

Message from the Editor:

This issue, my fourth as Sokol Notes editor, is intended to keep us connected during the pandemic that has all but extinguished normal life in California, particularly larger-scale social events, where “larger” means anything beyond the immediate circle of those who share a home. Starting in March 2020, Sokol Los Angeles has ended all activity and at this time, a return to normalcy and resuming our meetings is not in the near future. We hope some improvement may come after the upcoming elections, but as of now, we cannot tell you when we may resume Sokol activities. I will do my best to keep our Sokol LA group connected. I would welcome letters to the editor since for now, it’s the only way we can communicate with each other.

NAZDAR!

Yvonne Masopust, Editor



Message from the President

During this time of unrest as we await the outcome of this pandemic, it is important to reach out and say thank you. Thank you for being there and for being a part of Sokol and what it stands for. I am proud to be a part of this organization. Sokol has had a lasting impact on my life, and I value the friendships I have made as a member. I may not know all of you, but I know that you all had an important part in helping to make Sokol important.

I did not have the opportunity to grow up with Sokol but was fortunate to become aware of its existence through my cousin Anne Plachy. When she invited me to accompany her at a meeting of Sokol Los Angeles in 2000, I had no idea that 20 years later I would be sitting here writing this message. I miss our monthly meetings and social gatherings and look forward to everything opening up once again.

When I joined Sokol Los Angeles we had close to 140 members. Today we are almost half that with 78 members. We have lost several of our long-time members over these past 20 years, but Sokol Los Angeles is still alive as an organization.

I have been struggling over these past few months as to what we can do to bring life back to the organization. Attendance at meetings and functions has gradually reduced to the extent we eliminated our fall social after having to cancel it two years ago. We already cancelled family picnics several years ago. If anyone has an idea of what we can do to encourage participation, please let me know.

There are just some things that make life important, like people we know who are special, so we keep them close! This is also true for family members, old cars, family pets and even cherished gifts. We value them because they are worth it. I value Sokol and want to do what I can to keep it alive and well.

Nazdar!
Lillian Roter, President

IMPACT OF COVID-19

We have been living with this pandemic now for 6 months. Wearing a mask, social distancing, and a multitude of other unwelcome and unpleasant restrictions have become a part of everyday life for every Californian. Many have seen their livelihoods affected and even destroyed.

Sokol Los Angeles activities have completely ceased and at this time there are no plans to resume them, since Los Angeles County remains in the most restrictive, or "purple," tier of California's four-tier virus-tracking roadmap. We are told that LA County could reopen more widely sometime in October, but that would merely mean moving to the next tier, "red", which is far from "normal". In the "red tier", indoor gyms could reopen with 10% capacity and museums, movie theaters, churches and restaurant dining rooms at 25% capacity. Not sure how it will affect Sokol meetings, since we usually meet inside a church in West LA. I could not determine the total capacity of the hall we meet in, but I know I attended an event there that had well over 100 persons attending, so at 25% capacity we might be able to start meeting as long as we have no more than 25 members show up if capacity is 100, (or 25% of the total capacity), which is about the number that we usually have attending. We don't know at this time all the particulars; we will have to deal with the specifics once we decide to resume our meetings. We will keep you posted.

Some other Czech community events have taken place recently.

Sokol San Francisco has sponsored an online presentation by Petr Jansa, Ph.D., Sokol member and Senior Research Scientist II at Gilead Sciences, titled "Coronavirus and Covid-19: Understanding the virus, trends, medications and how to protect yourself" which took place via Zoom on September 9, 2020. Congratulations to Sokol San Francisco for finding a way to offer an informative presentation to their membership during the pandemic.

Southern California Czech community organized the traditional Labor Day Campout at Hurkey Creek in the San Jacinto Mountains over Labor Day Weekend (9/4-9/7/20) and attracted about 160 campers. Again, it is encouraging to see the Czech community organize events even under these difficult conditions.

The Czech Church has been holding masses virtually via Zoom since April and recently has been able to switch to meeting at Velehrad for outdoor worship. Velehrad is located in Orange County, which has already moved into the "red tier" in Gov. Gavin Newsom's four-tier Blueprint for a Safer Economy, and outdoor worship is permitted.

By Yvonne Masopust, Editor of Sokol Notes

DINKEY CREEK SOKOL FAMILY CAMP 2020 CANCELLED

So many of our members and their friends look every year forward to the Sokol Family Camp. In its present format, the Sokol Family Camp has taken place every year since 1986. In prior years, it was operated as a Sokol Children's Camp since 1969. In 2019 we celebrated our 50th anniversary of Dinkey Creek Sokol camps, and many of those who grew up in these camps now attend with their own children. Sokol Los Angeles has officially taken over the sponsorship of the Sokol Family Camp starting with the 2020 camp and had reserved Camp Fresno, Jr. in February 2020 for the week of July 12-19, 2020. Everything seemed to be running smoothly – until the pandemic hit. Due to the general atmosphere of uncertainty and safety concerns the campground's owner, City of Fresno, made the decision to cancel all reservations for the 2020 summer season and that meant that we had no choice, with no place to go to, the camp had to be cancelled.

Camp Fresno, Jr, which is the group camp we always rent for our Sokol camp, and Camp Fresno, Sr, which has individual cabins that are rented out to the public on the other side of the creek, are considered one entity by their owner, the City of Fresno, and are typically under the same management. Due to the heavy bark beetle infestation that has decimated the trees within Camp Fresno, Sr, the U.S. Forest Service threatened to close that camp for what it deemed to be dangerous conditions until the affected trees were removed. The then-manager experienced considerable frustration dealing with the City of Fresno's complex bureaucracy while trying to get funding and authorization to remove the problem trees to comply with the U.S. Forest Service requirements.

It became clear that safety at Camp Fresno was not a priority for the City of Fresno officials. No funds were allocated for repairs and maintenance for years, perhaps even decades, and several community groups who use the camp regularly were forced to take it upon themselves to perform the most necessary repairs to avoid having their campers exposed to dangerous conditions.

By 2019 the situation in the camps became more pressing and it became pretty obvious to everyone that major funding would be needed to perform necessary repairs and keep the camp operational, yet it was uncertain whether or not the City of Fresno would step up and invest into the camp to keep it safe and operating. Last year we were told that some improvements would be made by summer 2020. However, no improvements were made due to the Covid-19 situation. We hoped that after collecting camp rentals - but not properly maintaining the camps - for what appears to be a full 100 years, the City of Fresno would do right by the camp and allocate the funds needed to bring it up to par.

However, now another catastrophe has hit the region: the Creek Fire. The Creek Fire started on the evening of Friday, September 4, 2020 near Big Creek and Huntington Lake. Cause of the fire is unknown at present time. As of September 17 the fire damage is concentrated between Shaver Lake and Huntington Lake and in general on the west side of the mountain, but the fire has already destroyed 470 homes and is only 18% contained. The town of Shaver Lake has been saved as has the marina and the houses nearby, although in some spots the fire came very close. Dinkey Creek and Camp Fresno and its immediate vicinity (defined as 2-1/2 miles radius as the crow flies) are safe and unaffected at the moment and, barring something drastic and unforeseen, are expected to remain so. However, the devastation caused in the area, still ongoing at this time with no end in sight, may clearly influence our camp's future. Due to the huge impact of this wildfire on our Dinkey Creek Sokol Camp, the most popular single activity in our unit for half a century, I have decided to devote a whole article to the California's wildfires phenomenon in this issue.

NOTE: If you would like to read more on the subject of maintenance problems in Camp Fresno, google "Why did city disregard dangers at Camp Fresno – and stick someone else with the bill?", an article by Marek Warszawski published in The Fresno Bee on May 16, 2019 and updated on May 21, 2020.

UPDATE: As of 9/24/20, when this issue is being finalized for publication, the Creek Fire is only 32% contained. The cause is still under investigation, unknown at this time.



Shaver Lake Marina during the Creek Fire

CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES

45 YEARS OF FOREST MISMANAGEMENT

About 20 years ago I asked the local ranger at Dinkey Creek why so many trees were dead and dying – one could visually see the problem because instead of being green, dead and dying trees were brown. This question literally opened up a can of worms, as the ranger, an older and clearly very knowledgeable man, started telling me that the reason the trees are dying is because proper forest management has become illegal. He explained to me what proper forest management was, and I remember what he told me even after all these years.

Proper forest management:

1. Early identification of distressed trees, which are removed early on, when they can still be sold for lumber, which can be used in construction and for other uses
2. Early removal of distressed and excess trees allows healthy trees to receive more moisture, sunlight, and space and promotes the growth of new trees and all healthy trees
3. Removal of diseased, dead, and excess trees reduces wildfires.
4. Controlled burns are part of proper forest management and reduce wildfires
5. Diseased and distressed trees that have not been removed attract insects, such as bark beetles, and forests need to be sprayed with pesticide to kill these.

Environmentalists and politicians, who were clearly not knowledgeable in forest management and its vital role in the health of our forests, have passed various laws, both at the federal and the state level, which have resulted in the catastrophic condition of our publicly owned forests today:

Current laws (both federal and state)

1. Make removal of trees so difficult and costly that it's nearly impossible to accomplish, with the result that there are more trees than the land can support and diseased and dead trees are left in forests to rot and become ideal firewood.
2. Make spraying of pesticide illegal - deadly infestations such as that of the bark beetle cannot be corrected.

The ranger who told me about this about 20 years ago stated that if rangers received unlimited funds and worked 24/7, it would take at least 10 years to reverse the damage caused by these laws and unless these practices cease immediately, the damage will become irreversible. That was 20 years ago, and these laws continue in effect to this day.

As a regular Dinkey Creek camper and a person who has backpacked and camped in the High Sierra extensively since 1971, the sorry state of our forests is a subject I am very passionate about. By sheer coincidence, as I was driving from Ventura to Santa Barbara on Monday, September 14, I listened to the John and Ken radio show. I think it was Providence that wanted me to hear the featured interview with Tom McClintock on this very subject. I have found the interview online, though in audio form only, and put in the effort required to transcribe it in its entirety. I hope you will find it eye-opening and educational.

Definitions:

J&K....John & Ken (J&K) John & Ken Radio Show hosts. The show airs Monday thru Friday, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. Pacific Time on KFI AM 640, a local Southern California talk radio station.

TM.....Congressman Tom McClintock (R-CA). Tom McClintock represents California's 4th congressional district, which, among a long list of locations, includes the Sierras from Truckee to the Sequoia National Forest and includes Yosemite, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, and Lake Tahoe.

NEPA..... National Environmental Policy Act, a United States environmental law that promotes the enhancement of the environment and established the President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). The law was enacted on January 1, 1970.

Per Wikipedia (excerpts): NEPA grew out of the increased public appreciation and concern for the environment that developed during the 1960s, amid increased industrialization, urban and suburban growth, and pollution across the United States.

Congress answered these calls by enacting NEPA, which has served as "our basic national charter for protection of the environment" since 1970. NEPA incorporated provisions which require agencies to follow specific procedures in order to accomplish any federal project.

Since its passage, NEPA has been applied to any major project, whether on a federal, state, or local level, that involves federal funding. Court decisions have expanded the requirement for NEPA-related environmental studies....even if no federal funds are directly allocated to finance the particular action.

To learn more detail about NEPA google "NEPA" and read the Wikipedia article on this subject.

ESA Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), which is the primary law in the United States for protecting imperiled species.

WIIN ACT..... Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act, enacted in December 2016, provides for improvements to the rivers and harbors and for the conservation and development of water and related resources.

J&K We'll bring on Congressman Tom McClintock, now representing California's 4th Congressional District, very vast, up there in the more northern part of the State. Tom of course was a state representative here in Southern California for many years before he made the move to Congress and we're bringing him on to talk about forest management issues because he knows a lot about it and the history of it in this debate over climate change vs that.

J&K Welcome to the John and Ken show

TM Thanks, guys

J&K There's so much propaganda about warming temperatures. Talk about the forest mismanagement and why that has so much to do with the extent of these fires.

TM Well, it's not complicated, and anybody who thinks if we all ride our bikes to work this problem is going away is simply delusional.

Look, excess timber comes out of the forest in one of two ways: it's either carried out or it burns out. We used to carry it out, it was called logging. We had healthy forests and we had a thriving economy.

And then in the 1970s we began imposing environmental laws that have made it all but impossible to carry out that timber and what we've seen over those decades – increasingly severe forest fires, we've had an 80% decline in timber harvested out of our federal forests since 1980 and we've had a (related) increase in acreage destroyed by forest fire.

And the mismanagement has gotten to the point where you can now tell the boundary between private lands that are not affected by these laws and the public lands that are. And you can tell them solely by looking at the condition of the forest. You can actually tell the boundary line by the condition of the forest on each side.

How clever of the climate only to decimate the public lands.

J&K Talk about what happens when you simply have too many trees growing in a forest, too close together. What – what's the effects?

TM Well, an untended forest is just like an untended garden. It's gonna grow and grow until it chokes itself to death. And that's what's happening in the Sierra Nevada. Instead of harvesting the excess timber, we've allowed it to accumulate to the point where we now have four times the timber density that the land can support.

Like any environment where you have overcrowding, that causes stress, and that stress then makes the trees vulnerable to disease, to pestilence like bark beetles, to drought and ultimately it's consumed by catastrophic wildfire.

That's how nature manages a forest. It's been doing so for many, many millennia.

In the 20th century we decided, you know, we don't want to wait 200 or 300 years for a forest to go through that cycle. We want to preserve these forests so that every generation can afford them and that's why we started the Forest Service and it began active scientific management. It matched the tree density to the ability of the land to support it and we had healthy forests all that time.

By the way, we used to make money doing that. Foresters every year would go into the forest, they would mark off the surplus timber; that timber would be put out to bid, logging companies would then pay us to take that excess timber out. 25% of that went into the local communities in the mountains, the other 75% went into the Forest Service so that we could invest back into our national forest system.

These environmental laws have now turned things around to the point where we cannot make any money doing it, the cost of the report... four years is typical for a NEPA report to do a forest thinning project. The report itself is 800 pages or more, so not a lot of that gets done. And when we do it, it ends up costing us money because what we can get for the trees does not cover the cost of the environmental studies.

J&K So this is really not about saving the trees, even the dead trees – in the LA Times there is a story today that there are a 150 million dead trees in the Sierra Nevada. Common sense says you got to remove that before it burns!

TM Not only that, but a fire-killed tree has a lot of value. You can actually cut those things down, mill them, (unintelligible), we used to do that! We used to auction when a forest came through a fire that killed trees, we could auction off those trees for salvage and we would get money for that.

Well now the expedited environmental impact studies for a salvage operation require 2 years. Well, here is the problem: over those 2 years the trees lose all of their value. So by the time you finish that evaluation process, the timber is not worth anything. You put it out to bid, and nobody wants to bid on it. So it stays there in the federal forest. It doesn't regrow. Brush gets first claim on forest-fire-damaged land. So after a couple of years, what you got left is about 4-6 feet of dried brush and then these dead, dry tree stumps, or tree trunks I should say, across the landscape. They start falling on top of the brush and you got a perfect fire stack for second generation fire and we're seeing some of that here in this region.

J&K So it seems like a lot of people in federal government, even sounds like Gavin Newsome, realize the last 40 years have been bad policy. Is that what you're hearing? Are people coming around to saying "We used to do this right, we're going to go back"?

TM: We're seeing more and more of it. But here's the problem though. Until we reform those environmental laws like NEPA and the ESA, we cannot restore the forests to their former vitality because it's simply cost prohibitive and endlessly time consuming.

Now here's what we did do in the Tahoe Basin. We got a measure through back in 2016 which gives a categorical exclusion from NEPA for forest thinning operations up to a certain amount, you can do as many of them as you want. What that has done, has taken the environmental report from 800 pages down to a dozen pages, it's taken the environmental review process from 4 years down to just a few months. The Forest Service is now using it for the biggest forest thinning project ever attempted in the Tahoe Basin. They need it desperately – it's vastly overgrown. 600,000 acres, with 20,000 acres of mechanical thinning that is directly drawn from this new legal authority.

Here is the problem. That was my bill. In order to get it through the Senate and get it in the WIIN Act, we had to agree to limit it to the Tahoe Basin. So it's working in the Tahoe Basin.

We need to extend those same policies across the entire Forest Service system. And I have a bill to do so, and yet we can't get a hearing in the Natural Resources Committee under Nancy Pelosi.

J&K You know what is crazy? It's what you said in the very beginning. If we don't thin the forests ourselves, nature will with a massive fire, which is what is going on now.

TM Exactly. As you can see, nature is a lousy gardener.

J&K Yeah. You're right, there are only two ways to take care of this. Either we carry the trees out or they get burned out.

TM And to call this a modern problem is ludicrous. Before Western civilization we lost even more wildlands to fire every year: 4-12 million acres a year in California according to the paleontologists who study this thing. We got that down to 1/4 million acres with the Forest Service up to the 1980s – actually the entire last half of the 20th century. Now we're back up to 3 million.

J&K That's what angers me about all the propaganda. They're talking about "We got the worst fire season". "The climate change is creating such a monstrous situation!" you are talking about 1/4 million of acres burning compared to 4-12 million acres back before human being found California.

TM Yeah, but now we're back to 3 million acres this year alone – why? Because we abandoned active forest management for the environmental left and for 45 years these laws are in place, all of which were imposed with the promise that they would improve our forest environment. I think we're entitled to ask "Well fine – how is the forest environment doing?" The answer is absolutely damning. And to contribute this to global warming is simply to ignore all of the history of forest management for generations.

J&K Alright Tom, we appreciate it. Thanks for coming on.

TM My pleasure. Thanks for having me.

While specifically not mentioned in any of the above, consider that while the logging of the federal forests in the U.S. has decreased by 80% over the last 45 years, our need for timber has not. So where do we get our wood from now? The damage done by NEPA extends far beyond the U.S., at least in my opinion. The shortage of timber in the U.S. has created a demand for timber elsewhere. In recent years much has been written and said about the rapid deforestation of the Amazon rainforest, which is so extensive that its disappearance DOES affect our climate. While the various reports I found online blame lack of strict environmental laws, it seems pretty obvious – at least to me – that a timber shortage in the U.S. would increase the value of timber elsewhere. So it's possible that the NEPA regulations may result in an environmental catastrophe not only within the U.S. where this is already felt, but possibly even in Brazil, where the desire for a substantial profit will continue to drive the rapid deforestation of the Amazon rainforest, and possibly in other poor countries that will kill their forests in order to sell their timber. It is beyond the scope of this article to delve into this connection, but it's certainly food for thought.

NOTE: If you would like to hear the entire interview, go to YouTube and search for **Forest Mismanagement (Tom McClintock)**

You may also want to hear Tom McClintock's very effective speech he delivered in Congress on October 5, 2017. Go to YouTube and search for **We Are Running Out of Forests to Save**

LABOR DAY CAMPOUT AT HURKEY CREEK

Friday, September 4 – Monday, September 7, 2020

A Southern California Czech community tradition for almost 60 years, our annual Labor Day Weekend camps have been sponsored for about 25 years by the Pacific District of American Sokol (approx.1968-1993), thereafter privately by Vladimir Litochleb, Yvonne & Ludek Masopust, Suzy Kay Litochleb, and now the task of continuing the tradition rests with Martina Nemecek, who is both an enthusiastic and extremely competent organizer. Martina took over the organizing about three years ago, and one of the first changes she made was to move the camp more south, to Hurkey Creek in the San Jacinto Mountains. This accommodates the many members of Czech and Slovak communities who live in Orange County and San Diego, for whom Hurkey Creek is approximately a two hour drive and who typically did not attend our previous camps in the Sierra due to the long commute, about eight hours from San Diego. Since Hurkey Creek has been chosen, attendance has increased dramatically. This was the third year that the Czech community's Labor Day Weekend Campout attracted around 160 campers, most of them families with children. During the day there were

organized games such as a treasure hunt, three legged race, and other fun activities. For adults there was hiking and socializing, and in the evening there were campfires with singalongs.



Group photo of Hurkey Creek campers

👍😊👍 *JUST FOR FUN* 👍😊👍

In the last issue I mentioned YouTuber Jen, posting as Dream Prague, and encouraged our members to look at some of her videos. Jen continues to produce new YouTube videos regularly, about one per week. Jen and her husband are Americans who came to Prague to teach English. Jen grew up in the West Los Angeles area and worked in law firms prior to making the move to the Czech Republic. She has been living in Prague for the past eight years and reports in her videos what life in the Czech Republic is like, often very humorously. Some videos are in English, some are in Czech, which she is learning. Her Czech videos have English subtitles.

Go to YouTube and type “Dream Prague” in the search box to have a list of her videos pop up. Her view of the Czech way of life is lighthearted, entertaining, insightful and educational. I enjoy them.
YouTube → Dream Prague

The most recent video I watched was comparing the standard of living in US vs. Czech Republic. Just an example of what you can expect. You can find this video by going to YouTube and entering:
Which country has a better quality of life? (The Czech Republic or the US?)

SAINT WENCESLAUS



On September 28th the Czech nation commemorates the tragic death of its patron saint, St. Wenceslaus (Sv. Václav), who was assassinated in 935 by his younger brother Boleslav I. The following brief summary of early Czech history, ending with Wenceslaus's death, is intended to commemorate this event.

BOHEMIA'S EARLY HISTORY UP TO THE TIME OF ST. WENCESLAUS' ASSASSINATION ON SEPTEMBER 28, 935

Written by Vladimír Litochleb (1924 - 2001)

Edited by Yvonne Masopust

Following the defeat of the Huns in 451, several Slavic tribes moved to Central and Southeast Europe from their original dwellings in Asia. The Huns, under the leadership of Atilla the Hun (God's Whip or Scourge of God), have been devastating Europe for decades, spreading terror, raping, destroying and burning the settlements of the Markomanni, the Celts, and the Quads who dwelled in Europe at the time. The Huns were a nomadic people of Turko-Tartar origin and they came into Europe from their home on the Asian steppes. They came to Europe to loot and destroy. They fought on fast horses, so their attacks were swift and unexpected. They were eventually defeated in 451 A.D. and retreated back to their steppes and eventually disappeared as a people altogether.

The Czechs moved into the lands they occupy today to fill the void left by the retreating Huns. Legend has it that their first leader was Přemysl, who married the youngest of Duke Krok's three daughters around 650 A.D. Her name was Libuše, her sisters were named Kazi and Teta. Přemysl and Libuše founded the Přemyslid dynasty, the oldest Czech ruling dynasty, which continued, according to legend, with Nezamysl, Mnata, Vojen, Vnislav, Křesomysl, Neklan and Hostivít, but nothing is known about these rulers or their reigns. We only know of them through the oral tradition passed from one generation to the next for centuries. Historically, their existence is undocumented and has been designated as "legend" rather than as "history" and what we know about them is speculation at best.

The first historically documented Přemyslid was Bořivoj (852-888/9). The Přemyslid dynasty continued to rule Bohemia for 400 years, making it the longest ruling dynasty in all of Europe. The last Přemyslid ruler was Wenceslaus III, who was murdered in his bed in Olomouc in 1306 when he was only 16 years old. He died at the hand of an unknown assassin during his military expedition to subdue Poland. It was never discovered who was behind the assassination. With the death of Wenceslaus III the Přemyslid dynasty came to an end.

The period from the defeat of the Huns to the reign of Bořivoj is covered with a veil of darkness and mystery. For an historian it is a period of speculation and uncertainty. Bořivoj was married to Ludmila and history tells us that they were both baptized sometime between 880 and 884 by Methodius, one of two Greek apostles (Cyril and Methodius), who were spreading Christianity throughout Europe (Cyril had died in 869). Bořivoj's marriage with Ludmila produced two sons named Spytihněv and Vratislav. Spytihněv ascended the throne in 894 after Bořivoj's death, and his reign continued for the next 22 years, but he died childless, leaving no heir, so his younger brother Vratislav became ruler in 915. Vratislav I ruled only for five years, succumbing to wounds received in battle. Vratislav was married to Drahomíra, who came from Brandenburg (northeast Germany), and who bore him three sons and four daughters. The oldest son was born in 907 and was named Wenceslaus (Václav). He was followed by Boleslav and Spytihněv. We know nothing about Spytihněv but most likely he died at a very tender age. Of the four daughters, only Přibyslava is mentioned. After the death of Vratislav I in 921 the elders of his court declared Vratislav's widow Drahomíra regent until young Wenceslaus reached maturity. The elders also decided that the custody and upbringing of the young Wenceslaus was to be delegated to his grandmother Ludmila. Drahomíra resented greatly this custody arrangement, which sowed the seed of tragedy in time to come. Drahomíra was a very proud, domineering, and cruel woman. She started to spin the thread of vengeance. She felt insulted to be denied the custody of her own son and felt that she was being subjugated to her mother-in-law Ludmila. Ludmila, on the other hand, was a kind, peace-loving and good-hearted woman, but Drahomíra held a grudge against her. She began to hatch a conspiracy to murder Ludmila. Ludmila felt the hate and she knew she was being ostracized, so she gave up her custody of young Wenceslaus and retired to her castle in Tetín to spend her old age in peace and tranquility. But Drahomíra's hatred followed her even there. Drahomíra hired two Viking noblemen named Tunna and Gommon who forced their entry into the castle with a detachment of armed guards and strangled Ludmila with her own veil. Ludmila was murdered on September 15, 921. Drahomíra got her revenge and also Ludmila's sizeable estate.

Young Wenceslaus ascended to the throne in 922. At the time he was about 15 years old. He ordered Ludmila's body exhumed and brought to Prague to be buried in the convent of St. George. He expelled Drahomíra from the kingdom, but a few years later allowed her to come back to join his court.

In 928 the German king Henry I, nicknamed "The Fowler" because of his hobby of raising birds, decided to enlarge his kingdom and invaded Bohemia with a large army, advancing all the way to Prague. Young Wenceslaus decided against armed conflict and offered an "olive branch" of submission and agreed to pay a tax of 120 oxen and 500 talents of silver (12,500 kg = 27,500 lbs.). Wenceslaus' submission to the German king was a thorn in the side of his younger brother Boleslav. Boleslav governed the region that included Stará Boleslav and Mladá Boleslav northeast of Prague. He was an ambitious and ruthless monarch, always ready to take up the sword.

Young Wenceslaus was the opposite of his brother and did not fit the mold of the reigning sovereigns of his time. Most of the monarchs who were Wenceslaus' contemporaries were taught how to fight battles, to handle a sword with skill and to excel in horsemanship, general warfare, and conquest. They were not taught to read or write and were illiterate. Compared to them the young king Wenceslaus was a great exception, living in isolation and spending hours in prayers. He did not take part in the festivities, excursions and looting expeditions that were popular pastimes of other monarchs. He stood out as a gentle, good natured, peace-loving and educated monarch in an era of ruthlessness, slavery and interfamily squabbles, which more often than not ended in revenge and murder.

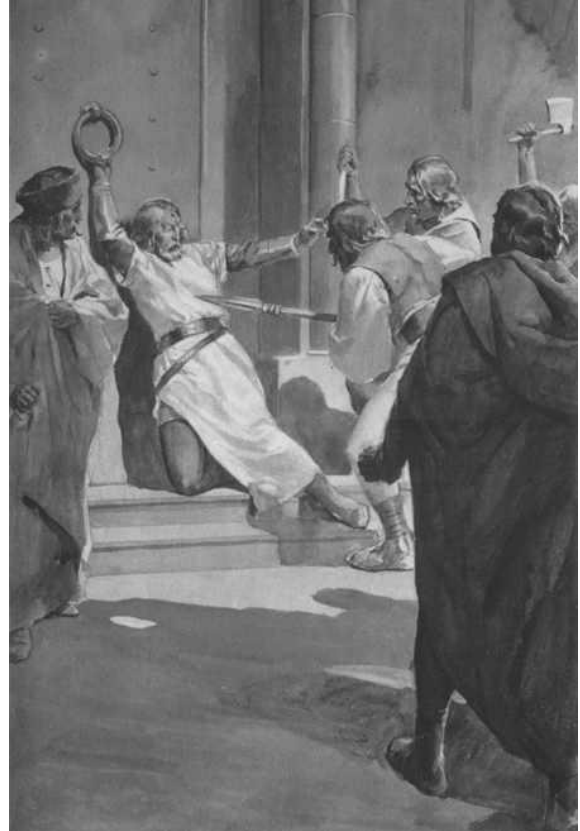
The elders of his court thought that the young king spent too much time in prayers and reading Christian liturgy. One of the court elders remarked: "The king is leading the life of a monk rather than that of a king. His mind is impaired by some mental illness, thinking more about the life after death rather than the life here on this earth."

The situation at Wenceslaus' court led his mother Drahomíra and his younger brother Boleslav to hatch a murderous plot, culminating in the young king's assassination. Wenceslaus was married at that time and had a son

named Zbraslav, but his most fervent desire was to travel to Rome and become a monk. He vowed to live with his wife in a brother-sister relationship.

Wenceslaus had a habit to visit once a year all the towns where he founded a chapel or a church. It so happened that on September 27, 935 he visited the church of Cosmas and Damian, located in his brother's domain. He intended to return to Prague the same day, but his brother Boleslav persuaded him to stay another day for the celebrations held for the baptism of Boleslav's newborn son. Even though Wenceslaus was warned about the assassination plot, he decided to stay, refusing to believe such plot existed. That night one of the earls at Boleslav's court by the name of Hněvsa worked out all the details of the plan with the other conspirators. It was decided to carry out the plan the next morning, on September 28, 935, as it was known that the young monarch will be attending the early mass.

On that infamous day Wenceslaus met his brother at the gate of the church and thanked him for the festivities, but Boleslav unshielded his sword and hit his brother over the head with it. But Wenceslaus, being the stronger man, took the sword away from him and said: "God forgive you, my brother". Boleslav immediately called for help and the three conspirators Hněvsa, Česta, and Tira came to Boleslav's aid. The wounded king started to run into the church, but Hněvsa ran him through with his sword. Afterwards, all members of Wenceslaus' company were massacred and a wild ride to Prague put Boleslav on the throne. Later historians have bestowed upon Boleslav the suffix "The Cruel" because of his fratricide.



Added by Yvonne Masopust:

The assassination of St. Wenceslaus was to have taken place at the doors to the church of Saints Cosmas and Damian in Stará Boleslav, which was a wooden structure and part of Boleslav's castle. Remnants of the original wooden church can be located in the crypt of the Basilica of St. Wenceslaus which was built on the site of the original church. It was consecrated in 1046. Stará Boleslav is located 20 miles northeast of Prague.

Legend places the date of Wenceslaus's assassination on Monday, September 28. The year is not specified, but the years 929 and 935 come into consideration, since in those years September 28 fell on a Monday (as it does in 2020). It is not possible to definitively resolve the issue of the date of death. The year 935 is mentioned much more often and is deemed more probable by a number of historians, based on relatively complex analyses and comparisons of available sources.

Wenceslas or Václav the Good was the duke (kníže) of Bohemia from 921 until his assassination in 935. His younger brother, Boleslav the Cruel, was complicit in the murder and succeeded his brother on the throne.

Wenceslaus' martyrdom and the popularity of several biographies gave rise to a reputation for heroic virtue that resulted in his elevation to sainthood. He was posthumously declared to be a king and came to be seen as the patron saint of the Czech state. He is the subject of the well-known "Good King Wenceslas", a carol for Saint Stephen's Day.

The hymn "Svatý Václave" (Saint Wenceslaus) or "Saint Wenceslaus Chorale" is one of the oldest known Czech songs. Tracing back to the 12th century, it is still among the most popular religious songs. In 1918, at the founding of the modern Czechoslovak state, the song was discussed as a possible choice for the national anthem. During the Nazi occupation, it was often played along with the Czech anthem.

Wenceslaus' feast day is celebrated on September 28. On this day celebrations and a pilgrimage are held in the city of Stará Boleslav. Since 2000, the September 28 feast day is a public holiday in the Czech Republic, celebrated as Czech Statehood Day.

An enduring legend claims an army of knights sleeps under Blaník, a mountain southeast of Prague. They will awake and, under the command of Wenceslaus, come to aid of the Czech people when their need is the greatest. There is a similar legend in Prague which says that when the Motherland is in danger or in its darkest times and close to ruin, the equestrian statue of King Wenceslaus in Wenceslaus Square will come to life, raise the army sleeping in Blaník, and upon crossing the Charles Bridge his horse will stumble and trip over a stone, revealing the legendary sword of Bruncvík. With this sword, King Wenceslaus will slay all the enemies of the Czechs, bringing peace and prosperity to the land.

Note: Both spellings - Wenceslaus and Wenceslas - are correct. In Czech it is Václav.
At present Václav is the 11th most popular Czech male given name, with 124,000 men and boys being named Václav, including two recent presidents, Václav Havel and Václav Klaus.

This article originally appeared in April 2000 issue of Sokol Notes.

If you are curious what the St. Wenceslaus Chorale, the oldest known Czech song, sounds like, you can listen to it on YouTube. Open YouTube and put into the search box "Old Czech national anthem - Saint Wenceslas Chorale" and play the first video that pops up. The song was sung during the funeral of Czech President Václav Havel in 2012 and the YouTube video was probably taped from the live television broadcast of that event.

St. Wenceslaus Chorale

Czech lyrics

Svatý Václave, vévodo české země, kníže náš,
pros za nás Boha, svatého Ducha, Kriste, eleison.
Ty jsi dědic české země,
rozpomeň se na své plémě.
Nedej zahynouti nám i budoucím,
svatý Václave, Kriste, eleison.
Pomoci my tvé žádáme, smiluj se nad námi,
utěš smutné, zažeh vše zlé,
svatý Václave, Kriste, eleison.

English translation

Saint Wenceslas, duke of the Czech land, our prince,
Pray for us to God and the Holy Spirit, Christ, eleison.
You are the heir of the Czech land,
remember your tribe.
Do not allow us to perish, nor the future ones,
Saint Wenceslas, Christ, eleison.
We ask for your help, have mercy on us,
comfort the sad, banish all evil,
Saint Wenceslas, Christ, eleison.

In Memoriam



When tomorrow starts without me,
Don't think we're far apart,
For every time you think of me,
I'm right here in your heart.



In Loving Memory of
Joseph Jan Riedl
1944 - 2020

It is with our deepest sorrow that we inform you of
the death of our beloved Husband, Father, Father-in-Law,
Grandfather and Brother,

Joseph Jan Riedl
on April 22, 2020

Survived by his loving wife Jill, daughter Monica and
husband Robert, grandsons Jason, Luke, Matthew
and sister Vera.



Lubomír Čížek

May 8, 1931 – August 22, 2020

Lubomír, known to his friends as Luboš, was born in Stupava, Czechoslovakia (now Slovakia) to Ludvík and Miloslava Čížek. He grew up in Mikulčice, a village in the Slovácko region in southeastern Moravia.

Lubomír studied Mining Engineering in Ostrava and after completion of his studies went on to work for an oil company in Hodonín. In 1958 he married his first wife Věra with whom he had two sons, Petr and Lumír, born in 1959 and 1961.

In 1970 the family left Czechoslovakia in the aftermath of the August 1968 Soviet invasion and emigrated to the United States. Lubomír went to work for the City of Long Beach as a Petroleum Engineer. His lifelong hobbies and passions were astronomy, geology, and stamp collecting. He was an active member of astronomy, rock, and stamp collecting clubs.

Lubomír and Věra divorced in 1982 and Lubomír became the companion of Dana Matula, with whom he lived for seven years.

In 1991 he married his second wife Zdena Effenberger. They lived in Venice until 1997, when they relocated to the Leisure World retirement community in Laguna Woods in Orange County (now Laguna Woods Village). By then both Lubomír and Zdena were retired and enjoyed fully everything this retirement community had to offer.

They purchased an RV and took it all the way to Alaska and back – a trip that provided them with many cherished memories. They joined several clubs and enjoyed their RV frequently on rock collecting excursions. They made new friends and led an active social life.

In retirement Lubomír made regular trips to his native Mikulčice, but in 2000, when he was 69 years old, he suffered a serious stroke there which left him partially paralyzed on his right side for the rest of his life.

Lubomír joined Sokol Los Angeles in 1977 and remained a member for over 40 years. He was an enthusiastic supporter of Czech community life and attended many social events and the Czech Church as long as he was physically able to do so.

Lubomír and Zdena lived independently in Laguna Woods until December 2017, when a fall and deteriorating mobility forced Lubomír to move into an assisted living facility in Irvine. He was hospitalized in May of this year and died in Mission Viejo on August 22, 2020, at the age of 89.

He is survived by his wife Zdena, sons Peter and Lumír, and grandson Royce.

Closing message from President Lillian Roter

We will keep you informed as we move forward from these pandemic restrictions. In the meantime, stay safe and well and remember to do what is right – be courageous.

“Courage is not always about action, and it doesn’t always involve danger, but courage is always doing what is right.” -- anonymous

2021 American Sokol Slet Postponed

The last American Sokol Slet was in June 2017 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. With the American Sokol Slet occurring every four years, the next slet was planned for June 2021 in the Chicago area.

It was announced earlier this month that the American Sokol Slet Committee proposed and the ASO Executive Board approved postponing the 2021 Slet due to the present state of the pandemic affecting all units nationwide and the general climate of uncertainty what the situation may be like next June. The original timeline required units to begin practice for the Slet and venue contracts to be signed this month, which is simply not possible.

Depending on future developments, the next Slet may be postponed to 2022 or skipped altogether, thus scheduling the next Slet in 2025 on its usual timeline (every 4 years).

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