

Greetings from Your Czech Honorary Consul..... Marit Lee Kucera

Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota is unique among all Sokol units in the United States. It has two honorary consuls, one representing the Czech Republic and one representing the Slovak Republic. This April issue inaugurates my first column in *Slovo* as the Honorary Czech Consul. My colleague Don Pafko, Honorary Consul of the Slovak Republic in Minnesota, and I plan to write monthly columns.

Last month, the March *Slovo* had a two-page picture essay, expertly assembled by Martina Gurgel, of the Installation Ceremony on December 5, 2015, for the Honorary Consul of the Czech Republic for Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, and South Dakota. The official title is Honorary Consulate of the Czech Republic in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The office is located in the C.S.P.S. Sokol building in Saint Paul. Currently the office is open by appointment. My phone number is 651-238-0447.

This month I want to thank all those who participated in and attended the ceremony and reception. Master of Ceremonies was Dr. Bořek Lizec, Consul General of the Czech Republic in Chicago.

Jaroslav Zajíček, Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of the Czech Republic in Washington, D.C., gave the official presentation of the Consular Commission. He also spoke about the role of honorary consuls and the services performed by the 24 Czech Honorary Consuls of the Czech Republic here in the United States.

Madison Jerde, Miss Czech Slovak Minnesota Princess 2015 – 2016, sang the anthem of the Czech Republic. Her sister Corbin Jerde, Miss Czech Slovak Minnesota Queen 2014 – 2015, sang the anthem of United States of America.

Presenting greetings were Sharon Valasek, Honorary Consul, Czech Republic in Kansas City; Don Pafko, Honorary Consul, Slovak Republic in Minnesota; and Chuck Nickolay, Mayor of New Prague, Minnesota.

The St. Paul South Bohemian Bagpipe Ensemble provided music before the ceremony. Band members were Frank Trnka, dudy (Czech bagpipe); Jason Brozovich, dudy; Sue Martin, E-flat clarinet; Emma Martin, B-flat clarinet; Dawn Bulera, violin; Dave Martin, *vozembouch*, *fanfrnoch*, and *hrábě* (Czech rhythmic folk instruments), and John Topic, vocals and *hrábě*.

I want to thank the generous sponsors of the Installation: Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota, Czech and Slovak Cultural Center of Minnesota, Western Fraternal Life Association Minnesota, WFLA Hopkins Lodge 11, *Česká a slovenská škola Twin Cities*, American Sokol Western District, Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International, *Domáci* Czech Folk Dancers, and Saint Paul Czech and Slovak Folk Dancers.

I extend special thanks to all the ceremony participants, plus Christina Banks, Dan Bednar, Cindy Coulter, Chuck Draheim, Bea Flaming, Martina Gurgel, Ed Hamernik, Mary Kucera, Doreen McKenney, Joy Peterson, Matt Peterson, Signe Peterson, Theodore J. Polashek, Jitka Sebek, and Joan Sedlacek. Special acknowledgement goes to Jerry Patzwald from Milwaukee who provided Staropramen, a premium beer from Prague, and Staropramen coasters, plus souvenir bottle openers for all the guests.



In January, Arnie and Deb Ziskovsky presented Marit Lee Kucera with a decorated egg commemorating her Honorary Consul Installation on December 5. Czech-born artist Daniela Mahoney, egg decorator and cultural educator from Portland, Oregon, created the one-of-a-kind design.

Dawn Bulera and Markéta Resong catered the refreshments, which included Czech favorites with a Minnesota 'accent': *chlebičky* with a Spam®-cheese spread, and meatballs made from turkey with wild rice and a cranberry sauce.

I extend my ongoing gratitude to the Installation Committee, chaired by Mary Cahill with countless hours of planning and work also provided by Judy Aubrecht, Arlene Hamernik, Libuse Imbrone, Pamela Kotval, Renata Ticha, and Phyllis Vosejпка. *Thank you!*