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Zarja

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The Dawn



Bela Krajina



Bela Krajina Artwork

From the Editor

Just recently I experienced my first visit to the Bela Krajina region. I've been close to the area on previous trips as both my grandparents came from Dolenjska but for some reason I never ventured further. Well it took one time to fall in love and realize I have to go back!

In May this will happen when I join the 80th Anniversary Tour – Secrets of Slovenia. Bela Krajina is one the best kept secret of Slovenia. It is amazing how friendly the people are, how it's very important to them that you learn about their traditions, the changing scenery and their cuisine to name a few. It's very hard to spend a day in Bela Krajina and be hungry, the food is just too good.

Our tour will spend time in this region. We will enjoy a culinary day with local women who will show us how to make the famous belokranjska pogaca, enjoy a glass of karampampoli, a special home made brandy, we will taste buckwheat potica and various breads. We will learn about different musical instruments, view a 12th century church and a visit to see how linen flax is made. Then of

course a visit to a local wine cellar followed by a meal. This will be a memory of a lifetime! It is not too late to sign up.

Make sure you read the article written by Mary Lou Voelk on an interesting 300-year-old story that goes on until this day in the village of Drasici. It is a wonderful story.

I hope you enjoy this issue on some of the highlights we experienced in Bela Krajina. Please let us know what you think.

In closing I want to say hvala lepa to all those who have added a kind donation for *Zarja The Dawn* with their annual dues. The money is greatly needed and appreciated. I also hope many of you are planning to attend our two day event to be held on June 19 and 20, 2009 "Let's Feel Slovenia" and CELEBRATE ZARJA. This event is going to be fantastic. More information will follow in the next issue but for now – *Mark your calendar!*

- Debbie Pohar, Editor

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Letters to the Editor

We have enjoyed being members and appreciate the format, information and color of Zarja. Congratulations to the Editor and contributors for the beautiful magazine. It's G-R-E-A-T!!!! Ours is one of the generational members of SWUA.

Mother – Margaret Slavec Ostroska
Daughter – Dorothy Ostroska Pryately Andrews
Granddaughter – Christine A. Pryately
Great-Granddaughter – Emily P. Echols

To the Editor: I have always enjoyed "Zarja" an excellent magazine and getting better! We are all very proud of your efforts based on hard work and dedication. Congratulations!

Albina Skocaj

IT'S A SMALL WORLD AFTER ALL!

I spent New Year's Eve in Disney World with my family. It was crowded and we heard rumors that other parks were closing because of the high attendance. Out of my family of 9, I was elected to stand in line at the information booth and I was helped by Melissa from Mentor, Ohio. Of course I immediately started wondering if she was Slovenian and before I had the chance to ask her she noticed my hat and shirt I was wearing and said..... are you part of the magazine? I said yes, are you a member? She responded yes and that her grandmother was Mary Muller the former National President. Next thing I knew I called a family member over to take a picture of Melissa and I. So not only did I get my questions answered but I also met a member. Yes, as the song says, it's a small world after all! - Bonnie Prokup



Zarja - The Dawn

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Communications for the next issue of publication:
Do you have something SWUA-related you would like to share with readers, like an event you want to let people know about or an idea for an article? We would love to hear from you! Please e-mail the editor at pohar4@aol.com. We reserve the right to edit any article submitted. It is preferable that you submit your idea for discussion prior to writing an article. Articles must be related to SWUA events or members. The deadline for articles is the 15 day of the month, 2 months preceding the issue. For example, articles for the May/June issue must be received by March 15th. Thank you.

National President's Message

Remaking Slovenian Women's Union Of America

In the last issue I asked if you would consider making SWUA a part of your New Year's resolution. I am hoping many of you did and if not you can still do it. *We really need your help.* There are many ways to get involved, just ask! Because without you we can't do it. We need your support, your enthusiasm and your drive in keeping the Slovenian spirit alive. Can you help?

Already several have stepped up to the plate to offer their services at the headquarters at 431 North Chicago Street, Joliet, Illinois. As many of you know we had damage in the summer of 2007 to our upstairs. Since that time a small handful of volunteers have put their heart and soul into this project. If only we took pictures of the before and after, you would be amazed at the progress so far!

First to the rescue was Carol Ryba our VP of the Home Office. Even though she lives in Florida she was able to secure bids, choose a contractor and work almost daily on the many needs and decisions. Luckily she had the help of Jonita Ruth, our Home Office Manager, who made calls and offered suggestions along the way. Carol definitely got the ball rolling and kept it rolling from that point forward. I am afraid to think where this project might have ended up without her leadership.

Then there was Denise P. Bartlett our National Treasurer who lives in Milwaukee, over 2 hours away from Joliet. She assisted in decisions and the remodeling of the bathroom where she volunteered her husband Bob Bartlett to spend several days in Joliet making this happen. Bob then recruited his brother Jim who also volunteered.

Just recently your National Secretary drove over 2 hours and your Zarja Editor and myself drove over one hour to spend Saturday and Sunday cleaning and painting. We worked for over 23 hours to the tunes of Dick Tady and the Singing Slovenes. The music was an inspiration to keep us going.

Then we had other types of volunteers, those that donated items. Special recognition to Carol Ryba, Denise P. Bartlett for various supplies, Patricia Massucci for a bed frame, mattress and box spring, Vicki Hodgman for a dresser,

Pat and Bob Figuirowski for a kitchen table and chairs, and Jim Knapp who found cabinets for the kitchen.

We also had a few visitors who helped carry items upstairs; Bob Figuirowski, Bob Bartlett, guests from Minnesota and another young lady from Branch 20.

Our project is by no means finished. We still need your help! We have saved SWUA lots of money by doing several jobs ourselves and hope to continue to do so.

We still have more painting, we are in need of a plumber, an electrician, we need kitchen countertops, a stove, microwave, blinds for the windows, ceiling fans, closet poles, carpeting, kitchen flooring, kitchen sink, vacuum, silverware, dishes and water glasses. If you think you can help by donating an item or donating your time please contact me! **WE NEED YOUR HELP!** We can do this together.

Bonnie Pohar Prokup
National President, Zveza
wprokup@aol.com



Welcome to Our New Members!

1 Barbara Dickmann	20 Darla Jean Rohder
1 Susan Markgraf	20 Anna Marie Uher
1 Karen Medinger	24 Donna Slatner
1 Jack Napotnik	42 Susan Garland
1 Ariana Shank	42 Tony Peterle
1 Laura Shank	50 Colleen Boruszkowski
1 Joseph Stancar	50 Ed Pershey
2 Judy Stoll	71 Maureen Capwell
3 Linda Peppard	71 Tricia Dalton
3 Donna Smith	71 Wilma Martincic
12 Joyce Zawerschnik	89 Rose Kamnikar
20 Carolyn Bernickus	93 Novosel Women
20 Kelsey Carter	99 Judy Bezjak
20 Amy Cox	99 JoAnn Rustik
20 Marie Panozzo	108 Roza Oblak
20 Amber Purkart	

VP of Home Office Message

Importance of the Beneficiary Form

First of all, Hvala lepa (Thank You) to those who have filled out beneficiary forms and returned them with your 2009 dues payment. There were some of you who chose not to do this because you stated your information in our files was correct. In addition to updating the information on file, this exercise was also to help us be more efficient. The State of Illinois will not allow us to remove the files from the State and since I live in Florida, it is beneficial for me to have the information so that I can answer queries, etc. Our plan is to eventually scan all the information into the database, but this will take some time. By helping us accomplish this exercise, you have saved us time and money because we would have had to copy over 2,000 records.

If you have not sent me this information and you still have the form, please do so. I plan on sending a supply of forms to all the branches so if you threw the form away you will be able to get a new form from your branch or by calling the home office in Joliet (815.727.1926). Again thanks for your cooperation.

Information On Burial Insurance

Unfortunately, sending these forms has stirred up many questions. It is quite apparent that some members and their

families may not understand burial insurance. Some family members of deceased members did not even know their loved one had insurance until this year's invoice was forwarded to them.

When SWUA offered this insurance in the 1930's, \$100 was helpful to the immigrant family. Unfortunately, \$100-\$300 does not help very much in today's economy. Burial insurance has no cash value, and it cannot be increased. A member who joined prior to 2000 and was under a certain age qualified for the insurance. Per our bylaws, a member must be in good standing to maintain this insurance. Therefore, if dues are not paid, the insurance is void. Our main purpose today is to preserve our heritage so in 2000 we discontinued the insurance and all new members are Social members.

Finally, we would like to thank those of you who have added a donation to your annual dues payment. We greatly appreciate this kind generosity especially during these difficult economic times.

- Carol Ryba, Vice President of Home Office

SWUA Member *Denise Bartlett* has Special Distinction

In 2008, Denise Bartlett, member of Branch 43 - Milwaukee, and SWUA's National Treasurer was the first and only member to become a Lifetime Member of SWUA. This membership category was added at the 2007 National Convention. Denise, at 62, hopes to live long enough to make it a good investment for herself but more important to her was giving a boost to the SWUA funds. Lifetime Membership is a one time in a lifetime payment of \$500.00. As Treasurer Denise is well aware of SWUA's financial needs and concerns and hopes others will consider joining her in the special category of Lifetime Member of SWUA. If enough members would consider this Lifetime Membership larger purchases for the Home Office and Heritage Museum would be possible sooner rather than in the future. If interested contact Denise Bartlett, at denisebartlett@wi.rr.com or by phone at 414.327.4990.

Zarja The Dawn Donations "Keeping the Spirit Alive"

\$100 Donation

Rose Ann Prey, 89, Zarja
Branch 89, Zarja

\$50 Donation

Ileene Collins, 14, Memory of Josephine and Louis Lusic
Kathleen Karpan, 30, Memory Franciska and Miroslav Miklic
Carol Jean Dickinson, 50, Loving memory of Rudolph J. Paik

\$40 Donation

Jean Ficek, 24, Memory of parents, Josephine and John Pohar

\$30 Donation

Dorothy Swintosky, 30, Memory Frank J. Zevnik
Jean Ivons, 10, Memory Fr. David J. and Margaret Stalzer
Jozica Tompa, 43, Memory Ivan Omerzu
Mary Ann Palmer, 109, Memory Stephanie Vranesich

Zarja The Dawn Donations

“Keeping the Spirit Alive”

\$25 Donation

Jeanette Eckert, 100, Memory mother, Angela Steiver

\$20 Donation

Dorothy Marie Tezak, 3, Memory Catherin Tezak

Evelyn Pipoly, 50, Memory Michael Pipoly

Mary Pat Ryan, 28, Memory of Stephanie Ryan Br. 28 Treas

Evelyn Prijatelj, 23, Memory Mary and Anna

Josephine Mistic, 50, Memory Angela Mistic, mother

Dorothy Zupancic, 20, Honor of Dorothy Zupancic

Mary Ellen Scepita, 7, Memory V. Scepita, J. Sever and A. Sever

Norma Becco, 3, Zarja

Elsie Shine, 54, Memory Mrs. Jennie Shine

Gene F. Rak, 30, Memory Franciska and Miroslav Miklic

Helen L. Skul, 3, Honor of Ann and Louis Anzich, Helen Skul

Erin Jex, 12, Memory Ann Grambow

Bernice Krasovec, 3, Mary Hiza

Rosanne Savol, 20, Memory Ann Ramuta and Josephine Ramuta Sumic

Florence Telich, 23, Memory mother, Apalonia Zitko

Jennie Kouchich, 43, Ann Rebernik

Mary Irene Banich, 89, Zarja

Cheryl Megahan, 105, Memory Anna Karun

Theresa Tranbarger, 95, Memory Hattie Isek

\$15 Donation

Frances M. Schultz, 99, Memory Frances Zibert, mother (Br. 2)

Carol Marie Jacobson, 33, Mary Hinnenkamp, Dorothy Jacobson, Josephine Rizzi

Christine Stanek, 2, Memory John Toplak

\$10 Donation

Barbara Urick, 35, Zarja

Clare Gospo, 2, Zarja

Frances L. Klemencic, 10, Memory of parents Joe and Frances Klemencic

Helen Troha, 50, Memory Frances Kosten

Eleanor Marel, 91, Memory deceased family members Avcin, Marel Bostjancic

Frances Piwoni, 12, Memory Helen Pizar

Joan Lesnik, 20, Zarja

Julie J. Lesnik, 20, Zarja

Lillian Papesh, 20, Memory of Michael L. Papesh

Shirley Miller, 24, Memory Mary Rolando and Frances Meglan

Florence Smorkol, 24, Honor Florence Smorkol

Lillian Bennett, 20, Zarja

Marie Pivik, 25, Honor of Ivana Novak

Agnes Glavich, 3, Zarja

Elizabeth Arthur, 12, Memory Helen Pizar

Rose Svingel, 68, Zarja

Dorothy M. Zakrasek, 3, Scholarship Fund

Alice Kuhar, 14, Anna Kuhar, mother

Dorothy Cabot, 47, Memory Mary Skufca, mother

Albina Marsey, 14, Memory Jean Lourin

Mary L. Bahor, 91, Memory husband, Frank J. Bahor

Mary Alkovich, 16, Zarja

Bernice M. Bubel, 95, Memory of Bernice M. Bubel

Helen L. McFarland, 66, Zarja

Frances Novak, 16, Zarja

Caterina Burjes, 25, Zarja

Agnes D. Zabak, 47, Zarja

Ann E. Zaitz, 3, Zarja

Diane Govednik, 20, Memory William F. Govednik

Thomas McNally II, 2, Zarja

Aimee Nething, 102, Memory Mary Staut

Mary E. Kell, 79, Memory Anna Mae Anderson

Frances Adamic, 105, Memory Helen Grasser

Elaine Weber, 20, Memory Ann Volk

Anne L. Laurich, 38, Memory mother, Frances Jenko

Clare Mihelich, 20, Zarja

Eileen Krasovec-Perez, 3, Memory Mary Hiza

Virginia Guertin, 2, Zarja

\$5 Donation

Bernice Metesh, 20, Zarja

Francka Androjna, 14, Zarja

Mildred J. Stautihar, 47, Zarja

Patricia Figurowski, 20, Zarja

Paula Behling, 43, Memory Gertrude Delopst

Kay Yuratovac, 47, Memory Josephine Turk

Anka Krakora, 55, Honor Maria Selak

Sophie M. Prince, 34, Zarja

Frances Glowienka, 12, Memory Mary Kokals

Bernice Ceglar, 35, Memory Pauline Plevell

Theresa Godnavec, 30, Honor Theresa Godnavec

Anne Orazem, 35, Zarja

Linda Ford, 47, Zarja

Aleah M. Dovnik, 43, Zarja

Karen C. Goodman, 43, Karen Goodman

Jenna Rose Skull, 33, Zarja

Anonymous, 25, Zarja

SWUA Scholarship Program

In celebration of the Scholarship Programs' 60th Anniversary, biographies of past SWUA Scholarship winners who are currently working for the Slovenian Women's Union of America are featured.

MARY JO GRABER Branch 1, Sheboygan, Wisconsin Recipient of a 1979 SWUA Scholarship has been actively involved in Branch 1 work for years, serving as vice president for three years and currently the corresponding secretary. Her mother, Rogene Grabner has also been a dedicated worker for Branch 1. Mary Jo is the Quality Assurance Staff Chemist at the Kohler Company. Jamie Grabner, her niece, winner of a SWUA 2008 Scholarship is also currently attending St. Norbert's College.

I often say that one of the best things I've ever done for myself is to get an education. I am and have always been a life-long learner, yet nothing can ever really take the place of a formal education. With the help of an SWUA scholarship, I attended St. Norbert College in DePere, WI. I graduated magna cum laude with a degree in chemistry.



Having a degree means that as an adult I have been able to have a career, not just a job. I have worked in the chemistry field since graduation, in several different areas including chemical education, analytical chemistry and most recently as a quality manager of a chemistry lab.

Being a chemist is part of how I define myself. That and, of course, being a proud member of the Slovenian Women's Union of America! I am honored to have been a scholarship recipient and hope that the SWUA scholarship will be around for many more years.

- Best wishes, Mary Jo

MARY SPEHAR WHITE Branch 33, Duluth, Minnesota Recipient of a 1982 SWUA Scholarship is a bank officer. Her grandmother, Ana Podgorsek was a National SWUA officer and her mother, Suintina Spehar is still involved with branch work. A part of Mary's early education began in neighborhood garages and basements, where she and other Slovenian friends learned the dynamic, ethnic music which they now present as the "Singing Slovenes". Mary, using her sparkling voice is the lead singer.



I felt a great deal of pride being selected as a Slovenian Women's Union of America Scholarship

winner. What an honor it was to be the first recipient of the Marie Priland Scholarship Award! This scholarship helped me to finance my education at the University of Minnesota Duluth, where I earned a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education with a Kindergarten Licensure. I have used my education as a classroom teacher and trainer in the business world.

Currently, I serve as the Vice President of Branch 33, in Duluth, MN. Also, I am the secretary/treasurer for the Minnesota Region. I have had a strong influence of the Slovenian heritage and culture in my life; be it the food, music or the language. The delicious recipes and dishes that have been in our family for decades are not easily forgotten! I love to sing and so when I think of music and the language coming together what a beautiful sound! I am a member of the "Singing Slovenes" and the assistant director, to Frank Bucar. Our mission is to preserve Slovenian music and cultural heritage for current and future generations. We were honored to perform for the SWUA National Convention in 2007. Through my involvement with the SWUA, I have been able to give back to this great organization through music and help to do my part in keeping the spirit alive! Thank you so much Slovenian Women's Union for all you have given to me!

- Mary Spehar White

MONICA SELAK Branch 55, Girard, Ohio
 Recipient of the 2003 award, a Pre Med Student, comes from a true Slovenian family, rich in language, tradition and work ethic. Siblings, Mark won a SWUA Scholarship in 2001, and Andrea received a SWUA Scholarship in 1996. Her Mother, Maria Selak is currently the Branch President, and works hard to promote Slovenian culture within her family and community. Monica is the Zarja reporter for Branch 55.

Education is often described as first and foremost a process of acquiring knowledge in the formal setting of a classroom. Less often, but of equal importance, education refers to the learning that occurs in the setting of one's environment.

In addition to this formal and informal acquisition of knowledge, education to me has come to mean an ongoing process of learning, thinking, questioning, and growing in one's understanding of self and others. As a former scholarship recipient, I have had many experiences that have helped shaped my own unique understanding of what education means. While completing my undergraduate studies, education meant having the opportunity to take courses in unfamiliar subjects, interact with and learn from individuals of diverse backgrounds, and challenge myself to think unconventionally. Education meant not only expanding my knowledge of subjects, but also developing a better understanding of my environment and developing a sense of self. As I continue in my formal training as a second year medical student, education remains an important and essential component of my life. The daily application of acquired knowledge is inherent to the field of medicine and my future vocation as a physician. Equally important is the knowledge and understanding acquired from the interactions with my peers and those seeking medical care. I strongly believe that education is a life long journey. There will always be new information to discover, old ideas to question, experiences to learn from, and persons to interact with. It is my hope that as I move forward in my formal education, I will continue to grow and to develop into an individual who will be able to make a difference in the world. Perhaps this is education's greatest gift to each of us.



- Monica Selak

DEBBIE POHAR Branch 24, LaSalle, Illinois
 Recipient of a 2002 SWUA Continuing Education Award is the new Editor of Zarja, replacing Corinne Leskovar who held that position for many years. Debbie was fortunate to have known her Slovenian grandparents, who taught her and her family much of their culture, which they retain to this day. Her sister, Bonnie Pohar, has been active in the SWUA for years, first serving as the SWUA National Secretary, and currently, President of SWUA.



Little did I know 20 years ago when I joined SWUA that I would become the Editor of Zarja The Dawn and a National Officer. I joined just to belong to the group that my grandmother and other members of my family belonged to in hopes of learning more about my heritage and culture. This has taken me on an unbelievable path of learning, friendships and a great love for the country that my grandparents came from.

In 2002, I was fortunate to have received the SWUA Continuing Education Scholarship. Since then my life with SWUA has sky rocketed. I started as an officer in Branch 24, LaSalle and soon was offered the position of Editor of Zarja The Dawn. In 2005, I started to apprentice under Corinne Leskovar and officially became the editor in January 2006. As of 2007, I am also the Vice President of Outreach on the National Board.

I am proud to be a member of SWUA and forever grateful for the generous scholarship that I received so many years ago.

- Sincerely, Debbie Pohar

MARY TURVEY Branch 1, Sheboygan, Wisconsin
 Recipient of a 1956 SWUA Scholarship has been exposed to SWUA work, through her grandmother Marie Prislant, founder of the SWUA in 1926 and the Scholarship Program in 1949, and Aunt Hermine Prislant Dicke, Director of the Program from 1965 to 1991. Her mother, Margaret Fischer was the secretary of Branch 1 for over 30 years. Mary was appointed SWUA Scholarship Director in 1996.

As the proud recipient of an 1956 SWUA Scholarship, I attended the University of Wisconsin for a time, but ran out of money and dropped out. I am the eldest of

four children; a family that suffered financial stress during the 7 year long Kohler Company strike during the 1950's. Dedicated Kohler Public School educators encouraged students to educate themselves capitalizing on individual strengths and talents. I tried to follow their recommendations these past years by actively participating in three different research organizations, reading, and attending classes at the Northern Michigan University, but have always regretted not having a college diploma. Educationally speaking,



however, the most exhilarating times of my life were when each of our four children stepped up to the podium to receive a bachelor's degree. Picture a proud mother, standing up in the bleachers, torn between tears and laughter, so proud of her children's dedication to hard work, watching each receive a college diploma.

During the past 13 years as the Slovenian Women's Union Scholarship Director, a little of that same feeling, one of joy and admiration comes over me when applications come in from junior SWUA members who are determined to make the commitment for a technical school or college degree. During the fall and winter semesters each year, scholarship winner's proof of registration and grades come in, and again, I feel extremely proud of each one, not really knowing them as individuals, but as future leaders of our struggling society and our troubled world. If only it were possible to financially help each student applicant, it would relieve the financial worry that they and their families have. I know this very well from the past.

Yes, during 2009, SWUA Scholarship Foundation is celebrating 60 years of awarding over \$176,225.00 to 248 students. There is always a tendency to rest on the laurels of fine accomplishments, to congratulate all SWUA members and friends of the past and present, on this fine goal, but life marches on. Now there are major national, economic obstacles affecting all aspects of education, a larger number of young students with financial needs, another goal to attain.

– Mary Turvey

Scholarship Donations

\$8,000 Donation

We are totally blessed to have received an \$8,000 Scholarship Funding for Josef Princ and Rose Marie Princ Scholarships from Rose Marie Princ, a member of the Slovenian Women's Union of America who has dedicated her life to education. She taught at Nazareth Academy and Sterling Morton High School for 27 years and was also its administrator for 14 years. Now, in retirement Rose Marie continues to promote her firm belief in higher education, by generously supporting the Slovenian Women's Union Scholarship Foundation, funding for a number of years the Josef Princ and Rose Marie Scholarships. We thank Rose Marie Princ and all of those who send donations of any and all amounts to help financially assist young students. May each of you be rewarded for your generosity.

\$100 Donation

Branch 89, Oglesby, IL – Gift to Scholarship Fund

\$50 Donation

Ron and Mary Lou Erjavec (+Edward Ancel)
Branch 50, Euclid, OH – Gift to Scholarship Fund
Vickie Hodgman (+Kathleen Hodgman, her daughter)

\$32 Donation

Branch 24, LaSalle, IL – Gift to Scholarship Fund
(50/50 drawing)

\$20 Donation

Dorothy Jerneycic (Scholarship Committee Member)

\$15 Donation

Jane Polnaszek-Gray (+Edward Ancel)

For more information on the
SWUA Scholarship Foundation Program
please visit <http://www.swua.org/scholarship>

Donations and correspondence can be mailed to:
Mary Turvey, Director
SWUA Scholarship Foundation
4 Lawrence Drive
Marquette, Michigan 49855
mturvey@aol.com

Happenings: Culture and Heritage

Change Can Happen: The Slovenian Heritage Museum / 501c3

by VP of Heritage and Culture Mary Lou Deyak Voelk

Throughout the years, the museum needs have taken much time and energy. However, progress has been slow, often stagnant and at a standstill. Plain and simple, we have operated on a "broken shoestring. there is little money for proper storage of items and museum supplies.

In the Nov-Dec 2007 Zarja, George Plautz said it well: *Our Heritage Fund is so low that scraping the bottom of the barrel is now an art form. Hard working volunteers must endure crowded and dirty spaces, few tools and a sparcity of good will.....there is limited display area and absolutely no storage or curatorial space. These problems can be overcome with your involvement. The business plan for the museum is to create a Board of Trustees that will manage a 501.c3 Slovenian Heritage Preservation Fund....."*

Today, the "paper work" has progressed and we are almost there. We are within months of being a nonprofit entity, a status that will allow us to pick the museum out of the dust and give it the dignity and worth it deserves. This status has the advantages we need to make change happen. Tax Exemption: Federal exemption from payment of corporate income tax and then exempt from state and local taxes.

Eligibility for public and private grants: Nonprofit organizations are allowed to solicit donations from the public. We now qualify for grants that were not available to us in our former status. Furthermore, your gift will be fully tax-deductible.

As a volunteer your time can be a tax-deductible item. The museum board will be meeting in early April 2009 to finalize the legal paper requirements. We will also be working on a "Blueprint for Change" that is so desperately needed. This museum board consists of talented members who are passionate about their heritage. We are "Asking you to believe, not in our ability to bring about real change to this museum, we are asking you to believe in yours!"

The Slovenian Heritage Museum is now accepting your charitable donations electronically. Log onto our website www.swua.org and click on the link to the Slovenian Heritage Museum.

Holiday, Birthday and Special Occasions: If you have ever had difficulty finding the right gift for that special occasion/person, giving a charitable contribution to the museum is a great way to show your support of them and your heritage.

World War II Survey Update

In this past year, there have been numerous pleas for members to send in the names of Slovenian Americans who served in WWII. And while I have stated the importance of honor and dignity for those who fought for our country, there exists another reason for such a collection. Read on: (The Blaze of '73! The American Legion, February 2007)

At 12:16 a.m. on July 12, 1973, an alarm sounded at a suburban St. Louis firehouse. The National Personnel Records Center, home to 38 million sensitive U.S. Military records, was burning. Fire trucks arrived on the scene within minutes, but the blaze on the top floor was already raging out of control. What remained was a sodden, smoldering swamp of burnt and waterlogged papers. An estimated 16 million to 18 million personnel files- military life histories of those who served, including enlistment and discharge papers, training forms and performance reports

were destroyed. Hearing of the lost and damaged records amplifies the value of what it means for us to collect all that we can on Slovenian Americans. It also gives credence to the historical importance of our endeavor.

If you know of a relative that served, please send in as much information as you have access or knowledge of. (If it is just a name and branch of service) I await hearing the doorbell and seeing the mail person handing me a U.S. Postal container full of envelopes. "Sorry, Ms. Mary Lou, there were too many to fit in your mail box!"

Mail to:

**Mary Lou Voelk
9157 Clubhouse Dr.
Foley, AL 36535**

Habitat for Heritage: Count Me In!



Here is a chance to volunteer your skills and talents in bringing about change to the museum floor. Donate your services and/or talents and receive tax receipt acknowledgement. Please come forward! You are needed; your skills and talent are needed.

-
- Carpenters: building show cases; repairs
Electricians: needs assessment and updating on the existing electrical wiring especially for use in the technology equipment
Graphic artists: creating logos, templates, brochures
Plumbers: bathroom remodeling
Floor Experts and Cleaners: shampooing, floor sanding
Painters: painters are needed!
Cleaners: dusting, sorting, cleaning the showcase
Computers: knowledge of spreadsheets is always needed

Volunteer:

We can always find something that needs TLC

I will be coming from Alabama and have set aside 3 days, April 6,7,8 of 2009 for "work days". I am in need of volunteers to work along with me as we sift, sort and reorganize. This would also be a time for any of the above list of skilled persons to come in and see what tasks need to be done. I have some great photos of display cases that I photographed in Slovenia. Carpenters would get great joy making these up. If you have computer skills, there are Slovenian book titles that need to be entered. For those who cannot make it during the day, I will be available in the evening hours. Lunch will be on me, so please call or email to volunteer (or if you just want to talk). Please call (1.251.968.4364) and set up a time if evenings are good for you. Together we can make a difference if we "gather 'round the Linden tree" and work together.

Yes, Change Can Happen!

A Question Was Asked: What has happened to the listing of deceased members (Mati Register) that was being published in Zarja?

Answer:

Records and files at the national office are in need of reorganization/organization. It is imperative that this be done so that our national office can function within a "business ease". Our two devoted volunteers, Carol Novak and Carole Terlep who have been involved in the scanning, graciously stepped in to help out in this endeavor. Once completed, the Mati Register will again appear in Zarja.

Let's Feel Slovenia, Celebrate Zarja June 19-20, 2009

In June 2009, Zarja will be celebrating its 80th anniversary. In celebration of this historic event, Zarja and the Slovenian Heritage Museum are sponsoring "Let's Feel Slovenia, Celebrate Zarja". Culinary chef Dino del Medico from Slovenia will be conducting cooking demonstrations, and teachers from Slovenian World Congress will be conducting "Let's Feel Slovenia" (sessions on the country of Slovenia, language, crafts, music and more) for adults and children down to 10 years of age. Also present will be authors/representatives from Forget-me-nots books, the children's books written in Slovenian and English.

Another reason exists for sprucing up the museum; a wine and cheese reception with entertainment will be held at the museum in honor of our guests from Slovenia. A limited amount of tickets will be sold for the wine and cheese reception, so be on the lookout for the ticket sale. Or if you would like to get your name on a list please contact me.

"Let's Feel Slovenia, Celebrate Zarja" will be a most wonderful 2 days. Set the dates aside! More information will be forthcoming!

Mary Lou Voelk
9157 Clubhouse Dr.
Foley, AL 36535

Heritage Donations

\$100 Donation

In memory of our sister and aunt, Josephine Kernz Argubright, Branch 89 who passed away on December 29, 2008: Eunice Kernz Supan, Mary Ellen Supan Keith, Nancy Supan Henkel, Denise Henkel Duffin, Jordan Duffin

Donations

Maria Grdadolnik of Mississauga, Ontario \$16.78
Dr. Sue Ann Yovanovich of Indianapolis \$13.20

Your gifts are gratefully appreciated!

Men in a SWUA World

Tradition of Green George (Zeleni Jurij)

How many of you have heard of Green George (Zeleni Jurij)? Well, if you have there is a good chance that you have ties to the Bela Krajina area of Slovenia. Because that is an area that is steeped in its traditions and one of them is the celebration of St. George or Green George. Now, who is this Green George character? Simply, he represents St. George who was believed to chase away winter and bring the lush green of spring. The tradition was started long ago by shepherds that needed the grass that spring brought to feed their livestock and used to be celebrated on April 23rd with a grand banquet to honor the revival of spring and according to the farmers and herders of the day it signaled the beginning of spring.



Painting by Maksim Gaspari

However, the beliefs were altered under Christianity and many of the traditions and beliefs were halted. But not in the Bela Krajina region where the tradition of Green George is still carried out. On April 23rd the young men gather and one is chosen as Green George. He is dressed in greenery and the boys would go through the town singing the St. George carol as a way of asking for donations. If they were fortunate the lady of the house would spare them an egg or two and then she would be presented with a green sprig, which is fastened to the house's roof and will mean a good year of crops for the family. However, if the woman declined it is said that Green George and his band of boys

would put a curse on the house. In a way it sounds like a spring time version of trick or treat and it is still practiced in the Bela Krajina region today.

Now, that I think about it old Don likes eggs, I can sing a bit and I'm always looking for something to do with that old Christmas tree so all I need is a band of friends and I may be showing up on your door step. So, you better have your eggs ready, two over easy and some bacon and toast would be great!! Well, that's all for this issue and as always, may good luck be yours!! – Don Baldin

VP of Marketing and Fundraising

SWUA Membership Survey

Let's ALL go for it, RECRUIT and REVITALIZE this year, promote our *Zarja* magazine and invite prospective members to join SWUA. Is your branch offering interesting activities and branch meetings, so people will want to come?

All of us as members make SWUA what it is and each of us is responsible to market SWUA as best we can. Tell relatives, friends and prospective members about the *Zarja* magazine's 80th Anniversary and share a copy. Discuss the interesting articles highlighted this month about Easter traditions and beautiful egg decorating techniques; try a few of the recipes from the Bela Krajina region of Slovenia.

SWUA would like you to let us know how we can improve. Please go to the www.swua.org website and click on the

survey button. Spend a few minutes in answering the questions about your SWUA membership to help us improve our organization for you and your family. Survey information will be collected and answers will be confidential and released only as a collective summary. The more participation we get, the more valuable the information collected. The results can help us understand your individual concerns and assist the SWUA National Board in addressing them. If you have any questions, write to Bettekfitz@comcast.net.

If you do not have access to a computer, please visit your local library or a relative who can help access the survey. Each and every response is important; your opinion counts!

– Bernadette Kovacic Fitzsimmons

Julija's Easter Egg

By Loretta (Ahcin) Story

Many years ago in the tiny village of Novo Mesto in the Dolenjska region of Slovenia, there lived a young girl named Julija. She was the youngest of ten children - a lively child who liked to help her mother with the household chores, many times getting in the way. Being the "baby" of the family, she was adored by all, especially her Grandmother, who lived with them.

Julija would sit for hours watching her Grandmother crochet, fascinated with the way those gnarled fingers worked the delicate thread with the needles, creating the most beautiful doilies and hoping that one day she would learn how to create such beauty also.

They would sit outside under the shade of the linden tree in their yard and as Grandmother braided Julija's long hair she would tell her stories of her own childhood. Julija would ask her Grandmother many questions about everything for she was a very curious child.

Julija's mother felt that it was time to give her more responsibility and so she gave her the job of feeding the chickens and collecting their eggs. Julija loved her little job and felt a sense of pride in doing it well.

Easter was fast approaching and the whole family was busy with preparations for the beautiful holiday. It was mid-spring and the older girls were gathering fresh greens from the forest along with a few wild flowers for the "butare". Each daughter wanted hers to be the nicest.

Julija's father Josef was also very busy preparing for Žegan. There was a steady stream of smoke coming from the smokehouse where sausages and other smoked meats were cooking. He was one of the best sausage makers in the village and many families would give him their order for this specialty.

All of the children helped in the shelling and chopping of the walnuts, which had been gathered the last fall and stored in the root cellar. Mother wanted only the best for her potica, which, when baking, sent the most heavenly aroma throughout the village.

During all of this time Julija continued to care for her chickens and was worried about one in particular. It was different from the rest and didn't seem to be able to lay any eggs. Grandmother told her to be patient, the chicken would produce when it was time.

It was Holy Saturday and preparations had begun for Žegan - the blessing of the food. Mother placed a colorful

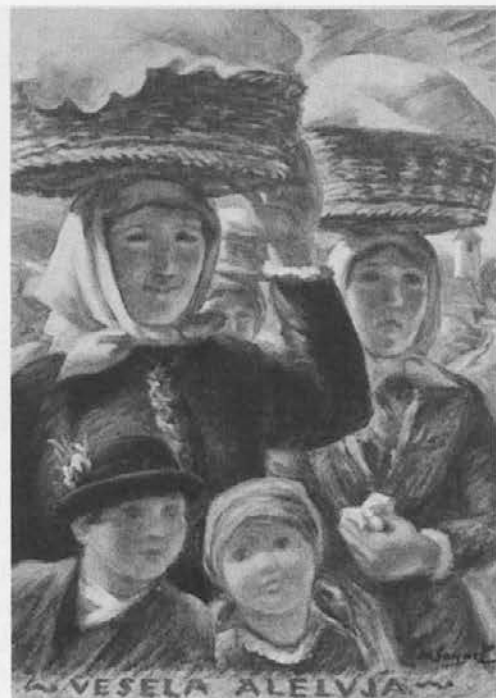
basket on the table and as she began to place the food inside.

The bread is in memory of Christ's crown of thorns, the five red colored eggs symbolize Christ's five wounds, the three horseradish roots are for the nails they used to nail Him to the cross and last of all she placed the sausage in the basket, which symbolizes Christ's body. Grandmother brought her most beautiful crocheted cloth and covered the basket.

The Žegan was now ready to be taken to church to be blessed. Julija suddenly realized she had not collected the eggs this morning and quickly went into the barn to gather them. She found her special chicken and also an egg! Only one egg and it was brown. Julija had never seen a brown egg before and felt this was something very unusual. Julija was overjoyed and ran back to the house gently carrying the brown egg and proudly showed it to everyone. "Look! My chicken has laid an egg - today - Holy Saturday! And, it's brown, which means it symbolizes the cross upon which Christ died! Please, can we take it to church to be blessed?" The family looked at one another. They knew that it was not uncommon for a chicken to lay brown eggs, however, Julija didn't realize this and her connection to the symbolism of Žegan meant more to them. So, mother found another small basket into which Julija carefully laid her little brown egg and Grandmother gave her another one of her embroidered cloths to cover it.

Off they went - Mother, being the woman of the house carrying the big basket and Julija proudly walking alongside her with her little basket. It was a blessed Easter for the whole family and one they always talked about as the children got older and had families of their own. Julija kept the little basket and when she married and had a daughter of her own, she let her carry it to church on Holy Saturday with one brown egg in it.

Vesele Velikonocne praznike!
HAPPY EASTER!



Painting by Maksim Gaspari

Bela Krajina

The Slovenian Countryside at Its Finest

Bela Krajina is a predominantly rural region covered by vineyards, forests and plains that are the heart of this vibrant countryside. Embraced by white birch trees and the call of the clean Kolpa River, Bela Krajina is a perfect place to forget your daily worries, relax and let the kindhearted people and the pristine nature call you. Bela Krajina is situated at the southeastern most corner of Slovenia and lies between the Kolpa River with the border of Croatia and the Gorjanci mountain ridge to the north. Entering Bela Krajina one is instantly swept away by the view of the lively karstic (*areas of limestone in which erosion has produced fissures, sinkholes, underground streams and caverns*) flatland and higher limestone formations.

Bela Krajina has a rich cultural heritage that nourishes many folk dances, customs and rituals that are brought to life through various traditional events. Painted Easter eggs “belokranjske pisanice” are famous far and wide, as well as “drsanke” and the embroidery work of Bela Krajina, which gives extra value to the region. It is known as the center for Slovenian folk culture, by far the greatest numbers of Slovenia’s old customs and ways have been preserved in the villages of Bela Krajina.

The region has been named after its white national costumes made of domestic linen and were worn every day by both man and women right up to WWII. The women’s costumes were made of lightly embroidered homespun linen or damask, the men’s costumes were of a simple cut, and were also made of linen. Their wide leather



belts can easily identify the men of this region. The brilliant white fabric that was used for the costumes made such an impression, that the region was named Bela Krajina (white region). Today the people of Bela Krajina wear their traditional costumes only at folklore events, when presenting their dances and customs.



There is no region in Slovenia where dancing tradition is as well preserved as in Bela Krajina. Dances from the Bela Krajina region are the oldest dances in the country. They are distinguished by the alternation of quick and slow rhythms, which are often accompanied by expressive lyrical songs. Bela Krajina is the only region in Slovenia where a round dance “kolo” is danced. Traditional dances from Bela Krajina are special because they combine cultural elements, coming from the early as well as recent history.

In the southern region of Bela Krajina there was a custom where young women called “kresnice” (Midsummer Night maids) set out across the village on the Midsummer Night singing songs and asking for gifts and donations from house to house and they were usually accompanied by a piper. The locals welcomed them generously and offered them presents. The tradition has it that their singing had to be continuous. Should the girls fail to sing uninterruptedly, the locals were allowed to chase them away

with fire-tongs. In return, the girls could wish a poor harvest to those that were not generous enough.



Bela Krajina has its own distinctive culinary style, with specialties like the traditional flat cake called belokranjska pogača, roast lamb (jagnjetina), suckling pig and povitica (rolled cake). Bela Krajina pogača (belokranjska pogača) in 2001

was trademarked as a cuisine with a suggestion of traditional status. It arose centuries ago on the basis of intercultural contact with migrants from the Balkans. This ceremonial bread is sprinkled with salt and cumin. Prosta povitica festive bread from Bela Krajina is also trademarked. Its special feature is its egg filling while the name "prosta" (simple) suggests it is easy to make. Cereal sausage called jaglaca or mastenica and cmar are two typical semi-dried products from the farm's annual autumn killing of a pig. The cereal sausage is stuffed with millet porridge and meat, whereas cmar is a kind of stuffed pork stomach; this compulsory Easter dish is called "nadef" in the local dialect where bread, pork, bacon and spices are stuffed into intestines.

Bela Krajina will win your heart with its forests of poetic birch trees growing among ferns in its clay soil. This is a region that has long been inspiring photographers and film-

makers. The region hosts areas overgrown with birch trees and an undergrowth of eagle fern. Local people named these natural phenomena "steljniki" (fern areas). In fact, they are the very symbol of Bela Kranija.

The climate makes this area a magnificent and remarkable wine growing district. The vineyards of Bela Krajina

produce some of the finest red and white wines in Slovenia. It is known for its high-quality wines, such as Metliška črnina (a dark red wine made of a blend of four types of red grapes which give the wine a rich, velvety flavor), Belokranjec (a white wine) and Modra frankinja (Blaufränkisch, a red wine).

For centuries this region has been overshadowed by poverty, causing many of its inhabitants to emigrate at the turn of the century. Recently Bela Krajina has taken a turn towards the development of tourism. They developed numerous walking paths that are very inviting for long and lazy strolls. You can finish your leisurely walk by tasting excellent wines, honey products and other culinary specialties of the region where the wine cellars, wine growers, tourist farms, beekeepers and innkeepers are waiting for you with great hospitality.



The Rovaš in Drašiči, Bela Krajina

The Accounting System for Wine Consumption

by Mary Lou Deyak Voelk, Zarja Journalist



The quaint village of Drašiči is located in the "Metlika Wine District", the heart of wine growing in Bela Krajina. Scenic hayracks dot the countryside and grape vines as far as the eye can see, flow along the sun soaked, southern slopes.

This area is famous for a very dark red, almost black wine, and a late maturing sweet "ice" wine. Traveling northeast on the road from Metlika to Drašiči is the protected steljnik forest. The steljnik refers to the tall, slender, white birches that grow amongst a carpet of fern that were once harvested for mattress stuffing.

While dining in the **Kmetija Odprtih Vrat** (The Open Door Farm) in Drašiči a very quaint and large mural on the upper wall caught my eye. I had noticed the unusual neckpiece hanging from the vintner. This same neckpiece was displayed atop the ceramic heater in the dining room. Through some cumbersome translations, the essence of a time honored tradition unfolded, one that goes back 300 years. Here is the story.

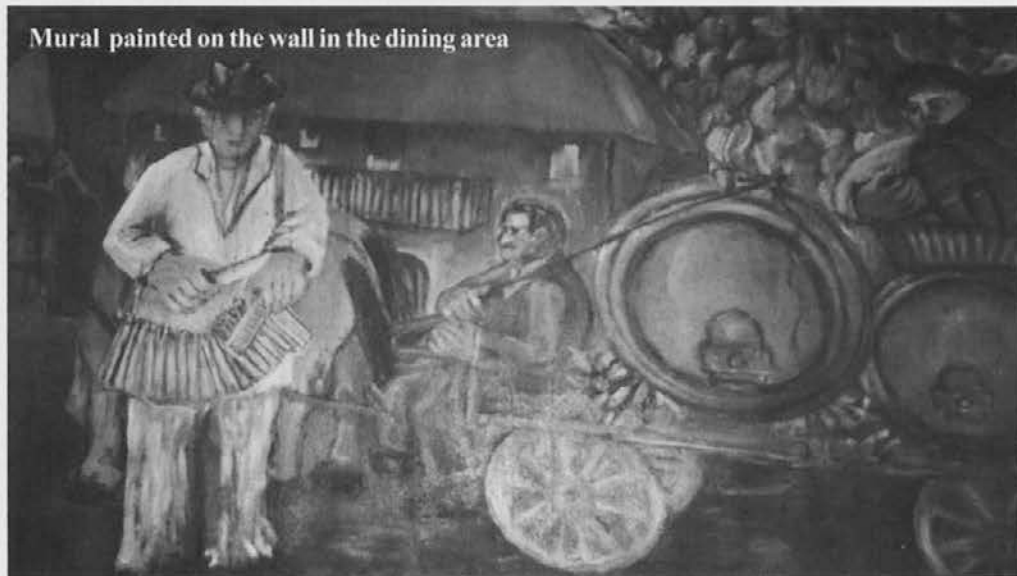
In Drašiči, every child is taught to love the vine from the day of their birth and this is what makes them such great winegrowers. Wine growing is pursued with religious zeal! But the "holy of holies" is the **Soseska zidanica** (neighborhood wine cellar), which also functions as an important village cooperative. This wine cellar is staffed by the 1st Chef (šekutar) and only he holds the key to the cellar.

Each year, on the last Sunday of October, the ritual begins. A horse drawn carriage stops at each village household where each wine producer donates 15 liters of their best wine. As they travel from house to house, the wine is poured into the large barrels. It becomes a "blended village wine". In turn, each producer gains the support of the **Soseska zidanica**, with an annual allowance of 10 liters of blended wine. The extra (5) liters is considered a membership fee. This wine is marketed and sold, the profits being used for member and village expenses.

To keep an accurate account of wine consumption, a **Rovaš** (tally/upon one's account) is used. It is a most ingenious abacus, an accounting system for wine consumption. (Notice the wooden pegs on the Drašiči village logo.) The house number for each wine producer is etched onto a wooden peg. Roman numerals (representing a glass, ½ liter, liter, 10 liter) are notched onto the household peg to account for the wine consumption during the year. All wine must be consumed by June 29th, as the summer heat raises the temperature of the cellar.

When the last Sunday in October comes around again, each member contributes their annual 15 liters. The 1st Chef at this time totals the past year's consumption for each member. There is 1.5 liter fine for each liter over the exceeded 10-liter limit. Ex: If 12 liters had been consumed, a member must contribute the new year allotment of 15 liters plus a 3-liter fine for overconsumption, a grand total of 18 liters. (2 liters X 1.5 = 3 liters)

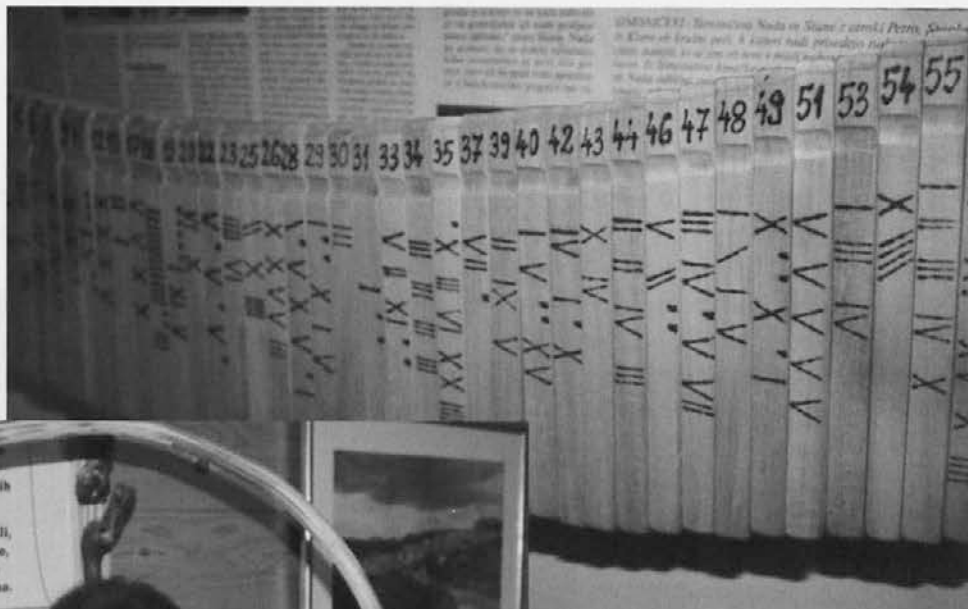
Mural painted on the wall in the dining area



In support of the needs of the village, jobs are doled out to members of the **Soseska zidanica** i.e. upkeep of the parks, repairs to community buildings, or any needs of the village not covered by the district or the nation at large. Their "in-kind donation of labor" and the moneys from the sale of the extra 5 liters of wine is best described as their share of tax money to the village.

When a male member of the **Soseska zidanica** passes

away, the 1st Chef checks the **Rovaš** account. Funeral arrangements begin if the member was of good standing. If wine consumption exceeded the 10-liter limit, the family must pay before the funeral arrangements proceed. Members take on the responsibility of all funeral arrangements, leaving the family



The Rovaš

to receive condolences. Members ring the church bells, dig the grave, serve as pallbearers, carry the casket and plan the food. Three days after the funeral the family is presented with \$100.

So, in Drašiči, a time-honored tradition has been carried on generation after generation. Only one change has been made; tractors are now used in place of the horses. Cleaning the streets is now one less job for the members.

While this is traditionally a men's only club, exceptions are made on St. Florian's Day (August 13th) when wives are invited after Mass. St. Florian is associated with brewers stemming from a legendary incident in which he miraculously stopped a fire with a single pitcher of water. In another incident a person was saved from a fire by invoking St. Florian's name. Today in Slovenia an artists' portrayal of St. Florian can be seen in most restaurants, gostilnas and as murals on the outside walls of village/town fire stations.

*Simonič Open
Door Farm
Drašiči 56, 8330
Metlika
Tel: 07/30/58/185*



The farm offers a wide variety of traditional foods, lambkin or piglet roasted over an open fire, home made breads, Bela Krajina flat cake (Belokranjska pogača), povitica and bottled wines from local winemakers to mention a few. The vistas overlooking the vineyards are spectacular. Just a short walk up the road brings you to the Drašiči town center.

**Secrets of Slovenia Tour 2009
This gostilna will be one of our dining sites in Bela Krajina.**



St. Florian painted on the fire station wall in Drašiči

Thank you to:

**Kmetija Odprtih Vrat
Drašiči for telling the
story of Drašiči. Sonia
Avguštin of Slovenian
World Congress,
Ljubljana, Andreja
Drakulic Veselic
and Goran Roce,
Metlika, Bella Krajina,
proof readers for
accuracy of tradition.**

Master Franc Grom

Creator of the Famous Vrhnika Egg

A Visit and Interview with Master Franc Grom of Vrhnika
By Bernadette Kovacic Fitzsimmons – Zarja Journalist/Translator

One glance around the walls of his spacious home gave evidence that we were in the presence of an extraordinary artist. There were framed awards, collages of framed beehives, and paintings of his egg crafts. A lighted case contained a display of the famous, intricately designed eggs. The beautiful dining room table with intricate inlay, and the chandelier hanging from the lofted ceiling were the products of his handiwork.

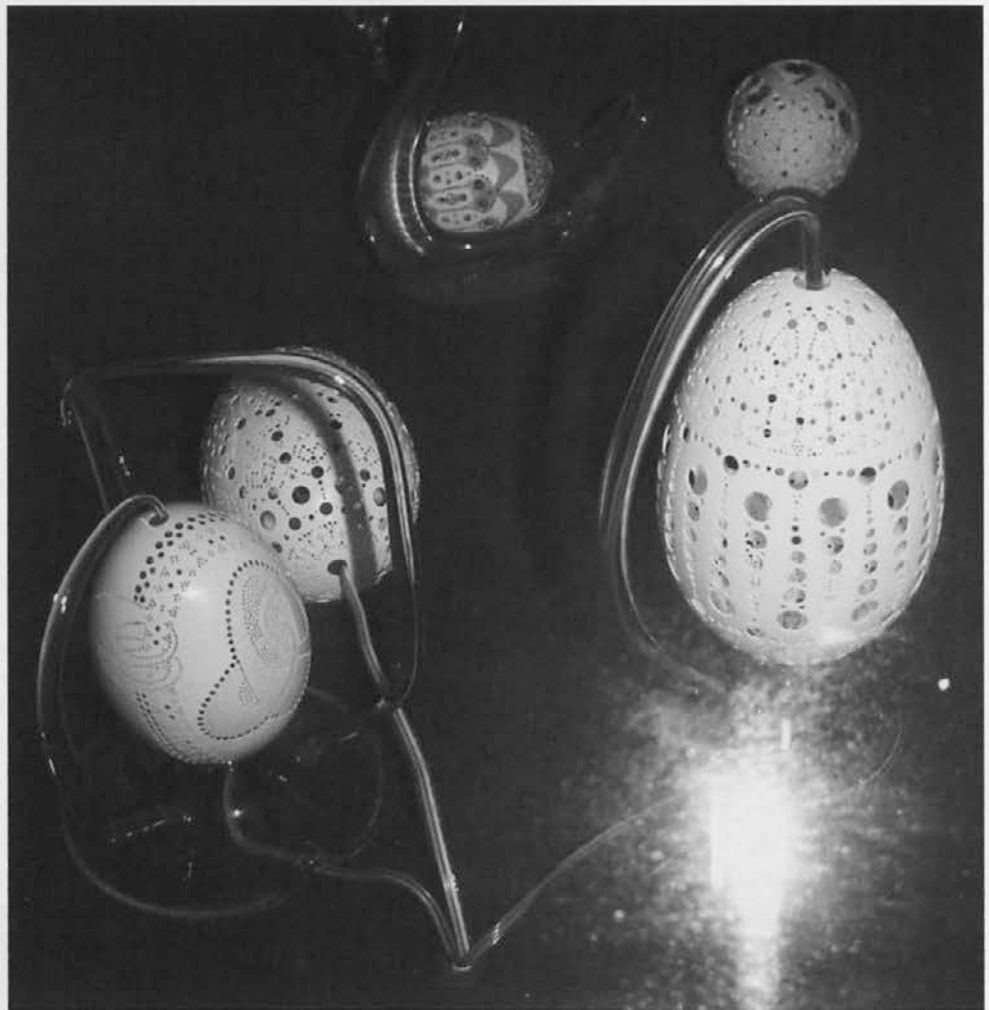
Master Grom exudes a warm and enthusiastic personality. It is obvious he loves what he does and gets much joy in sharing his craft. With his “dentist drill”, a steady hand and a focused eye, he quickly began drilling dot size holes into the eggshell to create amazing masterpieces and the best was yet to come. Designed eggs were individually hung on a custom holder, while Master Grom held a light so as to illuminate the design. With each

egg Master Franc described the identifying age-old symbolisms of Slovenia; carnations, lace, grapevine. Also in his collection were photographs of eggs that he designed for dignitaries around the world.

The following interview was conducted with Master Franc Grom. As he does not speak English, the following is a translation.

How did you get the idea to begin this egg decorating craft?

When I retired in 1993, I tinkered with using an electric boring tool by repeatedly piercing outlines of my original pencil drawn designs on eggs. I've always enjoyed design and art and continued to perfect my original craft as a



personal challenge which provides me with personal relaxation and satisfaction. I never expected any fame or profit from it, only a supplementary income during retirement.

How many hours per day do you usually work and how many eggs do you complete in a certain amount of time?

Typically I work with the electric boring tool 3 to 4 hours a day, since it is very tedious and detailed work. I use magnification glasses to help enlarge my view of the small designs I'm working with. I also keep track of the precise number of pierces I make in each egg, which is included on the certificate of authenticity that I provide to my clients.

What types of eggs do you most often use?

I use all types of eggs, but primarily work with hen's eggs and select ones with the thickest shells. I also use eggs from geese, and small birds. The largest eggs are from geese. Keep in mind that I blow the egg yolk and white out from each one before working with it. I prefer to use natural brown or white eggs and only on occasion dye them prior to decorating them. In addition, I have used fairly hard pumpkin like plants, cleaning out the inside seeds and other materials. I find this fun to create and they aren't as delicate to handle as eggs.

Tell us more about the symbolism of some of the eggs you have created.

The eggs I create are primarily inspired by traditional Slovenian designs such as carnations, grapevines and lace. I also enjoy creating designs with religious symbolism. For example, I've made eggs with the nativity scene and angels overlooking the Holy Family. I like creating illusions with light and shadows that reveal different views depending on how the egg is placed. I was asked to create an egg for the Vatican which was filled with symbolism, depictions of the left and right side of the altar, lace tablecloths and the chalice, including my depiction of the host with Jesus inside it.

Do you sell your designer egg creations to galleries or stores in Slovenia?

I have never offered my eggs for sale in galleries or stores since they are extremely delicate and original designs that I have successfully marketed and sold from my home studio.

What countries have you traveled to as a result of your fame in creating these gorgeous egg designs?

I have traveled throughout Europe, India, Asia, Australia and the United States to present eggs to dignitaries and others who have specially ordered by request a certain design to match their interests and personality. This past year I was invited to present an egg in Berlin to a physician who requested an egg be designed in the shape of a fountain with his name engraved in it. I have also made eggs for Prime Ministers throughout Europe. In addition, this past



**Master Franc Grom and
Bernadette Kovacic Fitzsimmons**

year I was invited to India to present an egg ordered by a Buddhist prophet. The theme of the egg included a lion's heart with details of eyes, nose and a beard. Since the egg went east towards India, the symbolism of the eastern direction was depicted by the position of the sun and earth on the egg, once again with details used of light and shadows to enhance the designs.

Former President Bill Clinton visited me and specially ordered an egg for himself when he visited

Ljubljana. As a result, I have an open invitation to the White House. So far, I have only traveled to Los Angeles in the US, where I was invited to do a class on my egg designing craft.

Do you take orders for individual specially designed eggs?

Absolutely, I welcome you to visit my studio, or contact me directly by e-mail as to what your wishes are. One single egg takes on the average of at least one week or more to prepare, design and complete. Most designs require 2,500 – 3,500 pierces, while more complex designs may have up to approximately 17,000 pierces. The eggs cost anywhere from \$150 - \$700, depending on the complexity of the design and the number of pierces. Each egg comes with a certificate, stating the exact number of pierces and statement of authenticity, including PATENT No., MODEL No., and AUTHOR HAND MADE No.

**Contact information for Franc Grom
Mojster domače in umetne obrti
(Master craftsman of traditional designs)
Stara Vrhnika 90a, 1360 Vrhnika, Slovenija
Tel. 386.1.755.7591
E-mail: zoran.grom@siol.net**

With Special Thanks

On October 17, 2008, our itinerary included a visit to the home and studio of Master Franc Grom. Vrhnika is a 30-minute ride from Ljubljana. Our designated driver was Jure Sešek, Radio Ognjišče director. Accompanying Mary Lou Deyak Voelk and I were Sonia Avguštin from Slovenian World Congress, Darja Japelj, native of Vrhnika and coordinator of the visit, and Urša Sešek and Matjaž Merljak both associated with Radio Ognjišče.

Branch Reports

Poročila Podružnic

BRANCH 1 – Sheboygan, Wisconsin

Our holiday visits to the homebound were planned according to the weather and what weather it has been! Like much of the country, Wisconsin had some brutal winter weather. All of our visits to the homebound were received with such welcome we came away with heart-warming feelings.

Pictured are Branch 1 President Aggie Gruenke's grandchildren Ryan and Amanda Kinney. Their mother is Treasurer Julie Kinney. Also pictured is Aggie's niece Amy



Gruenke. Aren't they cute? Possible future SWUA scholarship recipients?

Members, keep in mind the wonderful and generous SWUA Scholarship Award. Do you know of any Branch 1 members who are eligible now or in the near future? Read the articles in the Nov-Dec 2008 Zarja inside cover and page 4. For further explanatory information or questions, contact Mary Turvey, Director of the Scholarship fund.

By this time, all members of Branch 1 have received a copy of the 2009 agenda. We have very exciting programs scheduled this year! Keep the schedule close at hand and plan to be involved. Let us continue to be proud of our Slovenian Heritage!

The year 2010 is the 100th anniversary of our Slovenian church, SS. Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church. Much is planned and many workers are needed for the festivities. Let us continue to carry on now and in the future what our Slovenian forefathers sacrificed to accomplish.

It's not too late to extend "Srecno Novo Leto" greetings to all!

ANGIE FRITZ

BRANCH 2 – Chicago, Illinois

Our Zveza Day Picnic was a success with beautiful weather, a busy kitchen, bar and enough volunteers to work. Vince Rigler entertained us with Slovenian polkas. Thanks to our sister branches who attended and for everyone who came and made this day special.

Several members attended the Bishop Baraga Days in September. The next celebration will be held in Marquette, MI. If interested please contact the Slovenian Catholic Center at 630.243.0670.

Ten members attended the Illinois/Indiana Convention in Joliet. Joe Skala (Pres) chaired the meeting and Debbie Morris was our delegate. The banquet was beautiful and we enjoyed music by the Singing Slovenes and Bruce Korosa Orchestra.

Snow came early this year on the day of our Children's Christmas Party. But you can't keep children away when they know Santa is coming. A group sang Christmas carols; Kathy, Jessica, Amy, Nicole Hozzian; Kelly and Caitlyn Dore, and Isabella, Alexis and Olivia Wroblewski. Watch out American Idol, they are good.

The snow continued again at the Adult Party, but 50 brave members and friends attended. Vince Rigler entertained us. We honored 50 year members Beth Manion and Mary Reich.

JoAnne Hozzian, marched with the Chicago Police Band for President Obama's inauguration. What a wonderful memory she has!

Before Army Ranger Glenn Latronica left for his third tour of duty to Iraq, his aunts Elsie and Mary Reich cooked his favorite Slovenian dinner at his request. He is the son of Barbara Reich. God bless you Glen and be safe.

Congratulations to Hailey Siegler who competes in gymnastics and does well. She is the great-granddaughter of Elsie Reich. Also to Kelly Kochniarczyk who graduated from DeVry University. She is the daughter of JoAnne Kochniarczyk and granddaughter of Mary Podder and Barb Kochniarczyk.

We hope that our members who have been sick are feeling better: Marie Ovnik, Irene Kalina, Donna Cerec, Mary, Reich, Chris Pirman, Marija Rigler, Jean Zubek, Tina Schwerin, Geneva Cerjak, Helen Cukala, Tina Toplak.

Please remember St. Joseph Table- March 15. Keep warm and safe.

DAISY

BRANCH 5 – Indianapolis, Indiana

Greetings to all Branch 5 members! Apologies go out for the cancellation of our last meeting, but due to the weather alert, it seemed wiser to cancel the night before than to wait for morning to make a decision. We will discuss ways to improve notification of cancellations at our next meeting.

It has been a long, cold winter, and a very blustery one, too! Being "house-bound" is one of my favorite things! I

love to read, watch old movies and look at old pictures, especially the old sepia-toned or color-tinted ones of family long ago. We are fortunate to have many photos of weddings, christenings and yes, even funerals that date back to the early 1900s of family and friends. The closeness of the Haughville community here in Indianapolis is very evident in the many photos of families standing up for each other as godparents for children, witnesses for marriages, honor guards and pallbearers at funerals. Steve's father, Henry, had many pictures that were mounted on the old matting material and he would write the person's name on the back, and, if a group picture, he would list each person in order. It is amazing that one year Henry gave me the wedding picture of my father's parents and Henry's parents were the witnesses in the picture!! I hope if you have the chance to be "house-bound" you too will take the opportunity to get out those old pictures and write the information on the back of the picture so that someday you can present someone with a treasured memento from your family's past!

Easter Season brings a time for renewal to our lives. Please plan to attend a Mass at our beautiful Holy Trinity Slovenian Church and bring a friend or family member who may not have had the chance. Remember to give generously to the collection basket, your rewards will be plentiful!!

As always, please remember our members in your prayers, especially those who have been ill or hospitalized this winter. Pick up the phone or visit someone today!

Watch your mail for our May meeting info. God Bless!
PHYLLIS, KAREN and MARY

BRANCH 10 – Cleveland, Ohio

Hello ladies, we would like to wish everyone a happy, healthy new year! We are giving these families our deepest sympathy; Elsie Zalar, Lillian Romeo and Justine Girod.

We will have a dinner for our members sometime in June 2009. Please call Stephanie Segulin at 216.451.1876 for information.

Wishing everyone a Happy Easter. God bless our people in the service.

STEPHANIE SEGULIN

BRANCH 12 – Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Our Christmas Luncheon at the Brass Key was a huge success and every attendee received a gift from Santa Claus, together with a great lunch and some games of Bingo.

Sadly we lost another member of our branch. Sylvia Kotze, who was a member for over 20 years passed away peacefully on January 2nd. Sylvia was first missed several years ago when she became a resident of Village at Manor Park and unable to attend meetings. At that time we

already missed her presence, since she always had some special bakery which she prepared and you could always find her in the kitchen doing clean up which no one relished doing. We extend our deepest condolences to her family.

The organizers of the Balina League are setting up teams. If any members are interested in joining the SWUA team please contact Stan Vidmar at 541.9143. You will have a summer of fun. League play starts in June and runs for about eight weeks.

Our schedule for picnics should be published in the next issue of the USPEH Newsletter and then we can plan our summer outings.

Our combined lodges bowling tournament, (The Tony Verbick Memorial Bowling Tournament, held each year on the third Saturday of January) is always a "hoot". This event seems to draw a goodly crowd of "happy" Slovenians.

So until the next issue, when I will have more news, here's hoping everything is just right in your little corner of the world.

FRANCES REMSHAK

BRANCH 13 - San Francisco, California

Well it's that time of year again! President Doreen Sustarich and Treasurer Michele Twers have made the reservation for our annual Member of the Year Luncheon. It will be at Val's Restaurant, 2468 Junipero Serra Blvd., Daly City (right off the 280 Freeway). The date is Sunday, May 3rd at 12:00 noon. The cost is \$30.00 per person and you have a choice of Filet of Sole, Prime Rib or Chicken. We will have our raffle with outstanding prizes again this year. Look for Virginia Sustarich at Church on Sundays selling raffle tickets. This is the only fundraiser we have, so please plan on attending and buying raffle tickets. It is a wonderful way to enjoy the company of old friends and catch up with each other. This is a family event and all husbands, children and grandchildren and any other relatives are more than welcome. Make this your family



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event!!!! To make your reservation call President Doreen Sustarich at 415.468.5089 before April 22nd.

If you have news you would like to share with us, please e-mail me or send it to me at 2324 Buena Vista Ave, Belmont, CA, 94002.

I hope this article finds all of you in Good Health and Good Spirits and God Bless You.

BARBARA CHIODO bchiodo@comcast.net
650.593.9576

BRANCH 14 – Euclid, Ohio

Greetings! Members and friends of Branch 14 met for their annual Christmas Party in December at the Slovenian Society Home. Our loyal members along with guests from the Slovenian American National Art Guild and members of SWUA Branches 10, 25, 47 and 50 feasted on a delicious Slovenian dinner prepared and served by Sophie Mazi and her staff, and then everyone enjoyed a raffle. The raffles that we have at our two dinners are our only fundraisers during the year and are always successful.

We were very happy to have at our dinner the mother and aunt of Lisa Lorek, our SWUA Scholarship winner who attends the University of Dayton. Lisa graciously donated for our raffle one of her beautiful paintings which everyone wanted to win.

Congratulations are being sent to our two new 50 year members, Tillie Spehar and Mary Ann Blakely.

We will be having our second annual Mother's Day Dinner on the first Tuesday of May again at the Slovenian Society Home, where we will be honoring all our mothers. Our dinner will again feature a delicious Slovenian meal prepared by Sophie Mazi. You do not find too many cooks today who continue to prepare a traditional Slovenian meal starting with liver dumpling soup and ending with strudel. Sophie Mazi, our member, is a caterer who sells her tasty strudels and other pastries at her shop in Wickliffe where many members and others have made purchases.

Many, many thanks go to Stana Grill who takes all the reservations and arranges the seating for about 80 people at both of these events. Thanks also to Jackie Ullé, and Diane and Larry Varney for all their help, especially to Larry selling the raffle tickets and bringing the beautiful poinsettias which were used as centerpieces.

Soon you will again be hearing from Stana for Mother's Day dinner reservations. If she does not contact you, please contact her. See you at our Mother's Day dinner.

PATRICIA A BUDZILEK

BRANCH 16 – South Chicago, Illinois

I hope that all the snow that we've had this year is gone by the time you read this article. We are all kind of tired of it by now; it sure kept everyone from going out for fear of slipping and falling.

We would like to express our deepest sympathy to the friends and family of Marie Lavaich. She died in December and was laid to rest at Holy Cross Cemetery, may her soul rest in peace.

Our Christmas Party was held on December 11th at the Jovial Club. There was a good turnout with a few of the ladies from Branch 95 that joined us. There were 39 members, spouses and friends.

At our Christmas Luncheon we nominated Dolores Franko as our Member of the Year and she graciously accepted.

Our next meeting is March 14th at 1:00 p.m. in St. George Hall. We will have our usual corned beef sandwiches to celebrate St. Pat's Day. Marge, our President sent out some letters to people in the area to remind them to join us that day.

We will welcome a new member at this meeting, Alberta Corey, our President's sister, isn't that great!

Don't forget to have your Easter Baskets blessed.
HAPPY EASTER.

DOROTHY ROSSI

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BRANCH 20 – Joliet, Illinois

Wishing you all a Blessed Happy Easter. Officers installed at our January meeting were President Char Kobe, Vice President Jeanne Warsaw, Secretary Robyn Coyne, Treasurer Jean Herbst, Recording Secretary Grace Doerk, Sgts. at Arms Nancy Horwath and Sandra Kehring, Auditors Josephine Lustik, Bernice Nemanich and Pat Butterbach, Zarja Reporter Pat Schager.

Our annual St. Joseph's Table, scheduled for March 17, is always one of Branch 20's highlights. Members are asked to bring a dish to pass. Here's a chance to show off your favorite recipe. Hostesses are Mary Mihelich and Pauline Mihelich. Men and Junior members are welcome.

Condolences are extended to the family of member Barbara Potochnic. Also to members Lori, Judy, Ellen, Sarah, Christopher, Kyle, Kenny, Jessica, MacKenzie, Joe and Betty Tezak, and Amy and Alexander Rodrigue, on the loss of their loved one, member Josephine Tezak. Also to member Judy Gronwold on the loss of her mother, member Bertha Hofer.

Our annual bake sale is scheduled for March 21st and 22nd. Proceeds to benefit Branch 20 Scholarship Fund. Get ready to bake and buy. Bring goodies to St. Joseph Church before the 4:00 p.m. mass Saturday or before the Sunday masses.

Congratulations to Cynthia Lynn Gudac, Branch 20 member and Peter Anthony Ribolzi who were married on October 11, 2008. Cyndi is the daughter of Ron and Deanie Gudac, former Joliet residents. Bridesmaid was member Georgette Lamb and guests attending were members Jonita Ruth and Rosanne Ruth, relatives of the bride.



Cynthia Lynn Gudac (Branch 20 member) and Peter Anthony Ribolzi, both of Chicago, IL were married on October 11, 2008

Recall it as often as you wish, a happy memory never wears out.

PAT FIGUROWSKI

BRANCH 24 – LaSalle, Illinois

Dober Dan! Sixty plus members and guests attended our annual Christmas party on December 4th at the Paramount Club in La Salle. Hosting the event was Barb Pohar,

Debbie Pohar, Bonnie Prokup and Cathy Lenkaitis. The food was delicious and each guest received a loaf of potica and a lovely Christmas ornament. Junior members, Barbi Prokup, Josie Brady, Adam and Alex Lenkaitis, Heidi Story, Molly, Mary Kate, and Kelly Considine provided entertainment and singing. A story, "The Bell Boy" was read by Heidi, Molly, Mary and Kelly. Santa topped off



the event by making an appearance and making an early delivery of gifts for the children.

We have several sick and shut-in members who were remembered during the Christmas season with a Christmas cactus, delivered by two of Santa's helpers, Josephine Grabowski and Helen Swietek. Let us pray that with the spring time there will be renewed hope and healing for all those in need.

"Hvala lepa" to all who donated to the bake less bake sale. Your generous response is greatly appreciated and enabled us to donate to Horizon House and Lighted Way.

Our next meeting will be on Thursday, March 19, the feast of St. Joseph.

We love to see our members and guests - we do have a good time together! We welcome Donna (Hobneck) Slatner to our branch. For years Donna has made "butare" and passed them out to those who bring their baskets to be blessed on Holy Saturday. Every year they become prettier and this simple act brings lasting joy to those who receive them.

As we prepare to celebrate the beautiful feast of Easter let us remember how blessed and thankful we are to be able to enjoy the simple traditions of our great culture and be more determined than ever to instill and nurture these traditions in those to follow. To all who read this - "Vesele Velikonocne Prazike!" - Happy Easter!

Until next time, may your hearts be filled with peace and love.

LORETTA STORY 9lives@comcast.net

BRANCH 33 – Duluth, Minnesota

Greetings. Our Christmas party was cancelled due to a blizzard early in December and rescheduled for January 11. We had a good time even though it was late. We also sent valentines with a treat to all our junior members.

An update on upcoming events: in May we will celebrate our Member of the Year. We won't meet in June and July but in August we will have our Slovenian Picnic. On September 13th we are hosting the Minnesota Regional Convention and in October we will celebrate our 80th Anniversary with a mass and music by the Singing Slovenes. In November we will have our election of officers and in December our Advent/Christmas Party. Other information on our activities will be forthcoming.

Remember our meeting times are the first Thursday of the month at 6:30 p.m. We meet every month except the J months.

Our sympathy goes out to Lois Pelander on the loss of her husband Les. Lois was our reporter for many years and also started a funeral fund and took care of that for years. Enjoy Spring and Happy Easter.

BEV MENART

BRANCH 35 – Aurora, Minnesota

Branch 35 is sad to report the death of a very good member, Mr. Robert Wheeler. Robert's wife, Kathleen, has always been active even though she lives some distance away. Besides Kathleen, sons, David, James and his daughter, Cheri, survive Robert. We give our sincere condolences to Kathleen and her family.

Our Advent Party and election of Officers is now in the past. The 2008 Officers will remain for 2009.

I received a phone call from my granddaughter, Amanda Ochsendorf, who is attending Loyola University in Rome. She is crazy about the country, food and the many interesting things to see. She told me she would stay there if she could speak the language fluently. I gave her some good advice, "Stay because the best way to learn the language is to live with the people." She is very excited to visit the relatives in Slovenia before coming home. I hope she will love Slovenia as well.

The Assumption Group at our church is having a "Noodle" fundraiser. Some of our members belong to that group. They do many good things. Bernice and Ed Ceglar and Anita are helping them out, guess how many pounds they took orders for? Yes, 60 pounds. The local Super One store didn't have that many pounds of noodles on the shelf. Pray for them!!

I remind all eligible members to send their applications for scholarships to Mary Turvey as soon as possible.

Wishing all members of SWUA a wonderful year, good health love and peace. Pray for our Troops! Na svidenje.

ANITA VOVK gospanita@yahoo.com
218.229.3202

BRANCH 39 – Biwabik, Minnesota

It was Epiphany Sunday on January 4th, as the members of Branch 39 met at Michaels on the Course for our annual gathering. Everyone enjoyed the brunch and the button box music played by Carol Sherek. We sang along to a few old Slovenian tunes and in that festive mood,

rearranged chairs to play our dice game. The center was filled with wrapped gifts and it didn't take long to start the "stealing from each other". It was fun to watch the men



enjoying the game too.

The weather is brutally cold at this writing with temps reaching -45 in some parts of northeastern Minnesota - before the wind chill factor.

This extreme cold made the national news. Thinking about this publication for March/April, it makes us smile since we will now be getting ready for the planting season. Usually it's the July/August issue showing the fruits of our labor. Incredible and hard to imagine as we try to keep warm.

We will have an update on the progress of our Zarja Project in the next issue and let's all remember our membership dues.

Let us all pray for health and peace. MARIJA POMAGJI PROSI ZA NAS.

ROSEMARY (SERTICH) RIBICH
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BRANCH 42 – Maple Heights, Ohio

As winter slowly winds down we can begin to look forward to another spring and my favorite holiday. In my youth Easter was the culmination of a long dreary winter and a rigid six week Lenten fast. Ma always had something new for us to wear to church on Easter morning. This was a real treat because “new” wasn’t a part of our vocabulary. Most of my childhood clothes were hand-me-downs or made by my sister Julia (Lipnos), the family seamstress. She was also an accomplished crocheter and progressed well beyond the usual doilies to purses with a matching “tammy”. My special little girl purse for Easter was a navy blue one with a beige silk lining, a zipper and a handle. As near as I can remember the stitch resembled a very small shell. How proud I was to wear it. In today’s society of instant gratification it is hard to understand how we were so happy with so little. In reflecting on this now I think our saving grace was our close knit Slovenian neighborhood with traditional family values and rules. Everyone pretty much lived the same way and within our own boundaries, thus the world around it was alien to us. How sweet it was!

All enjoyed our Christmas lunch on December 23rd at Pipers Three. We extend our best wishes to Josie Perko Gruden in her assisted living domicile at The Elms of Hudson. Happy retirement to Marge Yemec Church who made it official in December. Marge continues to work hard as president of our branch. We still await comments from the out-of-town membership on the future of our branch. Please let us hear from you.

Happy St. Patty’s Day and have a nice Easter holiday with your loved ones. Our next meeting is Saturday, May 9th at 11:00 a.m. at the Maple Hts. Library. Zbogom.

LIL SADOWSKI LRSadow@aol.com

BRANCH 43 – Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Despite the threatening weather, our December meeting was well attended. The chili with trimmings and the mouthwatering desserts, served prior to our meeting, were delicious. A big thank you to all who brought the bountiful table of goodies.

Our birthday members included Jan Gehm, Tillie Skusek, Chet Zurawik, and Denise Bartlett. Again thanks to all.

Our slate of officers for 2009, is as follows: Theresa Mejchar, President, Jan Gehm, Vice President, Mary Bregant, Recording Secretary, Helen Frohna, Corresponding Secretary, Tom Gehm and Toni Needham, auditors. Our retiring officers, Josephine Janezic, Denise Bartlett and Jackie Smith have served us with enthusiasm and much time. Thank you for a job well done and best wishes to all of you.

Our bake sale was a HUGE SUCCESS because of all of the generous people who baked and helped out in any way. We are grateful to all, THANK YOU! Another bake sale is being planned for April 7, 2009, at the 88th St. School. Once again your help is needed. PLEASE!

A REMINDER! New beneficiary forms were mailed to all members. Please fill them out and return them as soon as possible.

The Holidays have come and gone, but the spirit was still very evident at our branch Yule Party held on January 10. After a social hour, a delicious lunch was served with potica, courtesy Josephine Janezic, as our dessert. Thank you, Pepca.

Installation of officers was held with Rita Majerle Klug reading the oath of office. All the outgoing officers were presented with a red carnation, as were the officers for 2009.

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Josephine Janezic was acknowledged for her 14 years of leading this branch as president. She was presented with flowers, a music box, and a beautiful bracelet made by one of our members, Joni Hynek. Thank you, Josephine, for your many years of dedicated service to this branch. We wish you much happiness and good health.

Special thanks to all of the members who brought the many door prizes that our guests and members enjoyed. A big thank you to Paula Behling who made two beautiful afghans for two lucky people.

May 2009, be a happy, peaceful, and healthy one.

MICI BREGANT

BRANCH 47 – Garfield Heights, Ohio

Hi everyone. With the Christmas Holiday's over we are approaching the Easter Holiday. Hope you all have a Blessed Easter. Our next meeting will be on March 8th at the Maple Hts Library at 1:00 p.m. Our Member of the Year Celebration will be May 2nd at Piper's 3 at 4:00 p.m. Mass for Living and Deceased will be June 7th at St. Lawrence Church at 10:00 a.m. In October our Branch will be hosting the Ohio Convention. This will be held on October 4th. Mass will be at 10:00 a.m. at St. Lawrence Church where a luncheon will follow at the Slovenian National Home. Further Details to follow.

Please encourage our younger members to attend our meetings. We need new ideas to keep everyone involved with our Heritage.

Birthday wishes go out to all of our March and April Members. Contact people: Olga Dorchak 1.330.468.7989 or Elsie Spellacy 1.330.699.0031.

KATHERINE WALLACE webblekatt@hotmail.com

BRANCH 50 – Euclid, Ohio

In this issue of Zarja we remember Bela Krajina, the home region of many of our Slovenian-Americans in northern Ohio. Our member, Ivanka Matic reminds us that Bishop Frederic Baraga (d. 1868), though from a noble birth, first served as a humble parish priest in Bela Krajina before embarking on his mission to the new world. His ministry in Bela Krajina was short-lived as the young priest's orthodox preaching was somewhat disturbing to the settled authorities who tried to make life difficult for him. Ivanka has written his life in the Slovenian language, and is a terrific source of information about Baraga and his cause.

As spring approaches, we fondly recall Branch 50's annual Christmas meeting and dinner in early December

at Vittorio's Restaurant in Wickliffe, Ohio. President Rose Mary Toth welcomed some 37 members and guests for a wonderful meal. A brief meeting took place at which the present board of officers unanimously agreed to serve another year: President, Rose Mary Toth; Vice President, Cookie Maxin; Secretary-treasurer, Fran Kajfez (with assistance from Alice Signorelli); Anne Tomsick will continue as your Zarja reporter, and Lillian Homar and Louise Troglia will serve as auditors.

There were a few more bright moments in the midst of our otherwise bleak past winter. As president of the Saint Vitus (Cleveland Ohio) Church Altar Society, Ivanka Matic once again presented a sizeable annual donation of \$10,000.00 to Father Joseph Boznar for the Church's roof replacement campaign. The money was collected from monthly sales of krofe baked by Ivanka and other volunteers.

Our Slovenian community in Cleveland has a new publication, the "Slovenian American Times." Subscription information is available on its website of the same name.

The annual Thanksgiving polka party was another huge success and already members of the Cleveland Polka Radio Club, including some of our own Branch 50 members (such as yours truly) are planning the upcoming 48th annual event in November 2009.

We have the following deaths to report: Frances Milavec, age 103, on November 14th, and Rose Silva, age 84, on November 18th. Our deepest sympathy to the families of Frances and Rose.

As we go to press in late January, Ohio's former governor and current US Senator of Slovenian and Serb heritage, George Voinovich, announced that he will be calling it quits at the end of his current term in 2010, concentrating on the work of government rather than the distractions of fundraising and re-election campaigns. Throughout his four decades of public service as Cleveland mayor, state

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governor, and US senator, Mr. Voinovich has been a strong, long-time supporter and advocate of the various organizations that uphold our Slovenian heritage. In the early 90's, Voinovich brought polkas to the state capitol when he invited my son and Branch 50 member Joey Tomsick to perform (along with Joey's band) at each gubernatorial ball.

Our next Branch 50 meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 18th at 1:00 p.m. at the Euclid Public Library.

ANNE TOMSICK 216.531.2745
cjaynow@yahoo.com

BRANCH 54 – Warren, Ohio

I hope this finds each of you in good health. This year, our officers are the same as every year and we will continue to keep our small group, and not give up! We spent Christmas, at our daughter's in South Carolina. We had such a wonderful time. I took several rolls of potica and the "southern folks" couldn't believe that you could make such a pastry. We took some to Providence Hospital, to Pat's unit, Coronary Recovery. The staff loved it and wanted to know when I'll be back with more potica. On our way home to Ohio, we received a call, that my brother, Frank Racher, was critically ill. We went straight to Columbus, Ohio and were able to see him. He passed away a few hours later. He was my only sibling and all his family will sadly miss him.

Our Mother-Daughter Luncheon will be on Wednesday, May 20th at Cafe 422 at 1:00 p.m. I'll be calling you for reservations.

Congratulations to Anne Tomazin's grandson, who recently graduated from Purdue University.

It was nice to see Virginia Shine at the AMLA party. She is staying in Cleveland after Al's death so she won't be coming to our Branch meetings. Louise Vett's son and wife from Florida, visited with her for the holidays, as did Elsie Shine's, son and family from Georgia.

Can't wait for springtime, this winter has been too long. Happy Easter to all.

JOANNE
PONIKVAR

BRANCH 55 – Girard, Ohio

Greetings from Branch 55! It is hard to believe that spring is upon us already. Warm spring showers and blustery winds readily replace the cold and snowy weather of the winter months. I'm sure many of the avid gardeners



Delores DePietro and Steve Luzar

among us are eagerly counting down the days when it will be warm enough to head outdoors and begin planting the flower beds and gardens. Helping my mom plant the dozens of flowers that she picks out for our flowerbeds is always something that I enjoy this time of year.

In recent branch news, the annual Christmas party was held at Amen Corner in Girard, OH on December 3. Several members were in attendance. As in the past, members of AMLA Lodge 42 joined us at this event. A 50/50 raffle was held and Barbara Gantar, a guest at the event, won the raffle for the second year in a row. She graciously returned her winnings to the Branch coffers. Thank you, Barbara, for your generosity! Maria Selak, Branch President, made traditional St. Nicholas cookies for all those in attendance. The evening ended with carol singing and button box music provided by Delores DePietro and Steve Luzar. All had a good time!

That's all the news for now. Meetings will resume in March.

MONICA SELAK



Left to right: Anka Krakora, Joan Twaddle, Delores DePietro, Kay Sefcik, Maria Selak

BRANCH 89 – Oglesby, Illinois

Greetings from Branch 89. We had 30 members and guests for our Christmas Dinner at Liberty Restaurant in Peru. Our youngest guest was little Evelyn Elizabeth who attended with her grandmother Annabelle Bryant and mother Carolyn. Bobby Huber was a guest of his mother Heidi Huber; he and sister Hannah came with their Grandmother Margie Walter. We turned our 50/50 into a winner take all drawing and Rosie Kamnikar won the whole pot. Alice Ebner won the poinsettia door prize and we all took home a candy cane and card explaining its significance. We thank Ona and Megan Rehn for planning such a nice event.

We hope to have a good turnout for our potica making class on March 9 at the Dickinson House in Oglesby. Anyone interested is invited to attend; you do not have to be a member to enjoy this class or any other meeting. Everyone should bring their favorite potica recipe so we can see the many little differences in recipes.

Marilyn Argubright is recuperating after a hospital stay. She is our Sunshine person who sends out all our branch's birthday and get well cards so I hope she is getting lots of them.

Our heartfelt sympathy is extended to the family of Josephine Argubright. She first joined our branch in 1943 and was always willing to do whatever job needed to be done. She is survived by daughters Alice Ebner and Margie Walter and sister Eunice Supan and brother Joe Kernz as well as grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

We'll see you at the next meeting. Contact me if you have any questions or anything to share.

BARBARA BRUCH barbarabruce@yahoo.com
815.339.2714

BRANCH 93 – New York, New York

Branch 93 closed out 2008 by gathering at Djerdan (a Balkans restaurant) in mid-town Manhattan on December 20th. Seven members attended including two newer members of the branch: Elizabeth Gross and Kim Thompson. Tea Rozman-Clark (former member) was in town and those attending got to meet her first child, Izabela Beatrice, who was born in Ljubljana in the spring. Tea said a few times "I may be back" (Ljubljana has become boring and Tea/her husband wonder why they ever left NYC! Tea, however, is busy with a Ph.D. program.)

We are going through another branch re-organization. Vesna Straser is stepping down after several years as our branch president due to heavy work and personal commitments. We thank Vesna for her

many years of service (and she does plan to continue her involvement as a branch member). Lynn Zalokar will take over in the interim, but she is requesting help moving forward (i.e. a few volunteers to serve as branch officers — essentially a committee to plan meetings/events and share some of the duties/responsibilities).

Lynn sees two functions of Branch 93 (and please let her know if you agree or disagree) - a place for members and prospective members to meet/get to know each other and learn/share re: our Slovenian heritage. The second function is reaching out beyond the Slovenian world with events such as the "Sample Slovenian Heritage" weekend through the Appalachian Mountain Club. Lynn e-mailed the branch with many instances in the past few months where the general public still doesn't know the who/what/where re: Slovenia!

Ongoing events that may be of interest to branch members or those visiting NYC: St. Cyrils Slovenian Church in NYC has a cultural program and meal every third Sunday of the month after the 10:15 a.m. mass (62 St. Marks Place, btw. 1st and 2nd Aves. in the East Village). Call to confirm 212.674.3442. "Slovenian Magazine", a 25-minute program shown in English on channel 25 (WNYE) the first and third Sunday of each month at 3:30 p.m. "It presents current events in Slovenia, its cultural and historical heritage, attractive features of the landscape, and the country's economic and tourist potential. It places great stress on original Slovenian creativity. Slovenian Magazine is mainly intended for foreign countries, as well as for Slovenians living around the world." website: www.rtvsllo.si/slovenianmagazine

Branch 93 lost two long-time members in 2008. In memoriam: Agnes Albro, 95 (49 year member) and Anna Jonke, 92 (58 year member). Our condolences to Carol Dooley (daughter of Agnes Albro) and Irmtraud Link (daughter of Anna Jonke) and their families.

Corrections and Clarifications: The photo of Branch 93 members with The President of the Republic of Slovenia, Dr. Danilo Türk (page 31 of the Jan./Feb. Zarja) did not include Slovenia's First Lady Barbara Miklic Türk (she did not attend the event).

Branch 93-NYC Contact: Lynn Zalokar, 201.947.6336, lzalokar@yahoo.com Website: www.swuanyc.org

Yahoo group:
SWUABranch93NYC-subscribe@yahoogroups.com
Facebook page:
www.facebook.com
(SWUA Branch 93 NYC is under Groups, Type: Organizations, Sub-Type: Clubs & Societies)

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BRANCH 99 – Lemont, Illinois

Hello all! Some exciting news to report: The January 23rd meeting at Olive Garden went very well, as there was much discussion with our regional president on plans for the SWUA Regional Convention that we will be hosting in November. Future announcements include the April 5th Palm Sunday Breakfast following 11 a.m. mass. This meal is free and is sponsored by the societies of the Slovenian Cultural Center. Be sure to mark your calendars in advance for the Mother's Day Mass on May 17 at 11 a.m. Afterwards, we will be honoring our Member of the Year, Martha Pecharich for a 12:30 celebration including lunch.

BRANCH 100 – Fontana, California

The Christmas Season is officially over, but Branch 100 members here in Southern California have pleasant memories of our very enjoyable luncheon that took place in December. Over 30 members and friends gathered at Antonini's Ristorante Italiano in Rancho Cucamonga on that Saturday afternoon. President, Mary Lou Jensen made it a festive day with special door prizes and Rosemary Mlakar offered the beautiful SWUA calendars for 2009. All that were still available were sold, so the Branch is happy to have had the opportunity to increase our treasury a bit. Also, the members are glad that we were able to help the Zarja Fund and to have a very special calendar to mark the New Year!

Along with the lovely lunch that day, we had our Annual Meeting. Officers were elected for 2009.



Linda Costell, Elvie Blasick, Mary Lou Jensen, Rosemary Mlakar, Anne Kapel, Mary Lou LaVallie

Most of the positions remained the same: President, Mary Lou Jensen; Secretary-Treasurer, Rosemary Mlakar; and Recording Secretary, Jean Koci. The only office that changed was that of the Vice-President. Newly elected was Linda Costell to take the place of Jan Eckert who could no longer serve. An important part of this meeting each year is the selection of our "Member of the Year". We are happy to announce that Rosemarie Black will be honored with this distinction for 2009. You will hear more about Rosemarie's special attributes in later issues of the Zarja. Rosemarie will be honored at a luncheon on Saturday, May 2. Final plans are still being made.

My husband Arnold and I were happy to have the opportunity to meet with Dragica Bosnjak, a reporter for



Arnold Koci, Jean Koci and Dragica Bosnjak, "Delo" sharing an album of Slovenian activities in Southern California

the Slovenian newspaper, Delo, when she was in California in December. We met her and a colleague in Hollywood at their hotel. She is a delightful and enthusiastic lady and was eager to hear all about our Slovenian activities here in California as well as our family background and connections with "The Homeland".

The Branch has scheduled a long-awaited cooking class for Saturday, March 7th at the home of Teresa Koci in Laguna Niguel. We will learn a quick and easy way to make cheese struklje and possibly flancate, as well. Starting time will be about 1:00 p.m. Please call for the address and directions if you need them. 949.495.0097.

Good luck to Jan Eckert on her upcoming surgery, and keep in your prayers Marge Ostrowski and any other members who may be going through difficult times.

We wish you all a Happy Spring and a Joyous Easter Season!

JEAN KOCI 949.495.0097 ajkoci@cox.net

BRANCH 102 – Willard, Wisconsin

Condolences to the family of member Frank Govek. A long time member of Branch 102, Frank (91 years old) passed away January 10th. Services were held at Holy Family Parish in Willard.

Aggie Debevec celebrated her 80th birthday at Chelsea's Supper Club with family and friends. Aggie has held numerous positions within our branch and served as our branch reporter for several years. Her unending support of activities in Willard has helped keep Slovenian traditions alive.

Birthday wishes also are extended to: Marie Hoppa, Juliet Murphy, Lynn Schwartz, Judy Di Pasquale, Dickie Bauer, Candy Johnson, Monsignor Malnar and George Plautz.

George Plautz continues his recuperation at Memorial Home in Neillsville. Please keep him in your intentions.

Branch 102 held their Valentine Party/meeting on Valentine's Day. Everyone enjoyed a potluck, bingo, business meeting and door prizes.

Beaver Days festivities including a parade, helped signal the coming of spring in Willard this March. Like most of the Midwest, Willard endured the cold and snow. Everyone appreciates the coming of spring, preparation of the fields and gardens.

Branch 102 extends our encouragement to, and support for, the new branch in Lake County, Illinois. Our Willard history book (*Spominska Zgodovina*, 1982) details the fact that many of our pioneer families came to this area from Waukegan in the early part of the 20th century. Good luck establishing your new branch!

KAREN HRIBAR SPIRES kleespires@comcast.net

BRANCH 103 - Washington, D.C.

"Ce v prosincu ni snega, ga mali traven da." "If in January snow does not come, then in February there will be some."

Srecno Novo Leto! That Slovenian proverb didn't hold true for our nation's capital last year and we haven't had any measurable snow so far this year.

Members of Branch 103 were proud to meet and discuss the highlights of 2008 and plans for 2009. Our first meeting in 2009 was held on Sunday, January 4 after mass in our Chapel dedicated to Marija Brezje.

We have been extremely satisfied with our previous election so no changes were made to the list of members holding office.

For over four decades our branch has been dedicated to keeping our community together. Serving as president during the past decade has been Mrs. Mary Lou Terselic. After such a long and fruitful commitment we are pleased to announce that she is our Member of the Year.

Treasurer Molly Thomas stated that she still has her "Lectovo srce" honey bread (pg. 2 of Jan./Feb. '09 Zarja) and that her mother used to pick chestnuts to sell in order to buy yard goods for new dresses. The two articles in the

recent Zarja about the honey bread and chestnuts brought back those memories.

Lydia Millonig, granddaughter of member Jana Bevec and daughter of another member Lydia Millonig, has released a CD "Warrior Angel" under the name "L'illon" consisting of lyrics and music written and sung by her (www.lillon.com). Congratulations for an effort that took considerable talent and energy to produce.

Veronica Stare, junior member and daughter of vice-president Angela Stare, was the recipient of the scholarship grant so generously donated by the founder of Branch 103 Irene Planinsek.

TATJANA ZUNKO

BRANCH 108 – Olney, Maryland

It has been a busy couple of months for our branch. Welcoming programs for the Forget-me-not (FMN) author tour in early October were nicely organized cultural events and enjoyed by all who attended. The youth members, children and adults were amused by the anecdotes and liked the excerpts of the story, *Louisa from Outer Space* read aloud by Slovenian children's author, Majda Koren, and Spela Brecelj, facilitator. Junior member Juliana Fitzsimmons was delighted to get a signed copy of the book, and volunteered to read a few paragraphs aloud at the Gaithersburg Library program. The FMN U.S. visit concluded with a private tour of the Embassy of Slovenia before departure back to Slovenia from Dulles International



Lili Prop, Juliana Fitzsimmons and Andrej Roza Rozman following the presentation at Barnard Elementary in Washington, D.C.

Airport. A big thanks to all our members and friends who volunteered to make these events go smoothly.

On November 4, President, Bernadette Fitzsimmons and her daughter Juliana attended the Kids Euro Festival event at Barnard Elementary School in Washington, D.C. featuring award winning Slovenian writers, Andrej Rozman

Roza and Lila Prap who performed/read from their respective books, *How Oscar Became a Detective* and *Why Crocodiles Cry*. Their interactive presentations were performed in several locations, including The Kennedy Center Millennium Stage.

Our 5th Anniversary Pilgrimage to National Shrine Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes in Emmitsburg, MD, and brunch at the Mountain Gate Inn took place on November 9. Father Peter Rozic, Spiritual Advisor and the chaplain of the grotto celebrated Mass together and especially recognized our group for this occasion to all those present that seemed to represent all corners of the globe. Fr. Rozic gave a meaningful homily and special welcome for our 5th anniversary. Branch members and their families enjoyed the pilgrimage around the historical grounds, which were frequently visited by first American Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton while she lived in Emmitsburg.

In January we had our first meeting of the year to discuss future plans and guest speakers for 2009. We met in February to honor France Preseren with a Pust luncheon, including krofe. Our authentic Kurant doll was on display

to celebrate the old Slovenian custom of chasing winter away before Easter Sunday.

Weather permitting, members and guests will participate in Slovenian costume/sweat/t-shirts/hats in the Annual St. Patrick's Day Parade of Gaithersburg at the Washingtonian Center on Saturday morning, March 14 at 10:00 a.m., followed by lunch at the Macaroni Grill. For details, go to parade@hssg.org. We've had fun participating in this event in the past, so all are invited to come out and enjoy!

Vesela velika noc in veliko pirhiov!

BERNADETTE KOVACIC FITZSIMMONS

BRANCH 109 – Twin Cities, Minnesota

With frigid winter temperatures ushering in the new year, the spirits of the Twin Cities Slovenians were warmed as we planned for our 4th Anniversary party on January 17th. In addition to the appetizers and wine Yvonne McComber, our treasurer, organized a silent auction of some 50 items ranging from "Slovenian booties" to rings of homemade blood sausage. The goal was to have each family donate at least one item for the auction. Al Siftar who donated a



1st Row left to right: Julian Medved, Sydney Setnicker Wood, Sophia Setniker Eschiti, Brittany Setnicker Wood, Brian Hahn
2nd Row left to right: Jack Tait, Jessie Smrekar, Tatiana Smrekar, Kathy Wertzler, Grace Tait and Margie Hahn

myriad of items many of which were connected with Slovenia surpassed that goal. "Hvala Lepa", Al and the same to Yvonne for a great job of organizing this first time event. The funds will be earmarked for the Festival of Nations Committee headed by Mary Medved.

In addition to the silent auction, Mary Bernard added a unique touch to the party. Eleven children, dressed as waiters and waitresses, were taught some basic Slovenian phrases related to ordering food and drink (non alcoholic). "Kaj be radi pili?" Imamo kofe,caj, in voda" was one example. Our members then responded back to them in Slovenian -"malo." Hvala Lepa, Mary. Involving grandchildren continues to be a goal for Branch

109. Special thanks to the children/grandchildren who participated in what turned out to be a great learning experience for them and our members.

A meeting at Frank and Mary Medved's home on January 23rd launched a brainstorming session for the Festival of Nations exhibit in May, which will follow the theme of "Invention and Transportation". The goal of the meeting was to come up with some specific ideas for the Festival that will be presented to the membership in February. With help from Mary Lou Voelk, SWUA Cultural chairperson,



THE SINGING SLOVENES

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3. V VAŠKI KRČMI
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5. SEM TER TJA
6. ZAPLULA
7. JE PA DAVI SLANCA PADLA
8. SLOVENIAN PICNIC
9. REGIMENT PO ČESTI GRE
10. TAM KJER MURKE ČVETO
11. TI NEZNAŠ ŠTO JE LJUBAV
12. HLAČE, HLAČE
13. GLAS HARMONIKE
14. KAMNIK POLKA
15. V DOLINI TIHI
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17. VANDROYČEK MOJ
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Frank Medved wrote a proposal to the Republic of Slovenia asking for financial assistance in completing the exhibit.

Our March meeting will be devoted to the election of officers as well as announcing our "Member of the Year". Mary Ann Palmer, our Branch secretary for the past four years will be giving up the office and we would like to thank Mary Ann for her devoted service to Branch 109, especially in these early growing years. Hvala Lepa, Maria!

NORM SETNICKER

A Visit by Bishop Anton Jamnik

On December 21, 2008, the Slovenian Bishop of Ljubljana, Pomozni skof Monsignor Dr. Anton Jamnik celebrated Mass in the Slovenian Chapel of our Lady of Brezje in Washington, D.C. and informally met with local Slovenians. His homily highlighted the importance of our Slovenian ancestral roots, respect for our heritage, and plans for the project ahead in the establishment of a Catholic College in Slovenia offering a number of popular majors, and the eventual goal of a Catholic University offering advanced degree programs. In addition, he elaborated about the many Catholic colleges and universities he toured in both the US and Canada in December to learn and collect information to help plan for the proposed Catholic University in Slovenia. Bernadette K. Fitzsimmons, SWUA National Board member presented a welcome address in both English and Slovenian on behalf of the SWUA and the National Board summarizing the founding of SWUA by Catholic immigrant women, and the importance of the legacy brought to us by our Slovenian grandmothers, great-

grandmothers and beyond that continues to pass down to present generations the traditions that help keep the Slovenian spirit alive in our hearts. Bernadette especially welcomed members of both local SWUA Branches, 103, Washington, D.C. and 108, Olney, MD for joining in this Slovenian Mass celebration.



**Juliana and Bernadette Fitzsimmons,
Bishop Jamnik and Nika Kovacic**

Introducing Branch 110 A Yearning for Roots

There must have been a void, “a yearning for roots”! 115 Slovenian Americans turned out for the Branch 110 inauguration. Saturday’s breakfast brought together the young and old who shared stories, memories, laughs and lots of “potica talk”.

On the docket were Mary Artac Urban, noted genealogist, who interacted with the crowd on “finding your roots”. Jane Paley a jeweler, whose specialty is creating personalized rosaries and repairing rosaries, demonstrated her craft.

Nick from Rocky Mountain Potica created poticas before our eyes! Many had watched their grandmothers and mothers, but had never mastered this famous Slovenian symbol. 115 people had the opportunity to interact and help as Nick walked and talked through those creative steps in the making of this symbolic cake. It was heartwarming to see young Mickayla Kutz, 10, from Wadsworth, IL taking a photo of the potica demo with her cell phone. Hopefully, she will someday be demonstrating the art of potica making.

So as not to go away empty handed, raffles and give-aways from local Slovenian businesses were part of the act. But it was that Slovenian bond that came through loud and clear as lunch was fast approaching and the crowd was just dispersing.

Meetings will be held every fourth Saturday of the month. The next meeting is scheduled for February 28 at Saddle Ridge Restaurant in Waukegan. Hopefully, more children and young adults will be attracted so they can carry on with the traditions and Slovenian culture and lead SWUA Branch 110 into the next generation.

For more information email:
Mary Carmody
mcarmody23@yahoo.com





Slovenian Women's Union of America
Slovenska Ženska Zveza v Ameriki

Membership Application

Yes! I want to join the SWUA. I want to preserve and promote the legacy of our Slovenian-American heritage. As a member I will receive the publication Zarja The Dawn; I can affiliate with branches and events across the country and best of all, I will come in contact with fellow Slovenes.

Please type or print legibly. Choose type of membership:

Junior (Birth to 18) Annual Dues \$5.00

Adult Annual Dues \$20.00

Name and Middle Initial _____ Maiden Name _____

Street Address _____ City/State/Zip _____

Phone/Fax _____ E-mail _____

Date of Birth _____ Do you speak Slovenian? _____

Please describe your Slovenian ancestry and provide **SLOVENIAN SURNAMES** _____

How did you hear about us?

SWUA member _____ newspaper _____ website _____ other _____

Applicant signature: _____ Date: _____

Branch Affiliation No. (if known) _____ Location: _____

Please make checks payable to the *Slovenian Women's Union of America* and mail to:

SWUA 431 North Chicago Street, Joliet, IL 60432

For additional information, contact:

SLOVENIAN WOMEN'S UNION OF AMERICA, 431 North Chicago Street, Joliet, IL 60432
815.727.1926 e-mail: swuhome@sbcglobal.net - website: www.swua.org

I would like to volunteer for the SWUA. My area of interest or expertise is:

Tell a Friend! If you wish us to send information to a friend or relative just fill in name and address here:

My friend's name _____

Address: City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Calendar of Events

MARCH 7

Branch 100 of Fontana, California will host a Cheese Sturklje making demonstration at the home of Teresa Koci in Laguna Niguel. For further information contact 949.495.0097.

MARCH 9

Branch 89 of Oglesby, Illinois will host a Potica making demonstration at the Dickinson House.

MARCH 14

Branch 108 of Olney, Maryland will participate in the Annual St. Patrick's Day Parade of Gaithersburg at the Washingtonian Center on Saturday morning, March 14 at 10:00 a.m., followed by lunch at the Macaroni Grill. For details, go to parade@hssg.org.

MARCH 14

Branch 16 of South Chicago, Illinois will host a St. Patrick's Day dinner and meeting at 1:00 p.m. in St. George's Hall. Members of former Branch 95 are encouraged to attend.

MARCH 15

Branch 2 of Chicago, Illinois will have a St. Joseph's Table.

APRIL 5

Slovenian Cultural Center of Lemont, Illinois will host a Palm Sunday Breakfast following the 11:00 a.m. Mass.

APRIL 7

Branch 43 of Milwaukee, Wisconsin will host a Bake Sale to be held at the 88th Street School.

APRIL 30, MAY 1, 2 and 3

Branch 109 of the Twin Cities will participate in the Festival of Nations to be held at the St. Paul River Center, 175 West Kellogg Blvd., Downtown St. Paul, Minnesota.

MAY 2

Branch 47 of Garfield Heights, Ohio will host their Member of the Year Celebration to be held at Piper's 3 at 4:00 p.m.

MAY 2

Branch 100 of Fontana, California will host a Member of the Year Luncheon.

MAY 3

Branch 13 of San Francisco, California will host their Member of the Year Luncheon to be held at Val's Restaurant, 2468 Junipero Serra Blvd., Daly City (right off the 280 Freeway) at noon. Cost is \$30.00. Contact President Doreen Sustarich at 415.468.5089 before April 22nd.

MAY 5

Branch 14 of Euclid, Ohio will host their Mother's Day Dinner. Contact Stana Grill for more information.

MAY 17

Branch 99 of Lemont, Illinois will host a Member of the Year Celebration at 12:30 p.m.

MAY 21 and 22

Branch 20 of Joliet, Illinois will have their Annual Bake Sale before and after all masses. All proceeds benefit Branch 20 Scholarship Fund.

JUNE 7

Branch 47 of Garfield Heights, Ohio will have a mass for the Living and Deceased at St. Lawrence Church at 10:00 a.m..

JUNE 19 and 20

CELEBRATE ZARJA along with a Camp for ages 10 – Adult "Let's Feel Slovenia". Slovenian cooking, wine tasting, music, language lessons, crafts and so much more! Complete details and registration packet to follow in May – June Issue, web site and online newsletter or email wprokup@aol.com.

SUMMER

Balina League in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, contact Steve Vidmar at 414.541.9143.

SEPTEMBER 13

Branch 33 of Duluth, Minnesota will host the Minnesota Regional Convention.

OCTOBER 4

Branch 47 of Garfield Heights, Ohio will host the Ohio Convention. Mass begins at 10:00 a.m. at St. Lawrence Church followed by a luncheon at the Slovenian National Home.

In the Kitchen with Slovenian Children Authors

with Majda Koren, Author of *Louisa from Outer Space*

by Karen Taylor, Zarja Journalist

As you all know from our last issue, a group of our Zarja writing staff, including members from our National Board made a trip to Slovenia last fall in order to bring a fresh new prospective to our beloved and internationally historic magazine. We wanted to bring you closer to the Slovenia of our ancestors and in doing so nourish our own souls and spirits. We wanted to connect to something greater than what has become a great source of pride in America-individuality, and find the basis that unites us to a greater sense of pride - our Slovenian American heritage. We wanted to explore the unique culture of our homeland and get back to the things that, in this crazy, hectic world, help to ground us and bring us fulfillment and comfort. For so many of us that means being more personally involved in those things that do nourish our lives and those that we sometimes take for granted: friends, family, traditions, celebrations and all that wonderful food that goes along with it.

*For some of you this continues to be a daily part of your lives, but for so many of us, especially those of us who don't live in Slovenian communities, it is something we honor as being an important part of our heritage but find it to be more difficult to achieve on a regular basis. Most of us feel over-extended with the demands of work, family and the managing of our household in these dire financial times. And I mean, honestly, where do I even find blood sausage in Champaign, IL? Where can I find folks that actually appreciate **eating** blood sausage in Champaign or know what goes into making potica? Not a single one of my friends has ever roasted a chestnut or enjoyed the amazing wines of Slovenia. I know that this is sad and I also know that if I don't find ways to begin to cultivate these things into my life they will be lost-perhaps forever. So this trip, or pilgrimage, as I have come to call it, was a way to further experience that which is the essence of each of us- being Slovenian.*

Although most of my fellow travelers were well acquainted with Slovenia - its culture, regions and language-for me, as a relatively newcomer, (this is only my second visit) this was a powerful trip in which I was able to see some of the lesser traveled parts of the country. In this economy I was worried about whether I could actually afford this trip. I learned (later as we do with so many important things) that I could not have afforded to have missed this opportunity. It was worth every penny I spent as it not only brought our small band of Zarja travelers closer together as a group



Majda Koren

but also allowed each of us to further strengthen our own knowledge and admiration of the people before us. For me that always brings to mind the two strong women who have most influenced me in this world, my grandmother and mother. But for each of us it was someone we hold near and dear to our hearts. We each learned a little bit about one another and our families and in some cases we learned that those people have intersected with each other at one time or another or with someone we met while on our trip. It was an amazing time, and as I said before, I met some truly amazing people.

One of the people that we met with is Majda Koren another of our *Forget-me-Nots* authors. She is the award winning author of *Louisa from Outer Space* - the story about a girl from another world who lands in the yard of a Slovenian boy who is frustrated by the responsibility of his homework and studies. He then takes her on a tour of his city and introduces her to its wonders. Once a city girl, herself, Majda currently lives in the beautiful Bela Krajina area of southeastern Slovenia in the middle of the Posavje wine region. This is the area that my own grandmother, (nee Frances Konda) was born and raised so I was particularly enthralled by its picturesque scenery of rolling vineyards, large stands of white birch, which gave the region its name, and the stunningly crystal clear Kolpa river which flows along the southern most part of this region and separates Slovenia from Croatia.

I had met Majda earlier in the year when she was a part of the *Forget-me-nots*' summer book tour. She is a strong, quiet and strikingly handsome woman who made a wonderful impression on all of those of us lucky enough to have met her when she was here in the US. She did much more than that when we met her again in Slovenia. Majda is just one on those people who, with few words, can reach out and touch your soul, (although she later admitted to me that she isn't as comfortable with all those overt physical expressions of greetings-like the hugs that I often used to greet her - just not how she was raised as a child). She is a woman who is kind, unassuming and giving. She really went out of her way to show us the beauty of the land, the customs, the people and the food of this region. She took us on a memorable tour, which included a cooking lesson by a family member who is an award-winning maker of *pogaca*- a beautiful flat bread that is much like foccacia and is traditional in Bela Krajina. She also treated us to one of the most incredible meals we had while on our trip - and you know that is saying something - the roasting of a lamb (*jagnje*) over a spit. In addition to that she took our entire merry band of travelers to her small cottage overlooking the vineyards and roasted chestnuts for us by the pan-fuels. We had all been lamenting the fact that we were wishing for roasted chestnuts in the brisk autumn days of our trip but had not had the opportunity to have them yet. Majda and her *mozem*, Bogdar, kept feeding us as many as we could possibly peel and eat. So with full bellies and blackened fingers we visited with Majda Koren.

Here are some of the things we learned about her:

Zarja: You have made it your life to work with children. Can you tell us about how you got started and why you chose this path?

Majda Koren: It just happened. Actually, I wanted to be a journalist, but didn't manage to finish that school.

So I became a teacher instead and found it quite exciting to work with children and for them.

Z: How and why did you become a children's author?

*Majda: I was writing a lot in high school but only stuff that is not "publishable", mainly about my teenage problems. But as soon I became a mother, I started to write for a Slovenian children's magazine called *Ciciban*. I just had to write and luckily, the editor liked what I wrote so I continued to do so. The easiest thing was to write about my youngest son. He always did something funny. In the stories, he is called little monster Mitzi who I made feminine. At first, she made a lot of inconvenient things at home and later, she went to school. She became more responsible in school, helping her mates in the classroom and quite critical to the acts of teachers and parents, who made mistakes dealing with children.*

*Nowadays I write a lot about the children I meet at school. A lot of them live only with mother or father because their parents divorced. The book *Eve and the goat* talks about this problem - about dealing with separation and missing the parent who has gone away. This book even won the main Slovene award for the children's books, named *Vecernica* (the Evening star).*

Z: What did you want children to learn from your book *Louisa from Outer Space*?

Majda: I was very excited when the editor called me and ask me to write a story for young Americans, whose grandparents lived in Slovenia. I knew, this shouldn't be something about 'potica' or 'krvavica' - it should be something that children like, something up to date. And what is more up to date then writing about space creatures? That's how I 'invented' the main character in the book. Another main character lives



in Slovenia. Quite ordinary boy, aged nine. Luisa and Jure (that would be George in English) took a walk through the streets of Ljubljana.

And that is what I wanted the children to learn: to get to know our capital more. To learn something about our biggest poet, France Preseren. But not to learn **too much!** In that case, if there were too many pieces of information, children would suspect something and wouldn't want to read any more. So this is what I've done: wrapped some information about us in a science fiction story.

Z: Your book includes the use of computers by the two young children in the story. Are children and schools in Slovenia as involved with computers for learning and entertainment as they are in the United States? Do most families have them in their homes?

Majda: They sure do! I even exchange mails with the six-year-old boys from my class. Most families have not only one, but also two or three computers. I could say that people without the computers are only the ones who prefer not to have one. And I also think, that, sometimes, the computer really can save you a lot of time but on the other hand, you are actually wasting time using it, browsing whatever comes your way or playing games for hours.

Z: Your book has beautiful illustrations and relates to sites that seem very familiar. Is this a city we should recognize and one that has meaning for you?

Majda: Ljubljana is my birthplace and I lived and worked there for a long time. I recently moved in the country but still come to Ljubljana two or three times a week. So it was easy to write about this city. And I really wanted young readers to learn about the city with its baroque buildings, the castle and works of (well, in mid-Europe) well-known architect Joze Plecnik. Children and parents, who will read the book, will get to know this architecture better, and some day, if they will want to, learn more about it.

When I make jokes, I even say, that the book Louisa from Outer Space should have the subtitle: A Guide to Ljubljana for Aliens (and of course, for little children).

Z: Majda, what can we expect from you next?

Majda: Hm, hard to say! Just finished the book called Julia is in love LOL, which is about the girl who spends too much time on the internet. I even invented a new word in it: netspacebook – all the computer addicts will know what I am talking about.

Some day I hope to write about Louisa coming back to earth, to Slovenia, so that Jure will have the opportunity to show her some more of our beautiful country. And when I finish that, I really hope to come

back to United States, to meet again with my kind friends and to do some readings again which I enjoyed very much.

And so with reluctance when we had to end our time with Majda to go on with our journey, she came up to me and gave me a warm hug goodbye.

Amazing people: Majda Koren

Forget-me-nots books are available at:

Slovenian Heritage Museum
431 North Chicago Street
Joliet, Illinois 60432

Cost: \$26.00

Add the following for S&H
1 book (\$3.50), 2 books (\$4.50)

For questions: 815.727.1926



Tia, Anica and Majda holding the book that Majda wrote about Tia (niece) and her dog

Belokranjsko Pogačo

(Bela Krajina Pogača)

Majda Koren is very proud of her aunt, Anica Renko, who has won numerous awards for her famous belokranjsko pogačo (Bela Krajina pogača). Majda convinced Aunt Anica to share her secrets and she demonstrated her special techniques in making pogača.

Origins of pogača are not well documented, however it was created during a period of lively cultural exchange centered around the Uskoks, groups of refugees from the Balkan regions in the 15th and 16th centuries. They were running when trying to escape from the Turks from Serbia and Croatia and therefore becoming an important historical factor on Slovenian territory. This dish is classified as a protected foodstuff brand with traditional reputation in Slovenia.

Before baking a square net pattern is made on the surface of it. The net has a double function in that it serves as ornament and instructions for use; namely the squares are bite-size and suitable for breaking evenly. (Note: Anica used ham slices instead of caraway for us to eat.)

INGREDIENTS

2 ½ cups sifted white flour	1 package dry yeast
3 tablespoons white flour	2 teaspoons sugar
1 cup plus 3 tablespoons lukewarm water	1 pinch caraway
2 tablespoons salt	1 egg

1. Crumble yeast into pot, add 3 tablespoons white flour, 3 tablespoons lukewarm water and sugar. Stir well and let yeast rise until volume has doubled.

2. Mix sifted flour, remaining lukewarm water and leavened yeast into large kneading bowl. Knead dough until elastic and not too stiff. Knead 10 minutes and test: if your fingerprinted pit in the dough disappears immediately, it is ready.

3. Cover with cloth, let rise in bowl until double in size.

4. Place leavened dough onto well-greased baking tin and stretch into a circle with 10-12 inches diameter.

5. Incise square net pattern into dough (see picture). Knife it through to the bottom. Brush with beaten egg seasoned with caraway. Sprinkle a pinch of unrefined sea salt or salt flower on top.

6. Bake at 425° F for 20 to 25 minutes. Pogača must turn light brown. The center reaches about 1 ½ inch height, corners are approx ½ inch. *Serve warm.*



Anica Renko from Kloster near Gradac, Bela Krajina with her award winning belokranjska pogačo



Converting recipes can be a bit puzzling, as measurements do not always come out evenly! Also, Slovenian flours are not equivalent to American flours so gluten may vary. Fresh yeast is also difficult to find, I substituted dry yeast. Serve warm with a dipping sauce and/or olive oil, hard cheese and a glass of wine! Dober tek!

(American conversion by Mary Lou Deyak Voelk)

You're Invited: Easter Egg Dyeing Party

Start A New Tradition – Host an Easter Egg Dyeing Party

Last issue we gave you ideas on how to host a Chestnut Party. We hope you tried it. If so tell us about it. We would love to see pictures and share your stories with our readers. But for now, let's talk about an Easter Egg Dyeing Party.

By now you should know the first thing you need to do is choose a date. Easter is on Sunday, April 12, 2009 so its important you plan this event some time prior. Because it's a time consuming craft, I suggest you keep your guest list to a minimum. A good indication is how many can sit around your table where you have good lighting. If you have a large table and would like to invite many or even your whole branch – go for it! Just make sure your table is covered with heavy-duty plastic as the dyes could stain your table.

Setting the mood:

What is a Slovenian Easter Egg dyeing party without Slovenian music? Just recently three National Officers painted all weekend to the tunes of Dick Tady. The music is upbeat and will get you in the spirit. If you don't own a copy call 815.727.1926 and ask Jonita Ruth in the Home Office to purchase a CD.

Centerpieces always "wow" our guests. This idea came from Anita Vovk, President of Branch 35 – Aurora, Minnesota.

Instructions to make your own Easter Egg Tree:

About three weeks before Easter go out and cut a branch or branches from a lilac bush. Place in a nice vase with water. If using a large branch you can put in a pot with soil, just make sure you water it. If you use the vase make sure you change the water. By Easter you will find small lavender or purple blossoms on the tree.



Now for a Background on Easter Eggs and Different Ways of Making Them Slovenian Style:

Easter is the time to celebrate Christ's triumph over death, binge on some of the heaviest foods available and explore one's painting skills - on eggs.

On the Saturday before Easter, women carry beautiful baskets with embroidered tablecloths and filled with potica (representing Christ's crown of thorns), horseradish (representing the nails in Christ's hands) and cured ham (representing the body of Christ) to church to receive the Easter blessing. Each basket contains "pirhi" (decorated Easter eggs), which are a symbol of Christ's Resurrection.

Records suggest that the decoration of eggs in Slovenia during Easter dates back to the 17th century. Over time, Easter egg-making became more intricate and artistic, and Slovenian pirhi are now considered to be among the most exquisite examples of Easter eggs in Europe. This folk art has given Slovenians a chance to express their creativity in infinite variety of patterns, colors and techniques, which



have been passed on from one generation to the other. It takes hours of patient work to decorate a single egg.

Among the best-known types of pirhi in Slovenia are the "pisanice" from Bela Krajina which are decorated with geometric patterns, whereas pirhi from other regions mostly

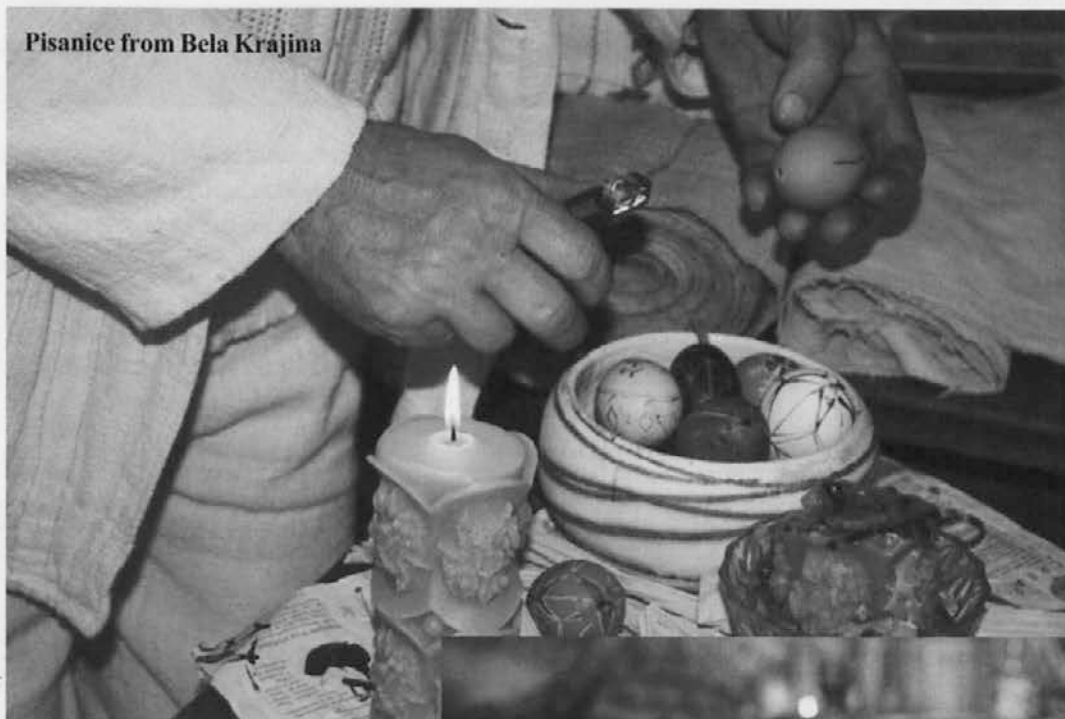
contain plant motifs. In the Dolenjska region, eggs are first treated in dye, and the color is then carved away with a small knife to produce “drsanke” with beautiful field flowers patterns. In Ribnica, they make “lesene pisanice” (wooden Easter eggs), while “pisanice” from Idrija are decorated with more than a thousand holes in the shape of a flower.

To create pisanice” from Bela Krajina wax-filled wooden tools are used to create the desired patterns on the hollowed-out eggshell. The wax is kept in a liquid state with the help of a candle. The egg is then dipped in red dye for at least two hours so as to ensure that it is distributed equally. Dye does not take hold on the parts where wax has been applied. Once dried, another wax pattern is applied and the egg is then cooked in black dye. The eggshell is then treated



eggshells are then collected from the dye, dried and left to cool.

“Drsanke” are drawn with a small knife. The color is removed from the parts where the knife is used to draw a line. They are usually designed using field flowers and corn cob motives.



Note:
In Bela Krajina, eggshells also were stuck to the ceiling to ward off cockroaches.

in water, which is brought to boiling before being extracted carefully and dried with a cloth.

In some northern areas of Bela Kranija, close to the Dolenjska region, a special technique called “drsanke” is also utilized. The shell is first dipped into a container of cold dye where water was cooked with red onion leaves and a spoonful of apple cider, which aids the absorption process of the dye. The dye is reheated with the eggshell and boiled for an hour. The



Jenka's Taste of Slovenia

Direct from Slovenia a Simple but Traditional Easter Meal

Jenka and Maria teamed up to prepare this simple Easter dish and dessert for you. Struklji is one of the most characteristic Slovenian foods, prepared in every geographical region of Slovenia, mostly on holidays. As there is a different variety of struklji for almost every region, Marija and I are going to show you how her family has made struklji for many years and it is for them a very traditional dish served at their Easter feast. Struklji can be a synonym for feast, as Slovenians use this sentence for an invitation: *Come to our house for some struklji*, which means come over for a dinner feast.



Also traditionally served at Easter is the dish steak and gravy (*zrezki v c'ebulni omaki*) in Marija's family that we have prepared. This is a very simple and delicious dish. I hope you will try it. *Dober Tek - Jenka*

STRUKLJI

5 cups white sifted flour
1 egg
3 tablespoon sunflower oil
1 ¼ cup warm water
1 ½ teaspoon salt

In a large bowl sift the flour and make a well. In the well add the egg, oil, a little of the warm water. Mix together and slowly begin to add in the flour from the well. Add more of the water and continue to add in the flour until you have a soft dough. Knead for about five minutes. Add flour to both the top and the bottom of the dough as you continue to knead. You should end up with a smooth, soft and elastic dough. When you have this consistency you should form a smooth ball and place it in the bowl. Rub oil the outside of the dough with sunflower oil and refrigerate for about 2 to 4 hours.

4 cups ricotta cheese
½ cup sour cream
½ teaspoon salt
2 eggs

Mix the cheeses together with the salt. Add each of the eggs and beat together to form a creamy mixture.

On a long kitchen table place a white 100% cotton dish cloth (like a flour sack). Flour the cloth and remove the dough from the refrigerator. Roll out the dough onto the dish cloth and add flour under the dough to the cloth as you roll to prevent it from sticking. Roll the dough as thin as possible and then begin to stretch by hand until it is

about 1/8" thick. It should be about 4' x 2 ½' long. Spread the cheese mixture on top of the dough. Roll one long edge of the dough inward and then pick up the exposed edge of the dish cloth and continue to pull it forward to roll the dough into a long cylinder. Cut the dough into 2-3 pieces and be sure to seal the ends of the cut dough. Wrap each cylinder of dough in a damp dish towel (or cheese cloth - if you use cheese cloth you may wish to double or triple wrap the dough to ensure that it does not leak when cooked) until the dough is completely covered by the towel. Tie each end of the cloth with string.

4 quarts water
2 teaspoons salt
3 tablespoons butter

In a large pot heat water, salt and butter to a boil. Drop all the wrapped struklji into the boiling water and simmer for about 30 minutes. Remove from the pot and drain. Remove the struklji carefully from cloth and cut into 2 inch pieces.

1 cup dried bread crumbs
4 tablespoons butter

In a separate skillet sauté bread crumbs in butter until you have a coarse crumbly mixture. Sprinkle this over the struklji before serving.

SUGGESTION:

Any slices of left over struklji may be fried in a skillet for another meal, Sprinkle it with the left over buttered bread crumbs before serving.

STEAK AND GRAVY (ZREZKI V C'EBULNI OMAKI)

3 lbs. of round steak – 8 slices about ½” thin
4 small onions chopped
½ tablespoon salt

Take the beef steaks, trim them of excess fat and pound thin between sheets of plastic wrap. Salt and pepper each side. Sauté the steaks in oil briefly until brown on each side and remove from the pan. Place in a bowl to rest while you add the chopped onions to the oil along with the salt. Sauté until translucent and then return the beef steaks to the pan in a layer over onions. Pour any remaining liquid from the steaks into the pan with the beef and onions. Cover and simmer for about 30 minutes. Add additional liquid if necessary.

Gravy

½ cup cream
3 tablespoons flour

Make a slurry with the cream and flour. Remove the steaks from the pan and add the slurry to the broth. Return to a simmer and allow the broth mixture to thicken. Once it has made a gravy, return the steaks to the pan with the gravy and let simmer for few more minutes. Serve each steak with the gravy.



Art of Making Struklji



ZARJA The

Celebrating 80 Years of Keeping

SAVE THE DATE: You are invited to one of the grandest events since the 2007 your calendar for June 19 and 20, 2009. Call the airlines, consider the train, fill a bus or just bring the family, but whatever you do don't pass up this great opportunity to celebrate your heritage.

Zarja The Dawn is celebrating 80 years and we have a great celebration planned. Come join the fun! During these two days you can participate in a wine tasting event (limited number of tickets will be sold), learn a Slovenian song and dance that will be part of evening gala performance, attend a cooking class with famous Slovenian Chef Dino del Medico, and learn all about beehive panels and why they are so important to our culture. There is more; learn of traditional customs and of course learn a few Slovenian words. We have several guests coming from Slovenia to help lead us in this celebration. On the evening of the 20th we will have a gala celebrating the longevity of *Zarja The Dawn* with a Slovenian meal and music and dancing.

The registration packet will be available in the May/June issue of *Zarja*, on the web site and in the online newsletter, the *New Neighborhood*. It is important to make your reservation early as space will be limited. We hope you can make this grand event!

“Let's Feel Slovenia” – CELEBRATE ZARJA!

Drašiči, Bela Krajina

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