, September 17, at 1 p.m. at Glenwillow Grill at 29765 Pettibone Rd. in Solon. Please call Debbie Duris at 330.467.2281 to make your reservation.

Debbie Duris and I had a wonderful time at the 25th Anniversary Celebration in honor of the Republic of Slovenia's Independence at the Cleveland City Hall Rotunda on Friday, June 10. Entertainment by the singing group, "Zarja," was entertaining and fun, as we were able to join in. The speeches from the various local and Slovenian politicians were extremely interesting. I am so proud to be a Slovenian-American!

In memory of my mother, I am so pleased that the SWU Scholarship Foundation awarded the Olga Dorchak Scholarship to the deserving recipient, Marissa Inga, from North Caldwell, NJ. She has an impressive resume and is extremely deserving of this scholarship. Marissa will be



Branch 43 – Members of the Year - 2016

Top Row (Left to Right) Shirley Vidmar – Loretta Urh – June Znidorka – Tillie Skusek – Rose Chepeck – Frances Zeman
Bottom Row (Left to Right) Helen Prijic – Lillian Hartmann – Sophie Bevsek – Fannie Smole – Irene Kunovar – Claire Ujcich – Mary Bregant

attending the University of Michigan, majoring in engineering this fall.

Have a beautiful autumn!

KATHLEEN FERRANTE

BRANCH 93 - New York, New York

Contact Information: Elizabeth Gross

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Summertime activities for Branch members started with the "Sing for Hope" performance at Liberty Plaza on June 6, with welcoming remarks by Honorary Consul Erik Horvat. Fifty pianos were transformed by artists for this public art project, including Eva Petrič's, "Etude ABOVE ground zero," which depicted a blue sky - as she experienced it on 9/11 in NYC - covered with lace clouds of memories to bring hope. At the close of the displays, pianos were donated to schools, hospitals, and nursing homes.



Piano design, "Etude ABOVE ground zero," by Eva Petrič.

We are very proud of Marissa Inga, who received the Olga Dorchak \$1,000 Scholarship from the Slovenian Women's Union Scholarship Foundation to attend the University of Michigan this fall. Tanya Vajk presented the award at the West Essex High School ceremony in New Jersey. Joyce Inga and her two daughters, Marissa and Michelle, have been longtime members of our Branch. Their family initially settled in a Pennsylvania coal mining community, called Browndale; Marissa's great-grandmother, Mary Zaverl Ostanek, a member of the Forest City Branch of SUA (then SWUA), brought up seven children, all of whom graduated

high school during the Depression.

On June 21, the Permanent Mission of Slovenia to the UN was the site of festivities celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Republic of Slovenia's Independence, with U.N. Representative An-



Marissa Inga

drej Logar and Honorary Consul Erik Horvat greeting an overflowing gathering of proud Slovenians and their descendants.

Many members attended the launching of the English-language publication by Archipelago Books of Lojze Kovačič's, *Prišleki*, (titled "Newcomers" in English), at the Community Bookstore in Brooklyn, with the translator, Michael Biggins, and Gabriel Sanders in attendance. (For those of us not proficient enough to read Slovenian books in their original language, Michael Biggins is a familiar name, having translated works by authors such as Vlad-

imir Bartol, Boris Pahor, Drago Jančar, and Tomaž Šalamun. He was recognized for this work, winning the Lavrinova Diploma Award from the Slovenian Literary Translators' Association in a ceremony in Ljubljana in 2015.)

Branch members travelled to Pennsylvania for the "Steeple and Steel" mini-bus tour of the Beth-

lehem Steel plant site and churches. This area still has an estimated 8,000 people of Slovenian heritage and an active Lutheran Windish Church. There are tours during the months of July through October, presented by the South Bethlehem Historical Society and Steelworkers' Archives, Inc.

Once again we were able to hear the "Jan Kus Quartet" in a summer evening of jazz music at the Central Library in Jamaica, Queens. We last heard our favorite Slovenian saxophonist in February, when he enlivened our Prešeren Day celebrations.

We hope you will join us for the 100th Anniversary celebrations at the Church of Saint Cyril in lower Manhattan on October 16, 2016. If you will be in town, let us know at vajkusa@gmail.com!

ELIZABETH GROSS

BRANCH 99 - Lemont, Illinois

Contact Information: Jana Hlade jmhlade@hotmail.com

Summer has ended and school is back in session - now we're looking forward to the fall colors and cooler temperatures. My favorite time of the year!

In June, SUA, along with the Slovenian Catholic Center (SCC) and several other organizations, celebrated anniversaries along with the 25th anniversary of the Republic of Slovenia's Independence. SUA celebrated 90 years and the SCC celebrated 20 years. Mr. Gorazd Žmavc, Minister for Slovenians Abroad for the Republic of Slovenia, and Dr. Zvone Žigon, Secretary, visited the SUA Heritage Museum, KSKJ Joliet office, and St. Joseph Church of

Joliet. Later, they attended a reception at the SCC and recognized all the organizations for their achievements.

Thank you to all who attended the *Štruklji* Culinary Class in August. And thank you, Bill Zerial, for teaching everyone how to make this delicious dish!

On October 1, at 2:00 p.m., please join us in the small hall of the SCC for a Safeguarding Your Home workshop. Retired Chicago police officers and Branch 99 member, Gloria Ekerman, and John Manley, will teach this class. They will talk about the best ways to protect your home from break-in and theft. Members and guests are welcome. The event is free, but a RSVP is required. Contact Jana Hlade at jmhlade@hotmail.com or 815.439.1905.

Wishing you a fun Labor Day holiday and a Happy Halloween!

JANA HLADE

BRANCH 100 - Southern California

Contact Information: Jean Koci
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Our members truly enjoyed the July/August issue of *Zarja* and we thank the editors and writers for another interesting magazine. The year 2016 is a year of special anniversary celebrations. It is 90 years for the Slovenian Union of America... formerly *Slovenske Zveze v Ameriki*. That was a special year for my parents as well, who married in 1926. Of course, we were all interested in the 25th anniversary of the Independence of the Republic of Slovenia on June 25, 2016. When my Slovenian cousins arrived on June 26, we had a lot to talk about, especially the changes in their native land over the past 25 years, as well as the changes that we have seen since our first visit in 1981... 35 years ago. It was fun having three small boys in the house, especially with my limited Slovenian. But, I understand that now they start learning English in the second grade, and also must study another language in the next few years. By high school they are fairly fluent in three languages.

It was nice to see the announcements of this year's SWUSF awards in the July/August issue of *Zarja*. Congratulations to all of these worthy students! I also congratulate Mary Turvey and her committee for their diligence in maintaining this Foundation that helps so many students with scholarships that are distributed promptly and directly to



Dr. Zvone Žigon, Sonja DePratt, Bill Zerial, and Minister Gorazd Žmavc.

them for their many needs. Through the years, quite a number of our Branch 100 young adults have been awarded scholarships and it means so much to them to know that belonging to the SUA has helped them with their education and also keeps them interested in their heritage.

It was nice to see the reports by Bernadette Fitzsimmons and Elizabeth Gross, who wrote about the Slovenian Open House at the Embassy in Washington D.C. The announcement of the 100th Anniversary of the Church of St. Cyril was also interesting. I hope

that our grandson, Garret, will be able to attend Mass at this historical church, as he is currently working in New York and living in Brooklyn. He wrote recently that after searching, he has found it.

As I write this report, I am aware of several members with health issues, so please keep Paul Jensen and Frances Ambrozich in your prayers.

Greetings to our friends across the country and we hope that you have had a beautiful summer.

JEAN KOCI

BRANCH 103 - Washington, D.C.

Contact information: Rich Terselic rat1@verizon.net

The activities of the Branch revolve about the first Sunday monthly Slovenian Mass held at the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. Branch 103 members, members of the local KSKJ chapter, and other area Slovenes congregate there. Branch members also join KSKJ chapter members in holding the annual St. Nicholas program at another location in the area. In the past, when the bulk of Branch members were younger and willing to drive distances, special events were held at various locations. Increased rental charges and demanding conditions related to use, have discouraged doing so.

The Branch chaplain, Fr. Ray Wadas, who celebrates the monthly Mass, reached age 75 and submitted his request for retirement from the Washington Archdiocese. His request was accepted and in accord with archdiocese policy, he will not be able to live in the parish where he last served as pastor. He will take up residence at a local seminary. Fortunately, he expects to continue saying the monthly Mass for the Slovenian community. Branch 103 offers Fr. Ray best wishes for a well-earned retirement!

Fr. Ray has shared the celebrant role with visiting priests. At the June 2016 Mass, he shared it with three priests from the Kranj area of Slovenia. They accompanied a group of about 60 of their parishioners who toured America.

The Branch is always happy to receive news of new members, and the most recent addition was Kaitlyn Zalar. Welcome Kaitlyn!

A founding member of Branch 103, Angela Daly, was recently hospitalized. After a stay at a rehab center, she has recovered and is dividing her time between her home and that of her daughter, Cathy Ireland. We look forward to again seeing Angela at the monthly Mass.

The Branch wishes to remember William (Bill) Svetlich, who died during 2015. While he was not a Branch member, he was a dependable supporter of its activities. He was a military veteran, and in retirement, served as a consultant to both U.S. and foreign governments. He was provided full honors and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

At the recent Branch elections, Mary Lou Terselic was reelected president and Anna Sonc Jevtic was elected to fill the vacancy as vice president. Rich Terselic continues as Branch secretary and treasurer, as well as Branch 103's Member Representative.

Mrs. Jevtic and other members of Branch 103 attended the June 23 celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Republic of Slovenia's Independence, held at the Slovenian Embassy.

Our Branch was honored to have two members receive scholarship awards from the SWU Scholarship Foundation. Susan Terselic Eckert received a Continuing Education Award of \$500 to assist her work on a master's degree in education. She has been teaching music and computers at the Lancaster Mennonite School in Hummelstown, PA.,



Susan Terselic Eckert was awarded a continuing education award from the SWU Scholarship Foundation to assist her studies for a masters degree in education from Regent College.

however the State of Pennsylvania requires a degree in education to issue a teaching certification. Susan's degree from Penn State University would not qualify her for the certification. Susan was a recipient of an SWU Scholarship Foundation award as a

high school student in the 1980s. She, her husband, and their family were Christian missionaries in Africa for about 20 years and recently completed that work and settled in Pennsylvania. Mary Lou and Rich Terselic attended the 2015 SUA National Convention, along with daughter, Susan, as their guest.

The second Branch scholarship recipient is Abigail Terselic. She received the Francis Colnar Barman Memorial Scholarship of \$2,000 to assist her studies for a nursing degree from the University of Oklahoma. During her freshman year there, she had a 4.0 grade point average. She is the daughter of Robert and Carrie Terselic of Tijeras, NM.

To fund Branch operations, a Free Will Offerings program is conducted each year, to which Branch members are invited to contribute. Donations are tax deductible, and in accord with SUA policy, a donation receipt is provided to each donor. Thanks to contributing members.

Branch 103 congratulates and thanks SUA President, Mary Lou Voelk, for her tireless and innovative contributions during her first year of service in this position.

RICHARD TERSELIC

BRANCH 108 - Olney, Maryland

Contact Information: Bernadette Fitzsimmons

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Branch 108 members met to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Republic of Slovenia's Independence at the Embassy of Slovenia's reception held in June. A festive evening was had by all for this monumental occasion.

On June 14, Bernadette K. Fitzsimmons, president of SUA Branch 108, and Jessica Bowser, prospective SUA member, attended White

House Heritage Day 2016. The event was comprised of leaders and friends of various ethnic groups. The event took place in the ornate Eisenhower Executive Office Building next door to the White House. Representation of numerous ethnicities was evident by the many different languages spoken, and was truly a cultural experience for all present at the meeting who were immigrants themselves, or children and grandchildren of immigrants to the United States. The main areas of discussion were on the topics of foreign policy, immi-



The Eisenhower Executive Office Building is considered to be a part of the White House where the Heritage Day took place.

gration policy, and domestic policy, as related to past and current immigration. Mr. David Simas, Assistant to the President and Director of the Office of Political Strategy Outreach, provided an overview of



Jessica Bowser and Bernadette K. Fitzsimmons, President of SUA Branch 108.

the current administration on the challenges and accomplishments of immigration. We were encouraged to understand that the Federal and State Governments and local communities provide resources to help immigrants during their transition from other countries, to obtain work permits, legal resettlement, education, financial assistance, and more. We also were encouraged to provide comments on the many difficulties that immigrants have faced in the past, and still today. The overriding message was for all of us to always remember who we are, and what we represent, and the many accomplishments of the sum of all immigrants on the success of the United States. Let us all stand up proudly, to tell our ancestors' immigrant stories, and what it means to be an American.

The following Slovenian proverb seems to sum it all up, "*Slava prednikov je svetloba potomcem.*" In English this means, "The glory of our ancestors is the light for our children." Good luck to our many SUA students beginning a new school year.

BERNADETTE FITZSIMMONS

BRANCH 109 - Twin Cities (TC) of Minnesota

Contact Information: Elaine Barthelmy
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Our May membership meeting focused on genealogy, with an informative presentation by Chuck Podominick,



Chuck Podominick talking about Genealogy at the May meeting.

who, with his wife, Jean, has visited Slovenia for eight of the last nine years. Visiting for a month at a time to focus on genealogy, Chuck has become the top Minnesota expert on Slo-

venian genealogy. Last year, he even received the "Genealogy Ambassador Award" from the Slovenian Genealogy Society in Ljubljana. Chuck provided useful information for researching our Slovenian ancestors, such as how to organize a search, how to get help, where to find information, and how to overcome issues that might complicate a search. Our members had many questions for Chuck, and eagerly shared stories from their own research.

On June 25, Honorary Consul of the Republic of Slovenia, Miro Medved, and his wife, Karen, welcomed Branch 109 members along with many other Slovenians - 160 in all - to their home for a wonderful celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the Republic of Slovenia's Independence. The Slovenian Consulate event began with the Star Spangled Banner and the Slovenian National Anthem, sung by the "Dream Quartet," a group assembled especially for this event. Miro also had taught them to sing, *N'mau Čez Izaro*, and a special arrangement of *Je Angel Gospodov*, that had been written for Miro and dedicated to him by the Slovenian composer, Damijan Močnik.



John Medved, Consul General Andrej Gregor Rode, and Miro Medved at the 25th anniversary celebration.

During the program, honored guest, Consul General Andrej Gregor Rode, read a special proclamation, and the outreach director of Minnesota's Slovenian U.S. Senator, Amy Klobuchar, read a letter the Senator had written for the occasion. Then the Dream Quartet led the singing of *Kolk'r kaplic tolko let*, more times than I could count, as we toasted many deserving individuals. A bocce ball tournament, music by a three-piece polka band, and a



delicious Slovenian dinner rounded out the day's activities. *Najlepša hvala* to Miro and Karen and everyone else who helped make this event so enjoyable.

Finally, our Branch welcomes and congratulates new member, Christopher Schneider, who received one of our scholarships this spring and attends Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota.

ELAINE BARTHELEMY

Zarja - The Dawn

My Slovenian Inspiration, My Mother, My Best Friend

Many years ago my mother made a lifelong connection to her extended family in Mozirje, Slovenia. Little did I know what that would mean to me so many years later. Who could have dreamed this up from one little letter in the mail? Many of you by now may have read the article about my mother, Mary Louise (Vertačnik) Fon, in the last issue of the *Zarja*. I was asked by editor Bonnie Prokup to add a little more to this story. So with great pride I wanted to do this for my mother, also known as Teta America, to all the families there in Slovenia!

Mom is the reason for many things that I have accomplished in my life, but there is no greater feeling I have than when she connected me with Slovenia. There are so many words and emotions over the years that have truly touched my heart and my family! It all began for me and my wife, Phyllis, in June of 1976, 40 years ago! It was when mom asked us to join her on a trip to Mozirje, Slovenia, to meet the relatives and see just what Slovenia was all about - its people and its beautiful places to visit. Never would I have imagined the impact it would have on the two of us from that day on! I must say at first it just seemed like another trip, but soon we both felt that something special was planted in us that would stay with us forever, just like it did to mom on her first trip in 1969 with my sister, Linda.

Mom is the reason that we both became involved in Slovenian activities here in Indianapolis and the surrounding areas. We were also involved with the Indianapolis-Piran Sister City Committee and its official signing here in Indianapolis in 2001. We made many trips up to Lemont, IL, when the Slovenian Catholic Center was first being built and since have made many trips to the picnics and other events there. Each time we met people that we now call friends. During all this time my wife and I have instilled the LOVE of Slovenia in all five of our children, as they helped us with all sorts of Slovenian activities here in Indianapolis. Since that first trip I have been back five times, and Phyllis three times, and on every trip there were more great memories made. Mom made it a point to have all of us and the

grandkids make this trip with her over the years. She went 14 times, always having someone with her. If not me, it was my brother, my sister, or a friend. It was in 2006, when mom was 86, that my sister Linda, brother Larry, and I took mom on the trip as a family. Mom was starting to decline in health and we figured this might be her last chance to return to Slovenia. Our thoughts were right, so during this trip filled with emotions, it was kind of like a goodbye trip as we met with all our families and friends during the two weeks. Mom was so thrilled to have us all with her!

Then it's the year 2014, and Phyllis and I are celebrating our 40th Anniversary, when our children decided to do something special. They bought the two of us round trip tickets to Slovenia. A gift that really got to the both of us. What happened next was something we could never have imagined. They decided that the seven of us and the three sons-in-law would make it a trip of a lifetime! So now there are 10 of us planning this journey to see the things that mom saw on that first trip. During this trip we saw many things and places from Ljubljana, from its churches and castles, to the caves in Postonja, Predjama Castle, Lake Bled, Logarska, Solcava, Piran, and Koper. Then to Nova Gorica Tolmin (Fonni), Pusno, Mozirje, and Recica, all the towns where all my grandparents were born. Just to walk into these places was really special! All the children are already talking about a return trip - what I wanted most out of this trip, another seed planted!

This last trip to Slovenia with all of my family was "oh, so special," but there was a little piece of me that was missing. Mom was back at home in Indiana in the nursing home. This was the first time that I had gone without her. So, in the morning on the day we left on this trip, I went to visit mom and took a picture of the two of us on my phone so that she could be with me and my family.

As I told Bonnie Prokup, mom so loved to read the *Zarja* from front to back, especially the stories about the people and their families. Mom's article was so special to me and I know that she would be so happy to know people now have a chance to read, "Her Story," as she did of so many that were written before hers!

Thank you, *Zarja* editors and writers, for all your hard work in continuing this magazine and sharing the stories of all the people!

Velika hvala, Stephen Fon, Sr.
Branch 5 - Indianapolis, IN



Standing at the front door of Stephen Fon, Sr.'s maternal grandmother's home in Radegunda near Mozirje, Slovenia.

The Slovenian-American Table

A cookbook that presents many of the favorite dishes that Slovenian immigrants brought with them to America, but with a modern flair. This book is more than a cookbook; it is a guide for today's American families to bring Slovenian heritage into their festivities, all with a modern American twist. This book takes you through a calendar year and offers primarily recipes, but also includes crafts, entertaining and decorating tips, a little background information of the holidays, and all with full-color pictures.

Mail your check to:

Slovenian Union of America - Attn: Cookbook

431 North Chicago St., Joliet, IL 60432-1703

**Please include a phone number in case we have a question regarding your order.*

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We hope you can join us; all are welcome!

Congratulations on SUA 90th Anniversary

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It is time for all us "happy people" to celebrate our 90 years of Slovenian-American heritage. Be a part of SUA/SWUA history by purchasing a Congratulatory Advertisement that will appear in *Zarja's* November/December 2016 issue.

The 2015-2019 SUA National Board brings this fund-raiser to you.
All proceeds are designated for our SUA Education/Culture Grant program.

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