

# Zarja

Official Publication Slovenian Union of America  
Uradno Glasilo Slovenske Zveze v Ameriki

\$8.99 U.S./\$15.99 International

Volume 93 Issue 4  
Winter 2021

The Dawn

BLED JEZERO



*I*  *love* *Slovenia* *Tour* 2021

# *Slovenian Union of America*

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

TELEPHONE: 815.727.1926

WEBSITE: [slovenianunion.org](http://slovenianunion.org)

## **2015-2019 National Board of Directors**

**PRESIDENT: Mary Lou Deyak Voelk**

(Branch 23) [marylou174@gmail.com](mailto:marylou174@gmail.com)

**VP OF OUTREACH: Annette Charron**

(Branch 3) [amtcharron@gmail.com](mailto:amtcharron@gmail.com)

**VP OF HOME OFFICE: Richard Grill**

(Branch 99) [rlgrill@hotmail.com](mailto:rlgrill@hotmail.com)

**VP OF MARKETING & FUNDRAISING: Stephanie Owens**

(Branch 93) [nycslovenianunion@gmail.com](mailto:nycslovenianunion@gmail.com)

**VP OF CULTURE & HERITAGE: Beverly Kochmann**

(Branch 109) [bbkochman@msn.com](mailto:bbkochman@msn.com)

**NATIONAL TREASURER: Robert J. Kuhel**

(Branch 16) [rjukuhel@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rjukuhel@sbcglobal.net)

**CORR./RECORDING SECRETARY: Mary Risner Glaize**

(Branch 30) [tankandfrog1@yahoo.com](mailto:tankandfrog1@yahoo.com)

## **STANDING COMMITTEES**

### **RESEARCH & ADVISORY**

Chuck Debevec (Branch 109) [cfdebevec@live.com](mailto:cfdebevec@live.com)

Richard Terselic (Branch 108) [rat1@verizon.net](mailto:rat1@verizon.net)

## **EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL GRANTS**

Debbie Duris (Branch 111) [dcduris@gmail.com](mailto:dcduris@gmail.com)

Frances Kovatovich (Branch 35) [velike2000@yahoo.com](mailto:velike2000@yahoo.com)

Carol Rutkiewicz (Branch 109) [crutkiewicz@live.com](mailto:crutkiewicz@live.com)

Bill Zerial (Branch 99) [billzer@sbcglobal.net](mailto:billzer@sbcglobal.net)

## **MEMBERSHIP**

Sandra Brierton (Branch 102) [sb24774@dce.k12.wi.us](mailto:sb24774@dce.k12.wi.us)

Christine Charron (Branch 3) [christinedcharron@gmail.com](mailto:christinedcharron@gmail.com)

James Lah (Branch 23) [jlal@ely.k12.mn.us](mailto:jlal@ely.k12.mn.us)

Richard Mutz (Branch 20) [sua.members@gmail.com](mailto:sua.members@gmail.com)

Lynn Zalokar (Branch 93) [lzalokar@yahoo.com](mailto:lzalokar@yahoo.com)

## **PRESERVATION**

Carol Novak (Branch 20) [sua@slovenianunion.org](mailto:sua@slovenianunion.org)

Carole Terlep (Branch 20) [sua@slovenianunion.org](mailto:sua@slovenianunion.org)

Georgene Agnich (Branch 20) [sua@slovenianunion.org](mailto:sua@slovenianunion.org)

## **FACEBOOK EDITOR:**

Mary Risner Glaize (Branch 30) [tankandfrog1@yahoo.com](mailto:tankandfrog1@yahoo.com)

## **DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL PROJECTS:**

Denise P. Bartlett (Branch 43) [denisebartlett@wi.rr.com](mailto:denisebartlett@wi.rr.com)

## **MEMBERSHIP MANAGER:**

Rick Mutz [sua.members@gmail.com](mailto:sua.members@gmail.com)

(ISSN 0044-1848)

Postmaster: Send all changes of address to this location:

SLOVENIAN UNION OF AMERICA

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

© Copyright All Rights Reserved

# LAURIE LEHMAN



*Afternoon Outing 12"x16" (scene of Piran, Slovenia)*

## Original Paintings of **Slovenia**

[laurielehmanartist.com](http://laurielehmanartist.com)

989-560-1645

## *Zarja - The Dawn*

**EDITOR: Bonnie Pohar Prokup**

**DIRECTOR OF DESIGN: Debbie Pohar**

**CONSULTING EDITORS: Annette Charron and**

**Bernadette K. Fitzsimmons**

**EDITORIAL OFFICE: 3119 Carrie St., Peru, IL 61354**

**PUBLISHER: Slovenian Union of America**

**Vol. 93, No. 4 Winter 2021** Published quarterly

Periodicals Postage paid at Joliet, IL and additional mailing offices.

### **Communications for the next issue of publication**

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

### **Submission Guidelines**

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

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

# SUA IS CELEBRATING 95 YEARS - DECEMBER 19, 2021!

## **Historical article written by Marie Prisland (December 1946): *THE SLOVENIAN WOMEN'S UNION ON HER 20th BIRTHDAY***

“We, the Slovenian women living in the United States of America, believing that it has become an absolute necessity to have a medium through which we may express ourselves as a unit in all matters which shall be of interest to us as loyal citizens of the United States, hereby unite ourselves in the Slovenian Women’s Union and agree to become incorporated...”

These words, forming the Preamble to our Constitution, express the feeling which prevailed at the first meeting held in Chicago, December 19, 1926 when the Slovenian Women’s Union was born.

An individual’s way can be a lonely one – more so in a newly adopted country; the going is difficult in the trying periods of adjustment. Therefore, it became more and more evident that the Slovenian needed an organization which could unite them, foster their ambitions and serve as an open forum for expression. Through it they could discuss their opinions and also through its medium gain from the experiences of women of other nationalities living in America. They wanted to be active in their newly adopted country which in return for given freedom asks only that its people contribute to the national welfare socially, politically and economically to the best of their ability. The Slovenian women wanted to rear their children to become good citizens, but how could children be guided unless mothers understood and learned the new way of life in America. All these factors eventually lead to the promotion and the formation of the Slovenian Women’s Union.

After the Union was born, women, regardless of distance, rallied to the banner of the new organization accepting with enthusiasm its ideals and program. Thus began an era of intense activities of the Slovenian women in America. From a small beginning of forty-four members the first month, the Union has grown to the unbelievable number of thirteen thousand members in 105 branches, established in fourteen states of the Union.

Later, realizing the importance of promoting a youth program, the Junior Division was organized. Its purpose

is that the younger Slovenian-American women appreciate to an even greater degree the country in which they live, to retain some of the Slovenian traditions, and to give them the volume of experience from their elders gained through hardship and struggle.

Our branches have organized groups in home economics, sewing, singing, dramatics, lectures, citizenship classes and welfare work. We have sponsored hand-work exhibits and conducted educational tours. Some branches have their own library. Our colorful drill teams are the pride of the Union. During the war the members were especially active. They offered 173,322 hours of work for the Red Cross. More than one thousand members were either in the Service, the Civilian Defense or served as Nurses’ Aides. 8,192 pints of blood were donated for blood plasma and approximately \$4,000,000 was invested in war bonds by the members. 9,709 sons, husbands, fathers and brothers of our members were in the armed forces of which 286 died for their country. Great relief work was also performed, especially for the destitute people of the country of our birth, Yugoslavia. Financial help was given and many thousands of pounds of food and clothing were shipped overseas.

The Slovenian Women’s Union is affiliated with the National Council of Catholic Women, The Catholic Association for International Peace, Women’s Action for Victory and Lasting Peace, and the Common Council for American Unity. Through these influential organizations, whose membership totals millions, we hope to help formulate the future peace for the world and give our support to the splendid programs these organizations are sponsoring.

The great progress of the Slovenian Women’s Union was possible only because of the intense interest of its officers and members who are always willing to work and exert their effort and time for the organization. They deserve our warm appreciation and heartfelt thanks!

Our most sincere wish on this 20th birthday of the Slovenian Women’s Union shall be: May she forever prosper and grow! May she always in her progress benefit her members and justly remain the pride of our women’s achievements!

## *May she forever prosper and grow!*

## THE FIRST NATIONAL BOARD OF THE SLOVENIAN WOMEN'S UNION

nominated and elected at the organization meeting, December 19, 1926

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President, Marie Prisland, Sheboygan, WI  
Vice-president, Katie Triller, Whiting, IN  
Secretary, Julia Gottlieb, Chicago, IL  
Treasurer, Mathilda Duller, Chicago, IL

### AUDITORS

Jennie Ozbolt, Barberton, OH, Founder Branch 6 and 51.  
Mary Widmar, Indianapolis, IN, Founder Branch 5.  
Ludmila Kusar, Berwyn IL, Auditor Branch 2.

### EDUCATIONAL COMMITTEE

Julia Gottlieb, Chicago, IL, Founder Branch 2 and 24.  
Margaret Kozjan, Pueblo, CO, Founder Branch 3.  
Jennie Oklish, Barberton, OH, Co-founder Branch 6.

### PUBLICITY COMMITTEE

Frances Jazbec, Chicago, IL, Editor of Zveza's first book AMERISKA SLOVENKA and later of ZARJA.  
Marie Prisland, Sheboygan, WI, Founder Branch 1, co-founder Branches 46, 100, and 102.  
Barbara Kramer, San Francisco, CA, Founder Branches 13, 20, 43, and 45.

### ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Frances Tanko, Gilbert, MN, Founder Branch 31, co-founder Branch 11.  
Pauline Osolin, Forest City, PA, Founder Branch 7.  
Mary Godez, Sheboygan, WI, (22 years in office.)  
Mary Plantan, Oregon City, OR, Founder Branches 4 and 79.  
Dorothy Dermes, Steelton, PA, Founder Branch 8.  
*(Written by Marie Prisland in 1976)*

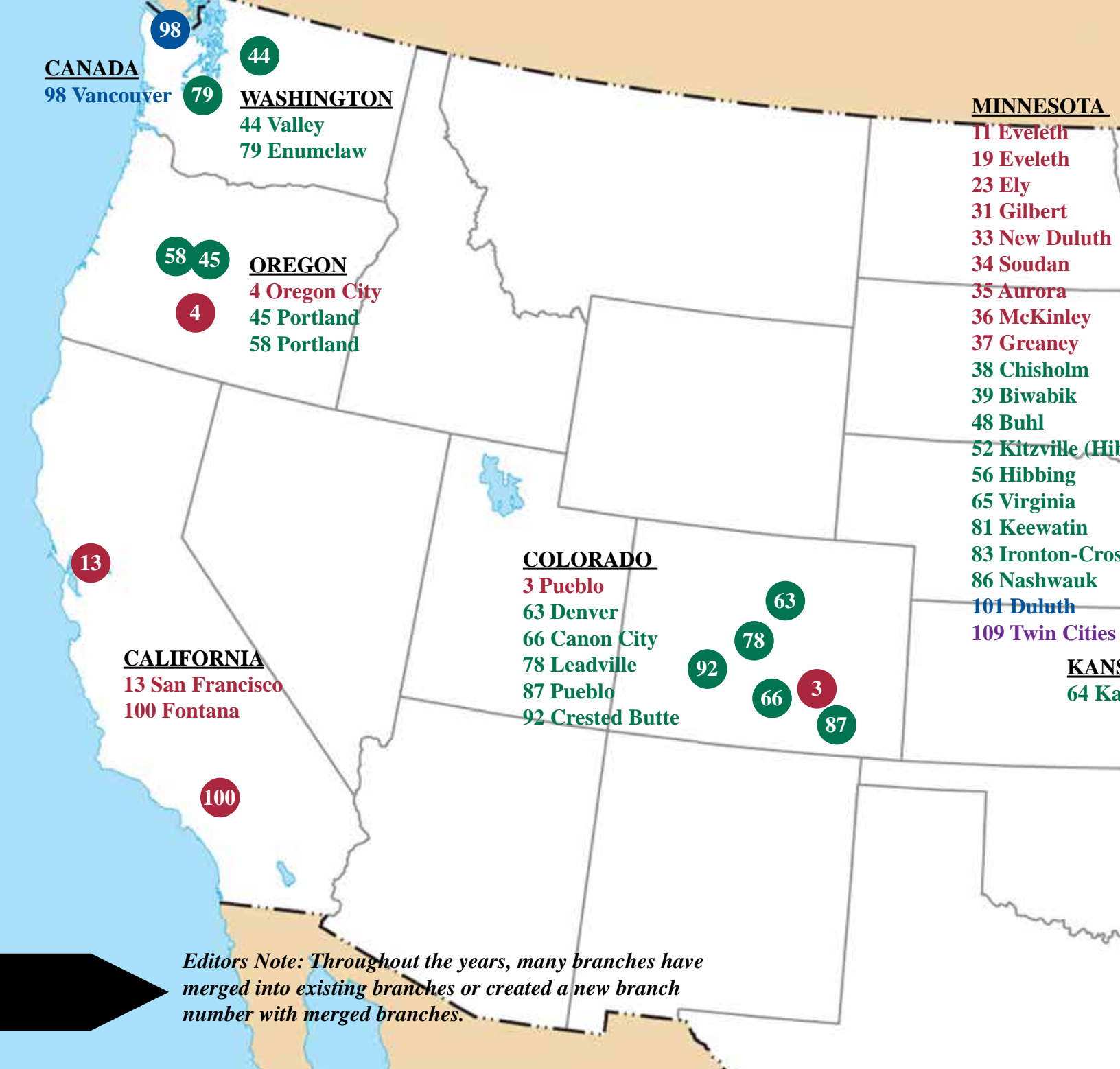


**Delegates of the First Convention November 1927, Chicago, Illinois**

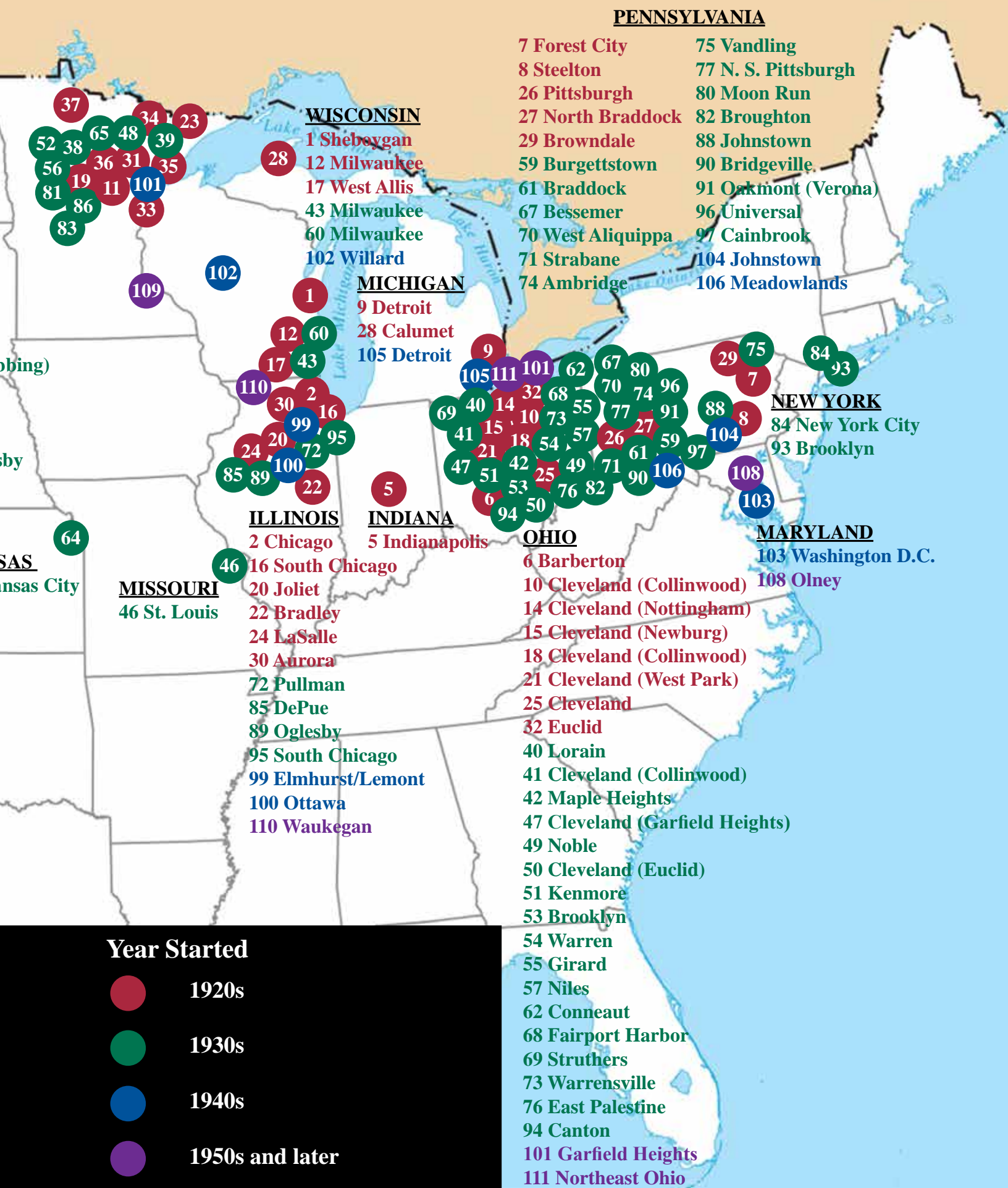
*Front row left to right: Mathilda Duller, Frances Jazbec, Marie Prisland, Julia Gottlieb, and Katie Triller.  
Delegates: Branch 1 - Meta Eržen, Branch 2 - Mary Kobal, Branch 10 - Mrs. Glavan and Mary Sluga,  
Branch 9 - Mary Puhek, Branch 2 - Fannie Mikuš, Branch 9 - Mary Verderbar, Branch 5 - Mary Vidmar,  
Branch 12 - Margaret Ritonja, and Branch 2 - Rose Smole and Theresa Chernich.*

## ***SUA Branches: Founding Date, Branch, and City***

12/1/1926	1	Sheboygan, Wisconsin	5/10/1934	58	Portland, Oregon
12/1/1926	2	Chicago, Illinois	3/17/1935	59	Burgettstown, Pennsylvania
1/12/1927	3	Pueblo, Colorado	3/3/1935	60	Milwaukee, Wisconsin
1/23/1927	4	Oregon City, Oregon	3/3/1935	61	Braddock, Pennsylvania
1/15/1927	5	Indianapolis, Indiana	5/18/1935	62	Conneaut, Ohio
1/23/1927	6	Barberton, Ohio	5/18/1935	63	Denver, Colorado
1/23/1927	7	Forest City, Pennsylvania	5/2/1935	64	Kansas City, Kansas
3/27/1927	8	Steelton, Pennsylvania	6/12/1935	65	Virginia, Minnesota
3/6/1927	9	Detroit, Michigan	6/28/1935	66	Canon City, Colorado
3/8/1927	10	Cleveland (Collinwood), Ohio	2/2/1936	67	Bessemer, Pennsylvania
5/4/1927	11	Eveleth, Minnesota	2/19/1936	68	Fairport Harbor, Ohio
10/31/1927	12	Milwaukee, Wisconsin	2/19/1936	69	Struthers, Ohio
10/30/1927	13	San Francisco, California	3/7/1936	70	West Aliquippa, Pennsylvania
10/31/1927	14	Cleveland (Nottingham), Ohio	3/8/1936	71	Strabane, Pennsylvania
11/7/1927	15	Cleveland (Newburg), Ohio	4/1/1936	72	Pullman, Illinois
2/13/1928	16	South Chicago, Illinois	4/5/1936	73	Warrensville, Ohio
3/15/1928	17	West Allis, Wisconsin	4/17/1936	74	Ambridge, Pennsylvania
4/9/1928	18	Cleveland (Collinwood), Ohio	4/17/1936	75	Vandling, Pennsylvania
4/13/1928	19	Eveleth, Minnesota	5/3/1936	76	East Palestine, Ohio
6/11/1928	20	Joliet, Illinois	5/6/1936	77	N. S. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
6/17/1928	21	Cleveland (West Park), Ohio	5/6/1936	78	Leadville, Colorado
8/1/1928	22	Bradley, Illinois	5/10/1936	79	Enumclaw, Washington
9/19/1928	23	Ely, Minnesota	3/3/1937	80	Moon Run, Pennsylvania
10/17/1928	24	LaSalle, Illinois	4/22/1937	81	Keewatin, Minnesota
11/22/1928	25	Cleveland, Ohio	5/10/1937	82	Broughton, Pennsylvania
12/19/1928	26	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	6/8/1937	83	Ironton-Crosby, Minnesota
4/17/1929	27	North Braddock, Pennsylvania	10/20/1937	84	New York, New York
4/10/1929	28	Calumet, Michigan	12/19/1937	85	DePue, Illinois
4/28/1929	29	Browndale, Pennsylvania	12/23/1937	86	Nashwauk, Minnesota
1929	30	Aurora, Illinois	1/9/1938	87	Pueblo, Colorado
8/9/1929	31	Gilbert, Minnesota	5/8/1938	88	Johnstown, Pennsylvania
8/25/1929	32	Euclid, Ohio	5/9/1938	89	Oglesby, Illinois
10/8/1929	33	New Duluth, Minnesota	5/12/1938	90	Bridgeville, Pennsylvania
10/12/1929	34	Soudan, Minnesota	5/12/1938	91	Oakmont (Verona), Pennsylvania
10/15/1929	35	Aurora, Minnesota	10/18/1938	92	Crested Butte, Colorado
11/8/1929	36	McKinley, Minnesota	11/16/1938	93	Brooklyn, New York
11/22/1929	37	Greaney, Minnesota	12/11/1938	94	Canton, Ohio
1/12/1930	38	Chisholm, Minnesota	3/1/1939	95	South Chicago, Illinois
2/3/1930	39	Biwabik, Minnesota	3/23/1939	96	Universal, Pennsylvania
4/21/1930	40	Lorain, Ohio	3/23/1940	97	Cainbrook, Pennsylvania
5/19/1930	41	Cleveland (Collinwood), Ohio	5/30/1940	98	Vancouver B.C. Canada
5/31/1930	42	Maple Heights, Ohio	1940	100	Ottawa, Illinois
6/4/1930	43	Milwaukee, Wisconsin	1941	101	Duluth, Minnesota
6/15/1930	44	Valley, Washington	5/11/1941	102	Willard, Wisconsin
6/10/1930	45	Portland, Oregon	1/11/1942	104	Johnstown, Pennsylvania
7/17/1930	46	St. Louis, Missouri	3/7/1945	105	Detroit, Michigan
6/27/1931	47	Cleveland (Garfield Heights), Ohio	5/24/1948	106	Meadowlands, Pennsylvania
8/1/1931	48	Buhl, Minnesota	3/7/1957	100	Fontana, California
9/11/1931	49	Noble, Ohio	3/7/1957	107	Fontana, California
9/15/1931	50	Cleveland (Euclid), Ohio	1/5/1962	101	Garfield Heights, Ohio
9/15/1931	51	Kenmore, Ohio	11/14/1965	103	Washington D.C.
3/25/1932	52	Kitzville (Hibbing), Minnesota	11/16/2003	108	Olney, Maryland
6/28/1932	53	Brooklyn, Ohio	11/29/2003	99	Lemont (Elmhurst 1957), Illinois
8/22/1932	54	Warren, Ohio	1/18/2005	109	Twin Cities, Minnesota
6/8/1933	55	Girard, Ohio	2010	110	Waukegan, Illinois
8/15/1933	56	Hibbing, Minnesota	2019	111	Northeast Ohio
3/4/1934	57	Niles, Ohio			



# *Slovenian Women's Union Slovenian Union of America Branches*





# THE STATE OF THE UNION

## Celebrating the 95th Anniversary of the Slovenian Union of America

This greeting is as relative in 2021 as it was in December 1931, “a Christmas issue and the occasion of the (5th - 1931) 95th anniversary of one of the most beautiful events that arose from the Slovenian population in America, the (Slovenske Zenske Zveze) Slovenske Zveze v Ameriki.”

Throughout centuries of time, generation after generation, this small group of people chose to speak and write using their native tongue. Beautiful traditions tell of their identity to this day!

This lineage of people lived under the thumb of other factions, yet they dared to dream and to envision a brighter future, and so the mass migration began.

Since this mass migration, over 100 years had passed. It was now the turn of the century, year 2000. The SUA leadership recognized the SUA was facing hurdles. The SUA was in need of a new direction; assimilation was happening with each generation. Children were now living in a global society. It began with rewording the purpose for which the organization stands.

*Vision: to preserve the living spirit of our Slovenian ancestors by promoting and nourishing the legacy left for us and future generations.*

*Mission: to reach those of Slovenian heritage by uniting them through their common interest in Slovenian culture and traditions.*

*Purpose: to promote resources, communication, and foster friendships in honor of our heritage.*

And then we had visitors. It was the summer of 2006. A Slovenian couple, Evald Flisar and Jana Bauer, were touring the country, and the SUA Museum was on their list. As they looked around the museum Mr. Flisar made a comment, “I think I can help you.”

Being that we were oceans apart, the comment meant nothing until an email arrived a few months later saying, “Get

yourself a ticket. You are going to the Preseren Awards and then to meet with agencies.” The meetings would include the Slovenian Tourist Board, Department of Ministry and Culture, Office of Slovenian Republic for Slovenes Abroad, Kompass Corporate Marketing and Sales, Ptujaska letvinarstvo (winery), and Slovenian World Congress.

It was a very cold early January in 2007. We were off carrying suitcases, passports, excitement, and a presentation which told the story of the SUA. Much to our surprise, we were greeted with flashbulbs popping each time the elevator doors opened! This trip to Slovenia was the beginning of a cooperative exchange, using talents from both countries which continues today. The resulting exchange has included genealogy, foods, workshops, grant writing, and travel/tours. Today the National and University Library holds scanned issues of *Zarja - The Dawn* (1929 - 2012). This past September 2021, Slovenia’s 30th Anniversary of Independence was celebrated in Joliet and Lemont. And so the cooperative exchange continues.

---

### **In Honor of the 30th Anniversary of Slovenian Independence September 25, 2021, on North Chicago St. in Joliet, Illinois**

A gratitude of thanks to Georgene Agnich, Director of Special Projects, and Richard Grill, VP of Home Office, for the time and effort put forth for the Open House celebration at the SUA Museum, Library, and Home Office in Joliet. Across the street, St. Joseph Church presented an organ recital featuring Richard Grill who played variations of traditional Slovenian hymns on the restored 1956 Schantz Organ; he received a standing ovation.

Originally the celebration was to be held on June 25, Statehood Day, to commemorate the country’s declaration of independence from Yugoslavia. COVID interfered. In this issue (pages 12-15), please read the in-depth story of this celebration written by Georgene Agnich.



### Plans for a Tour to Slovenia in June 2022

A tour to Slovenia in June 2022 is now in the planning stages. The tour will include a ceremonial dedication in honor of the 95th anniversary of the SUA. A written proclamation in both Slovenian and English giving honor to our founder, Marie Crne Prisland, will be dedicated in Rečica ob Staninj, the village of her birth. This special day will be a part of the June 2022 tour.



Do let me know if you are interested in such a tour ([marylouv174@gmail.com](mailto:marylouv174@gmail.com)). This does not mean you are committing. In a few months, a tour itinerary will be made available, and your decision can be made.

*Here are some personal considerations to think about when traveling abroad. The following issues are for your safety and comfort as well as for others on the tour. Consider the toll on one's body and the length of time sitting during flights and bus travel. Long, distant trips include a risk for those with knee, hip, back and other issues. Restricted*

*mobility can lead to heavy, tired, and swollen legs, ankles, and feet. One must maneuver steep steps to board and disembark a plane and a tour bus alike, which will be the main transportation while in Slovenia. Slovenia is a country with old castles and buildings, streets, and walkways. Not all places are handicap accessible. Being dropped off at the door is not always possible. Cobblestone streets and stairways, hills, and terrain of uneven surface all require a steady foot.*

---

## **December 19, 2021**

**A Virtual Celebration for us all, on the  
95th Anniversary of the  
Slovenian Union of America.**

**Our 95th anniversary begins the  
countdown to our 100th anniversary.**

I ask every member to join in on December 19, 2021, in your own home or at a branch or family activity, with a wine glass readied with a liquid of your choice, raise your glass at this given time: 4 p.m. EST; 5 p.m. CST; 6 p.m. MST; 7 p.m. PST.

How about a 9 and 5 candle on a cake? Kids will love that! Be creative! Do take photos!

---

---

# *Seasons Greetings*

---



*In this the loveliest of seasons, may the true  
Spirit of Christmas surround you.*

*May this Christmas season be filled with Joy and Peace.*

*With wishes for a happy, plentiful New Year!*

To je to,  
The SUA National Board,  
Standing Committees,  
and Zarja - The Dawn Staff

## Jean Korsman, President, Slovenian Women's Union of America, 1995-1999

Jean Korsman passed away on September 19, 2021, in Virginia, Minnesota. Family and local organizations figured into her schedule. She showed great pride in Korsman Farm Enterprises. Together, she and her husband, Roy, worked side by side in all aspects of farm life. Potatoes were their specialty. They were able to travel on a People-to-People Agricultural Tour of China, Russia, and Finland.

Jean was most proud of her Slovenian heritage. She was devoted to the Slovenian Women's Union of America (today the Slovenian Union of America), serving as Branch President, Minnesota State President, and National President (1995-1999). While widely known for the bounty of her vegetable garden, she was well known for her skill in making walnut potica. If anyone was interested in learning, she was there!

### *JEAN KORSMAN, National President*



### *The Promise of an Exciting 1999!*

We anticipate exciting times and events for our organization in the new year, 1999. In just four months time, we will be convening the 23rd National Convention of the Slovenian Women's Union of America in Orlando, Florida. By now you will have selected the delegates who will represent your Branch at this important gathering. This is where you will witness "Democracy in Action": Every vote of each delegate will count: in the election of the officers that will guide us into the next century, in any proposed bylaws changes, in any vote on special assessments and dues increases, on guidelines and qualifications for membership, on the Insurance aspect of our Union and dozens of other issues that are sure to be raised, accepted or rejected. Every vote will be vital to the future of Zveza. I hope you have elected delegates who are well informed and interested in preserving our record of sisterly love and concern for our membership.

Our founder Marie Prisland's objective and purpose for chartering our organization in 1926 was to "To assist immigrant Slovenian women in their social, moral and intellectual education, foster American and Slovenian ideals, help members become citizens, encourage participation in civic affairs and arrange for an adequate interment for its deceased members."

Over seventy years have passed, and necessitated changes in our purpose. The dream "to Americanize members" now becomes a wish to involve ourselves in a search for our Slovenian identity. The older we get, the more deeply we concern ourselves with our roots. We feel compelled to mingle our grandparents and parents' culture with our own.

As members of SWU we can follow in our predecessors' footsteps by imitating their gracious manners and hospitality; show respect for our National Officers, abide by the precepts and bylaws agreed on

over the years, cooperate with the local officers who give their time and efforts to keep our Branches functioning. We should cheerfully participate in the activities and projects that are presented each year. We should generously donate to the support of our ZARJA, HERITAGE, and SCHOLARSHIP funds so that they can continue to prosper and produce the results that were intended from their inception.

The roots of our Zveza were planted deep, growing into a tree that has stood solid for over seventy years! We can only make progress if the "branches" of that tree remain strong. Please send delegates to the National Convention who love and cherish our organizations' proud history; who support our efforts to educate and enlighten our young members so they will look back and recall the Slovenian Women's Union with the warmth and gratitude we feel towards our founders; those pioneer women who had a vision for the future: They were ahead of their time in their hopes for a strong "union" for us all.

We must protect that beautiful legacy; promote harmony and goodwill and come to the convention prepared to vote on issues that will benefit us all in the years ahead, strengthening and preserving our Slovenian Women's Union of America.

I am so proud and pleased with the new cookbook, MORE POTS AND PANS. I know you will agree this beautiful tribute to Hermine Dicke is more than a cookbook; it will be a long-lasting memento to all who came before and all who use its recipes and read its stories.

A heartfelt THANK YOU to Corinne and the committee who worked hundreds of hours compiling and editing the recipes, planning its unique format and finally publishing and marketing this book. Be sure to get one for yourself and all your family and friends. They will treasure it always.



*The Slovenian Union of America sends its condolences to her children and their families:  
Jim (Rosemary) Perpich of Eveleth, Kathy (Tim) Riordan of Virginia,  
Barb (Hank) Schoonover of Minneapolis, and Rob (Dione) Perpich of Eveleth.*

# 2021 SUA Educational Grant Recipients

The Educational Grant is designed to provide students of all ages a monetary award to help defray the costs of books, lab fees, and other expenses while furthering their education. There are other financial options such as scholarships and tuition waivers available to provide support for tuition.

This year, SUA awarded ten Educational Grants. All grant recipients have volunteered in their church and/or community. All have set high goals for themselves. The 2021 Grant Recipients are listed in alphabetical order:

**Jonathan Celestina** is a member of Branch 111. He is a senior majoring in Mechanical Engineering at Cleveland State University, Cleveland, Ohio. His favorite class is thermodynamics. Jonathan volunteers his musical talents in his home parish as well as his college, singing in two choirs. Jonathon also started an a cappella group in college. In the future, he plans to earn a MS in Mechanical Engineering.

**Mark Celestina** is a member of Branch 111. He is a junior majoring in Industrial Design at The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio. His favorite class is anthropology. Mark volunteers in local church events. Starting his own design company is in Mark's future.

**Rachel Dunford** is a member of Branch 100. Rachel is a junior majoring in Middle Eastern Studies/Arabic at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. Her favorite class is Intro to Islam. Rachel volunteers with nonprofits and community organizations, Workshops for Warriors, and her local church as a youth leader and musician. She also provides service hours for Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking. Future plans may include work involving the refugee crisis.

**Connor Ellis** is a member of Branch 109. He is a junior Finance and Design major at Arizona State in Tempe, Arizona. Marketing is his favorite

course. Connor volunteers as the Marketing and Outreach Coordinator for the Entrepreneurships and Innovation Committee in Changemaker Central, including making sleeping mats for homeless and maintaining the community garden. His career goal is designing and marketing.

**Dylan Ellis** is a member of Branch 109. He is a fourth-year student working on a MS in Chemical Engineering at Arizona State in Tempe, Arizona. His favorite course is a chemistry course, Immune Engineering. Dylan is the Student Director of Changemaker Central. He volunteers with Feed My Starving Children, COVID-19 test kit preparation at ASU Biodesign, and educational outreach events with Barratt Leadership and Service Team. He is a former ASEF scholar in Ljubljana at a bio design company.

**Sarah Hlade** is a member of Branch 99. She is a senior Special Education student majoring in Deaf and Hard of Hearing at Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois. Sarah volunteers at the SUA home office decorating the window for the seasons, holidays, and events. In college, she volunteers as a group leader for weekly discussion groups. She did a mission trip to Memphis, Tennessee. The group partnered with a church to provide needed work to homes of low-income families, repairing and roofing houses. Her career goal is to be employed as a Deaf Education teacher.

**Anna Horzen** is a member of Branch 30. Anna is a senior majoring in Human & Organizational Development at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee. Her favorite class is How to Make Almost Anything. As the communication lead for a service project, she worked with four individuals and a faculty advisor to design and manufacture a chair for a pediatric video fluoroscopic team at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, planned meetings with teams, managed conflicts, and created content presenta-

tions with pictures and/or video. Her career goal is to use photography and videography to preserve nature.

**Joseph Humphrey** is a member of Branch 20. Joseph is a freshman nursing major at Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois. His volunteer focus is providing in-home care. This learning experience solidified his college major. His future goal is to work in a hospital in ICU.

**Ashley Kuhel** is a member of Branch 2. Ashley is a junior majoring in Mechanical Engineering at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Champaign, Illinois. She has volunteered at the SUA Home Office organizing old documents, identifying old articles in previous *Zarja* magazines, and searching for past articles in *Zarja* journals or on the online site. Ashley is pursuing developing business skills by working as a student consultant. Working as a consultant is part of her goals for the future.

**Emma Wade** is a member of Branch 111. Emma is a freshman nursing major at Kent State, Kent, Ohio. She believes that community service is the opportunity to make a difference in society. Key Club provided Emma an opportunity to volunteer in her community, as did Big Brothers Big Sisters. Her goal is to become a nurse with a long-term goal of becoming a gynecologist nurse practitioner.

The SUA Educational Grant Committee would like to thank members, family, and friends for their financial support for SUA scholars as SUA relies on donations to fund these grants.

For more information on the SUA Educational Grant and the application, visit the SUA website <https://slovenia-union.org>

Bev Kochmann,  
Chair SUA Educational Grant  
Committee and non-voting member

## *Donations Thank you! - Hvala lepa!*

### **\$100 Donation**

Annette Venables,  
+Francis Mary Morison

### **\$90 Donation**

Megan Avellana, 111, SUA

### **\$75 Donation**

Barbara M. Louthan, 093,  
Convention Fund  
Gigi Plautz, +George Plautz

### **\$70 Donation**

Barbara M. Louthan, 093, SUA

### **\$50 Donation**

Barbara M. Louthan, 093,  
Educational Grant  
Barbara M. Louthan, 093,  
Building Improvements

### **\$40 Donation**

Bernadine Gudac, 020, SUA

### **\$20 Donation**

Natalie Krawczyk, 043,  
+The Berce Family

### **\$10 Donation**

Andrej Tivold, 030, SUA  
Branch 043, +Antonia Vodnik

### **\$5 Donation**

Gerry McNichols, 002, SUA

## *New Members Welcome - Dobrodošti*

002, McNichols, Gerry

002, Musich, Stephen

020, Gunier, Kathleen

020, Zakosek, Annabelle

020, Zakosek, Charlotte

020, Zakosek, Juliette

030, Dercher, Mary Theresa

030, Dudley, Cathy

030, Filipovic-Sadic, Stela

030, Howey, Carole Mrak

030, Huey, Olivia

030, Johnson, Caitlin Christine

030, Kadunc, Edward

030, Kalkas, David

030, Machek, Gerald

030, Maso, Luiz Roberto

030, Mihajlovic, Bojan

030, Shircel, Randal

030, Yochim, Parker

093, Stemberger, Marta

100, Kligman, Kate

100, Pozar, Timothy Milan

108, Travel, Viva Europa

109, Baraga, Anthony

109, Borgenheimer, Christine

111, Azman, Alysyan

111, Shenk, Linda

111, Shenk, Louis E.

## **April's Showers of Dollars Drawing - April 2022 Fundraiser**

The monies received will benefit the SUA National Convention in June 2023. Here is how the fundraiser works: Each day in the month of April 2022, one (1) winner will be chosen to win the cash prize for that day - \$65 or \$175. In addition, for their efforts, the persons selling each winning ticket will win \$10. The daily winner and the seller can be the same person and win both prizes.

**Entries may also be purchased online at [slovenianunion.org](http://slovenianunion.org). There are no processing fees for online purchases.**

A minimum of 300 entries must be sold. The winner chosen on each Sunday in April will win \$175 each. In addition, the top sellers (1st, 2nd, and 3rd places) will win \$150, \$100, and \$50 respectively. This is a WINNING opportunity for everyone!

**Thank you for your support!**

No. of Entries: \_\_\_\_\_

Check Enclosed for: \_\_\_\_\_

**Entry Form (Copies Accepted)**

**PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY**

Entrant's Information:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Seller's Information:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Branch Number and Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete form and mail with your check in the amount of \$10, per entry, payable to SUA.

Send to: Debbie Duris • 9167 Briarwood Road • Macedonia, OH 44056 • (216) 212-2316

**Calling all  
writers, poets  
and essayists!**



**Slovenian  
Union of America**

**The Slovenian Union of America Opens Submissions for the 2022 Slovenian Literary Award  
to Recognize and Promote Writers of Slovenian Heritage**

The award is open to both first time writers, as well as published authors.

For nearly a century, the Slovenian Union of America has been dedicated to preserving the legacy of the Slovenian ancestry of its members. Writing has been a formative part of the Slovene heritage, and the SUA Slovenian Literary Award acknowledges those who continue this vital tradition. The winner will be announced in June 2022 honoring the award recipients for their literary contributions. The time and place will be announced at a later date.

Applicants are welcome to register, provide a 100-word biography, and submit their work here:  
<https://slovenianunion.org/sua-literary-award>

**Accepting Submissions: November 1, 2021 - January 31, 2022**

- All genres of creative writing will be considered - Short Stories, Novels, Speeches, Personal Essays, Memoirs, Poetry, Manuscripts, Screenplays, and Academic Work.
- Musical compositions will not be considered.
- The award is not limited to English; both English and Slovene will be accepted.
- Works are judged on quality by a panel of writers and a committee.
- Applicants may live anywhere but must be of Slovenian heritage.
- Individual writers only (no groups) with up to three submissions per writer.
- Applicants must be 18 years of age or older.
- Membership in SUA is not required.

*For press inquiries please contact [slovenianliteraryaward@gmail.com](mailto:slovenianliteraryaward@gmail.com)*

# The Slovenian Union of America (SUA) Welcomed Four Officials of the Republic of Slovenia to Its National Office in Joliet

by *Georgene Agnich, Branch 20 – Joliet, Illinois*  
[773-205-1326/georgeneagnich@gmail.com](mailto:773-205-1326/georgeneagnich@gmail.com)



*Dr. Helena Jaklitsch views SUA window display. (Consulate photo.)*

**T**he Slovenian Union of America (SUA) welcomed four officials of the Republic of Slovenia to its national office in Joliet on September 25, 2021, as they visited several Slovenian-American heritage cities in honor of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Slovenian independence from the former Yugoslavia.

After touring the KSKJ's national office that morning, then lunching at Joliet's popular Merichka's Restaurant, Dr. Helena Jaklitsch (Minister for Slovenians Abroad), Dr. Zvone Zigon (Director for the Ministry for Slovenians Abroad), Ms. Alenka Jerak (Slovenian Consul General), and Ms. Olivera Baumgartner (Senior Assistant to the Consul General) arrived at the Slovenian Union with Dr. John Vidmar (Honor-



**Mayor O'Dekirk, Dr. Jaklitsch, Georgene Agnich, and Alenka Jerak in SUA Heritage Museum.**

ary Slovenian Consul, Deacon of St. Mary's Retreat House in Lemont, and SUA member).

On hand to greet the Slovenian officials were Joliet Mayor Robert O'Dekirk; Joliet City Councilwoman Jan Quillman, who is also a member of SUA; Hilary Denk, District Director for Congressman Bill Foster; Gregory Peerbolte, Executive Director of the Joliet Area Historical Museum; and Don Govoni, Vice-President of the Board of Directors of the Joliet Area Historical Museum and a member of SUA. Also on hand were SUA's Vice President of Home Office, Richard Grill, who read a "Welcome" from SUA National President Mary Lou Voelk, and members Georgene Agnich, Michael Vidmar, Sandra Rodeghero, and honorary member James Schaible.

The guests made new friends as they chatted and enjoyed refreshments. They listened attentively when Georgene Agnich gave a tour of the Heritage Museum, in which she focused on the historical significance of



**Dr. Jaklitsch, Dr. Zigon, and Richard Grill listen during tour.**

foundress Marie Prisland, how the Slovenian Union of America continues to preserve and promote Slovenian heritage as it marks its 95<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and how Slovenia has assisted the Union in its mission over



**Hilary Denk, Mike Vidmar, Georgene Agnich, Alenka Jerak, Don Govoni, and Gregory Peerbolte in SUA Heritage Museum. (Consulate photo.)**



**Dr. Jaklitsch, Sandy Rodeghero, Hilary Denk, Dr. Zigon, Dr. Vidmar, Mike Vidmar, and Olivera Baumgartner in SUA Heritage Museum.**



**Don Govoni, Mike Vidmar, and Sandy Rodeghero converse in SUA Heritage Museum.**

the past many years. Dr. Jaklitsch and Ms. Jerak presented Georgene and Mayor O'Dekirk with gifts from Slovenia, then Richard Grill gave each official a copy of SUA's *The Slovenian-American Table* cookbook, the Summer 2021 issue of *Zarja – The Dawn* heritage magazine, and a tote.



*Jan Quillman and Dr. Vidmar chat near Marie Prisland exhibit.*



*Annette Koncar, Alenka Jerak, and Mary Lynn Bruno at the Ancel Center. (Consulate photo.)*

The Slovenian officials and SUA members next crossed the street and visited the Ancel Center, the museum of St. Joseph Church, where they were greeted by co-curator and SUA member Annette Koncar, and her sister, Mary Lynn Bruno. The Ancel Center occupies two classrooms in the closed grade school. Here the visitors learned about the history of St. Joseph Church since its founding in 1891 by Slovenian immigrants. Then, Dr. John Vidmar drove the Slovenian officials to St. Joseph Cemetery, where Joliet's Slovenian pioneers and their descendants are at rest.





*Dr. Jaklitsch and Dr. Zigon at Marija Pomagaj altar in St. Joseph Church.*

They returned in time to attend the 6 p.m. organ concert at historic St. Joseph Church. In a pre-concert ceremony, Frank Markun welcomed the officials in Slovenian, after which daughters Mary Lynn Bruno and Annette Koncar presented each one with the church's 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary book adorned with a red carnation and an ivory bow. Dr. Jaklitsch then addressed the audience in Slovenian and presented Mr. Markun with a certificate of recognition of the 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St. Joseph Parish and thanks for preserving the Slovenian national and religious identity in succession generations.

The concert, performed by professional organist Richard Grill of SUA, featured sacred music by Slovenian composers Stanko Premrl, Kamilo Masek, Matija Tomc, and a traditional selection by Ignacij Hladnik. He received a standing ovation for his performance. The evening concluded with refreshments, prepared by SUA member Lillian Cepen, in the Ancel Center. It had been a full and congenial day of discovering Joliet's Slovenian heritage in its various institutions, and Dr. Jaklitsch, Dr. Zigon, Ms. Jerak, Ms. Baumgartner, and Dr. Vidmar could look forward to celebrations in Lemont the following day.



*Dr. Jaklitsch presents a Certificate of Recognition of St. Joseph Church to Frank Markun.*



# I love Slovenia Tour



# 2021



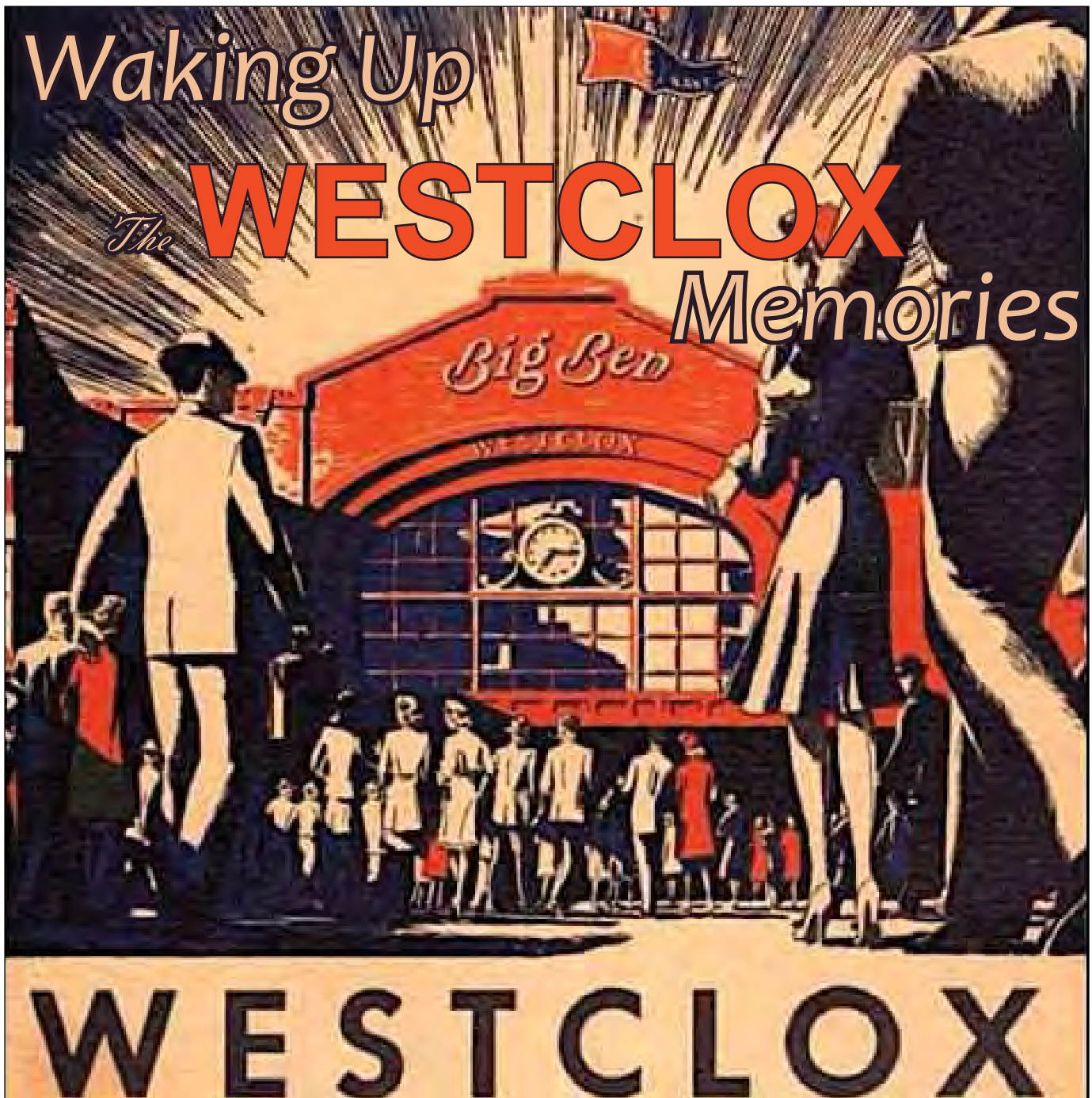
# Road Trip Through



Beautiful, magical, fairytale-like, addictive!



# gh the Homeland



*Zarja Staff Writer, David Sodac, Branch 89 Oglesby, IL*

For at least four generations, the Western Clock Manufacturing Company, better known later as Westclox, was the livelihood and largest employer of the small town of Peru, Illinois. The factory had its beginnings in 1885, after Connecticut clockmaker, Charles Stahlberg, was awarded a patent for his innovative, new alarm clock design. Mr. Stahlberg had been employed at the Waterbury Clock Factory in Connecticut but chose to take his patented design and go West

in pursuit of his own fortune. He chose the bustling river and railroad region of La Salle, Peru, and Oglesby, Illinois to establish his factory, some 100 minutes west of Chicago. He succeeded in convincing several investors to back his new ideas and soon launched the United Clock Factory. The clock company went bankrupt not once but twice during its first couple of years. A Chicago newspaper would later print that Mr. Stahlberg's pioneering spirit was there but that his business skills

appeared to be lacking. However, the powerful local businessman, Frederick William Matthiessen, who owned and managed the successful Illinois Zinc Company, swooped in to save the little clock company. It was Mr. Matthiessen who incorporated the clock business as the Western Clock Mfg. Company in 1888. A few years later, with the introduction of the stylish Big Ben alarm clock, it officially became America's preferred wake-up alarm clock provider. By 1910, Big

Ben was the bestselling alarm clock in the world. The company grew into 44 building structures that housed numerous manufacturing departments and services. The 800,000 square-foot Westclox complex covered a two-by-four block stretch of downtown Peru, Illinois. The company became the heart of the community and showed its appreciation by generously giving back through financial contributions and treating its employees as family. In 1931, the company merged with Seth Thomas Clock Company, with both companies becoming divisions of General Time Corporation. The Westclox factory became known as “Westclox Division of General Time Corporation.” By 1935, the complex became the world’s largest alarm clock factory where 2,300 workers were employed in manufacturing a complete line of Westclox timepieces. They included alarm clocks, time clocks (both spring and electric), pocket watches, automobile clocks, and many other timekeeping instruments. However, this article is not just about a remarkable, successful money-making venture. It is also about how those who worked there made it great because of their treatment and working conditions. Westclox employees considered themselves as being a part of one big, happy family.

Westclox offered great benefit plans, paid vacations, insurance, and opportunities to become involved in sports teams, leisure recreation, and club activities. The company published a beloved company magazine called *Tick-Talk* and provided flexibility in work supervision and internal promotions to garner the loyalty of its workers. The company became a leader in pioneering many outstanding innovations, such as the “Safety First” initiative. It was proud to be recognized as holding the National Industrial Safety Award for many consecutive years. By 1941 over 3,000 employees were enjoying the expanded space of the factory and its attached campus with gardens, tennis courts, bowling

alleys, a reading library, a baseball field, an outdoor ice-skating rink, and a relaxing cafeteria. These endeavors, combined with an innovative factory welfare department and employee benefits packages, led to a lot of workers spending their whole lives with Westclox. It became one of the most desirable manufacturing places to work having gained a favorable employer reputation.

In 1925, sixteen-year-old Marie Banko, born of Slovenian immigrant parents, became one of those many contented employees. She was one of five family siblings who were employed at Westclox throughout its years of existence. Thrilled to be a part of the experience, she always reminisced how those years were the best years of her life, often using the slang term of the times, “It was the *bees’ knees!*” Marie worked fourteen years, mainly in the Watch Department as a dialer. A dialer, as my mother would always explain, affixed the hour and second hands to the clock face using fine tweezers under a standing magnifying lens. She absolutely loved that gang of girls she worked with, always looking forward to spending breaks and lunchtimes with them, getting caught up with all the good and sad things in each other’s lives. Groups of them would love to go after work and cheer

on the Watch Department’s boys playing in the Westclox’s league softball games. They participated in all kinds of inter-department competitions. Westclox seemed to really focus on keeping its employees happy, offering planned trips, picnics, and outings for the employees. My mother never had those kinds of opportunities growing up in her large coal mining family of ten kids. The company planned



*Marie Banko Sodac 1930s.*

occasional weekend trips and short vacations to Lake Geneva, Wisconsin Dells, Starved Rock State Park, and a couple of times, they even booked hotel rooms at the Hotel Mira-Mar in downtown Chicago. They always called themselves the “Dialer Girls,” and they were friends for life.

Westclox was the dating site long before eharmony.com came along! It was a singles’ haven, as married women weren’t allowed to remain employed, particularly during the Great Depression era. Many employees met future spouses at Westclox. Opportunities to meet and socialize abounded. Single men and women enjoyed all that Westclox had to offer. Westclox seemed to really focus on



*Museum Curator Ruth Spayer.*



keeping its employees happy. Unfortunately, once a young couple decided to marry, the wife would no longer be employed as she was expected to become the homemaker. During the Great Depression years of 1929-1939, only married men were given priority for employment. Married women were released. Single women could remain employed. Consequently, many couples chose to marry “secretly” to prevent having the wife lose her employment. Marie Banko also became one of the many Westclox women who wanted to continue her employment but found herself being in love and wanting to marry. She and her fiancé, Matt Sodac, made the decision that it would be best to elope. He had just snagged a government manufacturing job with the Rock Island Arsenal in Rock Island, Illinois, and was making good money. She was doing quite well at Westclox and loved her job. On a Labor Day weekend in 1938, Matt and Marie took the train to Iowa City, Iowa, and wed secretly in the rectory of Saint Patrick’s Catholic Church. Fr. Patrick O’Reilly married them. Despite now being “Marie Sodac” on official documents, she returned back to work the following Monday known as “Marie Banko.” She kept

their marriage a secret from her family and Westclox friends for over a year. During the work weeks, she stayed with one of her sisters who lived in Oglesby, then took the Rock Island Rocket train ride down to stay with her husband on weekends. She laughed as she would remember how her friends and family questioned her weekend trysts with her fiancé.

The pressure from her husband and

her desire to be together finally forced them to share their marriage secret with her Westclox forelady, Miss Carrie Nothnagel. Marie told of her decision to leave and join her husband, Matty, in Rock Island. She wanted to break the news to the Dialer Department herself. She and Miss Nothnagel planned a department picnic at which she could share the news of her marriage and that she’d be leaving. Mom was the one who was actually sur-



*“Dialer Girls” of 1935. Marie Banko Sodac in the far left middle row with Carrie Nothnagle’s arm on her shoulder.*



*Mom's scrapbook from her Westclox days.*

prised at that picnic. Miss Nothnagel had turned the picnic into a wedding surprise party complete with a tiered wedding cake and household presents given from the department. She would never forget the love, kindness, and best wishes she received at that picnic. For years afterwards, she would either be visited by or visit her old Westclox friends and corresponded with them frequently. Copies of Westclox's monthly gossip magazine, *Tick Talk*, arrived in the mail like clockwork. She missed being in the know of what was going on in her old Watch Department and had to keep up on the gossip.

Not all was perfect through the years at Westclox. A tragic chapter occurred when many of its clock dial faces received applications of an unsuspected hazardous luminous paint. The paint was applied from the Radium Dial Company based out of Chicago. The "glow-in-the-dark" feature proved to be quite a popular seller. The Westclox Company became one of its largest customers. By 1920, the Radium Dial Company moved its operation to a building near the Westclox Company in Peru, Illinois, to expedite its delivery of the painted dials. However, there was some tension brewing between Westclox and the Radium

Dial Company. The Dial Company was accused of enticing the Westclox employees with promises of higher wages. A year later, the company relocated far enough away to Ottawa,



*1930s Big Ben glow-in-the-dark alarm clock.*



*Woman on assembly.*

Illinois, so as to not appear to be so alluring. Dial painters at a different dial factory in Orange, New Jersey, were using the same luminous painting process. When painting the dials of watches with a radium-based paint called Luna, the women were trained to lick the brush to get a fine point before they would paint the numbers on the clock. Some of their employees began developing various diseases including radium jaw and cancer likely related to their exposure to radium. Hundreds of workers, mostly young women, were put at great personal risk. Unfortunately at the time, there weren't any government-established safety guidelines for the use of this

radioactive paint product. The women workers at the radium factory in Ottawa were using the same process and also began showing symptoms. Many evidenced anemia, bone fractures, and radium jaw (necrosis and osteoporosis), and some developed tumors. Westclox stopped using the radium-painted products in the 1930s. Since the radium-based paint was outsourced at a different plant and then shipped to Westclox for assembly, the other plant's employees were not impacted. Several books have been written on the radium disaster topic: *Deadly Glow-The Radium Dial Worker Tragedy* by Ross Mullner (1999); *The Death Instinct* by Jeb Rubenfield (2011); *The Radium Girls* by Kate Moore (2018); and also several play adaptations from *The Radium Girls*.

compasses for the United States Army, and clocks for the United States Navy.



1958 Wrist Bend watch.

Westclox remained in clock production during the World War I years of 1914-1918. During the World War II years of 1942-1945, it suspended all production of watch and clocks intended for domestic sales and dedicated its production resources to the war effort. The plant became a major manufacturer of fuzes for military ordnance and produced aviation instrumentation and control components,

The "Camelot" eras of Westclox manufacturing came to an end when it was purchased by Talley Industries in 1968 and experienced a dramatic management makeover. The clock and watch production was moved to plants in Alabama and Georgia. The Peru plants became the manufacturing site for the Talley Military Products. The feeling of family and the high morale slowly eroded. The monthly employee gossip

magazine no longer was published. The factory picnic, planned outings, and parties vanished. Organized union members increasingly fought over working conditions. The feel of a contented family atmosphere all but disappeared. The influx of cheap watches from overseas, the Talley Corporation takeover, and ensuing labor trouble all resulted in the inevitable shutdown of the plant in 1980. Essentially, the roughly 800,000-square-foot complex sat mostly vacant. Eventually, a few businesses took space in what was left of the factory, and a plastic recycling company stored its goods in a large warehouse. During the early morning hours of January 1, 2011, two boys reportedly broke into the property. LaSalle County State's Attorney Brian Towne reported that the pair took a gasoline can from a boat stored in one building, poured the gas on the floor, and ignited it. The fire spread rapidly, exploding canisters of propane and severely damaging over 50% of the Westclox compound. The community was astounded.

Shortly after the devastating fire destroyed the Westclox complex, the LaSalle, Peru, Oglesby, and Richard A. Mautino Memorial Public Librar-



Westclox fire.



ies of Illinois sponsored a project that collected delightful memories submitted by former employees, and then Rebecca Witalka compiled them into a book in 2012. The publication was entitled *Remembering Westclox—A Collection of Stories and Memories*. There were numerous comments and warm memories about the friendships formed, the activities offered, and the employees’ feelings of being treated as a part of a large family. One of those submissions was from SUA member Delores Udovic Spelich. Delores started at fifty cents an hour. She was employed in the Adjustment or Repair Office from 1946 to 1951. She described how she and her coworkers all looked forward to the charismatic “Paymaster” every two weeks. He carried a four-inch-deep box at his waist that contained the paychecks; the box was held up by a strap around his neck. She also recalled the “mail girl” who rode her bicycle through the underground tunnel under 4th Street, coming from the Northside office to the cafeteria’s main entrance and delivering the mail to all of the factory departments. Their work day ended when they heard the buzzer that sounded at exactly 4:27 p.m. Women punched out first and then the men later. She wrote, “We’d rush upstairs in about 3 minutes flat and gallop as fast as possible through the two-block long departments as the men whistled at us.” There were always about seven buses out front of the main entrance with a policeman directing traffic for a hectic 15 minutes.

Since the Christmas season is upon us, it seems appropriate to mention the memories some of the former employees had of the annual Christmas parties thrown for the employees’ children. Patricia Urban was one of those children who remembered Westclox having wonderful Christmas parties for the families. They had bands playing Christmas music, and each child received really nice gifts

from Santa Claus. As an employee’s child, she remembered getting a tea set, a stuffed Cuddly Dudley poodle game, and a Ouija board. Westclox took really good care of its employees in the earlier years. Millie Noramczyk Koscielski remembered the cafeteria would host the Christmas parties for the employees, their children, and relatives. Santa Claus would be there to give each child a gift, such as a toy and game. Bill Miller worked at Westclox for total of 40 years, 20 as a Time Keeper in several different departments before working in the Sales Department for the last 20 years of his service. He thought employees were treated to two great events each year, the “Quarter Century” Club banquet and the annual Christmas party with quality toys handed out to the children. He’d like to think that Westclox was one of the best. Delores Udovic Spelich also shared that her children had so much fun attending Westclox Christmas parties with their grandma. They still remember how huge the complex was and receiving Santa’s play dishes and puzzles. Several thousand people attended.

Today, there is a most fascinating museum located in one of the former Westclox buildings. It’s located at 350 Fifth Street, Suite 265 in Peru, Illinois 61354. The museum staff also manages an online Facebook page where you can pose questions and comments about relatives’ employment years at Westclox. Interested visitors are always welcome at the museum, and its volunteer staff will graciously spend time explaining the history and displays of every clock, wristwatch, alarm, and travel clock ever produced by its motivated employees in the Peru factory. While putting together this article, Ruth Spayer, the curator of the museum, helped research their collection of *Tick-Talk* magazines, looking for “gossip” on my mother’s years at Westclox. Her husband, Don Spayer, also volunteers at the museum and was

employed at Westclox from 1963 up until the factory shut its doors in 1980. Don designed numerous machines and tools for Westclox and then later for the Talley Industries. His designs were used to make bomb components for the US military and then timers in the Peru factories for NASA’s Apollo Space Mission. He has a fascinating display and collection of machinery he designed on exhibit in the Westclox Museum. Don is the son of Josephine Miklavcic who was one of the many secretly wed Westclox employees who kept her job up until her pregnancy was obvious.

During the 100th anniversary of the Illinois city of Peru’s settlement, its mayor made a declaration of pride stating that “Just as Pittsburgh means steel to many people and Akron means rubber, so Peru stands synonymous with clocks!” From that celebratory day in 1935 forward, the company continued to grow and maintain its excellent reputation and be the pride of the community. On January 1, 2012, a fire broke out in the Westclox complex at 6:00 a.m. Even though the compound of numerous buildings is no longer standing, the long-ago memories of its existence will forever be endeared and remembered for Westclox’s contribution to society and the world. As a young boy, of course, I had Westclox products: several Wrist Ben watches to wear; a Big Ben alarm clock on my nightstand; a Baby Ben that would try to wake me in college; and then wall clocks as wedding presents! All those Westclox products came as gifts from my aunts and uncles who were employed through the years at the Peru Westclox complex. Special thanks also goes out to one of those former dialer girls, especially my mother Marie Banko Sodac, for always sharing her stories about her good old days!



# Slovenian Union of America

---

## Across America - Branch Reports

---

### BRANCH 1 - Sheboygan, Wisconsin

Contact information: Mary Ann Schellinger  
920.457.7946/[rhmas@yahoo.com](mailto:rhmas@yahoo.com)

Better late than never seems to be the theme for the stage of the Covid pandemic that we are still dealing with. On September 14, some members of our branch gathered at Riverdale Country Club to celebrate our Members of the Year, Ed and Germaine Tesovnik. This was the first time we gathered in person since February 11, 2020. We had a short meeting before dinner at which time elections were held for branch officers. Mary Sandwick will remain as President, followed by Marilyn Hendricks - Vice President,

Mary Jo Grabner - Secretary, Betty Repenshek - Treasurer, and Mary Ann Schellinger - Member Rep. We are so very grateful to all of them for agreeing to hold their positions for another year.

Germaine was presented with a tiara for the evening, and Ed was given a Slovenian shirt. They also received a Slovenian doily and Rogaska crystal candle holders from Slovenia. We honored them with a toast, and this was accompanied by a photo received via e-mail earlier in the day from Kathy and Pete Schroeder who were sending special wishes to them from Slovenia while they were on the I Love SUA tour.

After dinner, we were treated to a dessert of "potica cake." Same good flavor with many of the ingredients of the Slovenian potica, but this recipe is made in a Bundt pan. A side comment was made that this should be called "bundtica".





So many of our meetings incorporate food and fun, and this was no exception. After dinner we played Slovenian bingo - a fun game with a few prizes for the winners and also a chance to learn some Slovenian words.

It was so great to be able to get together with our members and share smiles and hugs. We look forward to getting together again in December for our Christmas celebration.



MARY ANN SCHELLINGER

### BRANCH 2 - Chicago, Illinois

Sadly, we report the passing of Fran Morison who served as President of Branch 2 for many years. For decades, Fran (along with her son, Terry) organized our monthly meetings, entertaining Penny Socials, and our important fundraising event: the annual and successful Zveza Picnic in Lemont. Along with her wonderful smile and kind demeanor, she made everyone feel welcome. We hope her family and friends will find comfort in the many happy memories of Fran.

We are planning a Christmas get-together for members and friends on Thursday, December 9, at 1:00 p.m. at Bucks Pit Stop in Hodgkins, Illinois. Please call either Judy Stoll (708.407.5558) or Debbie Morris (708.302.1279) for additional information if you are interested in joining us. Hope to see you there.

DEBORAH MORRIS

### BRANCH 3 - Pueblo, Colorado

Contact Information:

719.569.7125/[amtcharron@gmail.com](mailto:amtcharron@gmail.com)

On Tuesday, September 7, 2021, Branch 3 held its first event since February 2020. The 2020 Member of the Year, Diane Slaten, was honored at a luncheon at Park East restaurant. As a gift from the branch, Diane received a beautiful cross necklace, and 22 members attended.

Branch 3 held its first regular branch meeting since before the pandemic on Tuesday, October 5, 2021. President Eileen Kaplan gave a presentation on jack-o-lanterns. Eileen also welcomed new Branch 3 member, Kay Perko. Vice President Betty Skul presented a lovely tribute and led prayers for two recently deceased Branch 3 members, Marie Mutz and Joan Fossceco. Treasurer Diane Slaten



Branch 3 Member of the Year, Diane Slaten, celebrating at the luncheon with (left to right) her sister, Marian Peček; her mother, Agnes Glavich; and her aunt, Josephine Krasovic.

gave her report, and Secretary MT Karlinger read the minutes from the last branch meeting held on March 2, 2020. Eileen Kaplan and MT Karlinger conducted the kulant raffle, a fundraiser which raised \$60 for Branch 3's Heritage Fund. Josephine Krasovic won the kulant. Diane Slaten brought the door prize, a beautiful Kalanchoe plant which was won by MT Karlinger.

Member Agnes Glavich recently had her 94<sup>th</sup> birthday, and her daughter, Diane Slaten, brought delicious cupcakes to the October branch meeting to celebrate; the group sang "Happy Birthday" to Agnes.

Branch 3 officers Betty Skul, Diane Slaten, and MT Karlinger gave a report on plans for the 2023 SUA National Convention scheduled for June 15–17, 2023, at the Pueblo Convention Center. They discussed Branch 3 plans for a meeting for those interested in volunteering at the 2023 convention. The volunteer meeting was scheduled to be held in the dining room of Eiler's Place on Thursday, October 28, 2021, at 6:30 p.m.

President Eileen Kaplan asked Elaine Volk to lead a committee to plan the annual Christmas luncheon scheduled to be held on Tuesday, December 7, 2021, at Park East restaurant at 12:30 p.m.

ANNETTE SABO CHARRON & M.T. KARLINGER

**BRANCH 5 - Indianapolis, Indiana**

Holiday Greetings to all Branch 5 Members! Here in Indy, the Christmas season seems to arrive earlier each year! It feels like we rush through Autumn, Halloween, and Thanksgiving without really taking time to enjoy family time. Having a baking day, where family favorite recipes are made and shared, is an easy and fun way to pass on

those Slovenian traditions! Hope your Christmas and New Year are full of wonderful memories!

We had several Slovenian VIP visitors in Indy this year! Slovenian Ambassador Tone Kajzer and his wife attended our annual Slovenian National Home picnic and enjoyed meeting and talking to the many people of Slovenian descent who were there! Thanks to all who came and enjoyed the food and musical entertainment; it was a beautiful day for all!

Several weeks later, Dr. Helena Jaklitsch, Minister for the Slovenians Abroad, Dr. Zvone Žigon, Secretary for



*Ambassador Tone Kajzer, Steve Fon and Charlie Cline at the Slovenian National Home picnic!*



*Branch 5 President Phyllis Fon welcomed Dr. Zvone Zigon, Dr. Helena Jaklitsch and Alenka Jerak to SNH luncheon.*

the Office for Slovenians Abroad, and Alenka Jerka, Consul General of the Republic of Slovenia visited Indy on a multi-city tour. They visited Holy Trinity, our former Catholic Church in Haughville, drove out to view the Holy Trinity Bell tower, and attended a luncheon with members of different Slovenian organizations at Slovenian National Home. It was a very busy day, but they learned about the Indianapolis Slovenian Community and loved how the different groups work together to keep the Slovenian culture alive!



*Paul Barbarich took dignitaries to view refurbished and relocated Holy Trinity bells.*

Mark your calendar... JANUARY 29, 2022... SAUSAGE FEAST! Check the SNH website for more info!

As we usher in 2022, may we continue to pray for world peace.

MARY, KAREN & PHYLLIS

### **BRANCH 20 - Joliet, Illinois**

Contact Information: Georgene Agnich  
773.205.1326/[georgeneagnich@gmail.com](mailto:georgeneagnich@gmail.com)

We extend our sympathy to the family of member Marie Gulas, who passed away on August 22, 2021; to the family of member Frances Schultz on August 22, 2021; and to the family of member Dolores L. "Spike" Ambrozich, who passed away on October 1, 2021.

Congratulations and Best Wishes to members Sarah Hlade and Joseph Humphrey, who each have been awarded 2021 SUA Education Grants in the amount of \$500 for non-tuition higher education expenses.

Members Michael Vidmar, Sandra Rodeghero, and Georgene Agnich, along with Georgene's husband, James

*Winter 2021*

Schaible, assisted SUA Vice President of Home Office Richard Grill in welcoming four officials of the Slovenian government to SUA's home office on September 25, 2021, as they visited Slovenian heritage cities in honor of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Slovenian independence. Local elected officials and cultural leaders also were on hand to meet and visit with SUA's distinguished guests. Richard Grill gave a concert of sacred Slovenian music at 6:00 p.m. in St. Joseph Church to conclude the occasion.

A big thank you to all of our dedicated members who supported Branch 20 by purchasing tickets for our Fall Raffle 2021. Congratulations to our winners: R. J. Smolich (\$300 first prize); Anthony and Madeline Golobitsh (\$200 second prize); and Meaghan Earman (\$100 third prize).

Congratulations to members Joseph and June Muren on the birth of their great-granddaughter, Ida Stubblefield, who was born April 16, 2021. Ida is the granddaughter of Susan Muren Stubblefield, whose son, Dr. Bo Stubblefield, is Ida's father.

Branch 20 has again purchased 10 Christmas wreaths in honor of veterans at rest in Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood, Illinois.

Wishing everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, as we continue to pray for the end of the pandemic and the safety of our nation.

GEORGENE AGNICH

### **BRANCH 23 - Ely, Minnesota**

SUA Branch 23, Ely, Minnesota, held its first meeting in over a year due to the pandemic we now experience. With resuming regular meetings, we are planning our agenda for this current year. Our first activity will be to continue with our St. Nicholas Day Celebration for the young people in our parish. The celebration will be held on the Sunday in December closest to the actual feast day, December 6. One of our active members, Albina Medved, has the authentic outfit purchased in Slovenia. After the Mass at St. Anthony's Catholic Church, all young people are invited to the church hall where carols are sung. St. Nicholas pays a visit presenting gifts to the youngsters, and then goodies are served. It is an exciting and anticipated event.

At our October meeting, we will make preliminary plans for our traditional celebration, A TASTE OF SLOVENIA which takes place on the first Saturday in August in St. Anthony's Church Hall. Approximately fifteen booths are filled with traditional homemade Slovenian foods and many tastes are available. This is a much-anticipated event and also features authentic accordion music by local musicians. A demonstration can also be featured which can include potica, strudel, pohanje, and Slovenian Christmas cookies. The group makes noodles which are also sold. This event has become a community favorite and brings many visitors from the Iron Range area.

Monthly meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month, and new members are always welcome. You do not

have to be Slovenian to belong to this group but can come and learn our traditions.

For the past five summers, President Pat Koski has worked with Professor Matjaz Klemencic of Slovenia, gathering information for his book on Slovenians in Ely, Minnesota. The book has been published, and he is hoping to be back in Ely to make a presentation and have copies available for sale. Now that travel restrictions have been loosened, the group is awaiting word on when this book will be available locally by our local branch. It will also be available at the Ely-Winton Historical Society.

CHOTSIE HARRI

---

### BRANCH 24 - LaSalle, Illinois

Zivijo! Another summer season has come to an end. Bring on the sweaters, bonfires, and hearty soups. I'm anxious to turn on my oven and make Grandma's cinnamon oatmeal cookies.

In early September about 12 members met at our local library for a painting class that had been in the planning prior to Covid. All paint and materials had been purchased with the anticipation of our member, Karen Gehm, using her artistic skills to conduct the class. Sadly, Karen passed away in late August. In her memory, we twelve enjoyed painting our owl faces. Karen worked as a nurse and artist and enjoyed working in her flower garden. She is survived by a son and daughter as well as five grandchildren.



*Branch 24 members enjoying our painting class.*



*Enjoyed the lunch after the class.*

We are planning for our annual Cemetery Walk on All Soul's Day, November 2, with a dinner meeting to follow and our Christmas Party in early December.

DIANE DATA

---

### BRANCH 43 - Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Branch 43 finally got together as a group on September 22 and had their first meeting since the Covid quarantine. Our meeting was enjoyed by all, and our new format for the meeting was greeted enthusiastically. The meeting began with prayer, pledge of allegiance, and then introductions while enjoying some snacks, followed by singing a Slovenian song and learning a few Slovenian phrases. Many thanks to Jackie Smith for telling the delightful legend of *Fani the Hen*. A big thank you to our co-presidents, Linda Abstetar and Ellen Shiflet, for planning and conducting a very interesting and enjoyable meeting. As part of our cultural meeting in October, Beverly Marinello and her son, Dominic, gave a heartfelt talk about their recent trip to Slovenia with other SUA members on the I Love Slovenia Tour this past September. Many thanks for sharing your adventures with us.



*Jackie Smith, Beverly Marinello, Dave and Linda Abstetar.*

Officers of SUA and other Slovenian organizations in Milwaukee, enjoyed a pleasant afternoon at Triglav Park on Friday, September 24, meeting the dignitaries from Slovenia: Mrs. Alenka Jerka, Consul General of the Republic of Slovenia, Dr. Helena Jaklitsch, Minister for the Slovenians

*Zarja - The Dawn*



**Mr. Frank Murn and Beverly Marinello.**

Abroad, and Dr. Zvone Žigon, Secretary for the Office for Slovenians Abroad. The reception was sponsored by the Slovenian Cultural Society Triglav and the Slovenian Arts



**Mark & Helen Frohna.**

Program of UWM. After greetings and presentations were concluded, we were treated to a delicious dinner. Many thanks to our 93-year-old musician, Mr. Frank Murn, who entertained us with his button box tunes.

Look forward to highlights of our Martinovanje and Christmas Party in the next *Zarja* issue. Special greetings to all our sick and shut-in members. Wishing all our branches a very happy and blessed holiday season.

Želimo vam vsem skupaj, Blagoslovljene božične praznike in srečno novo leto 2022!

MICI BREGANT



**President Ellen Shiftet and Dr. Helena Jaklitsch.**

Winter 2021

---

**BRANCH 89 - Oglesby, Illinois**

Contact information: Terry Kamnikar

815-481-3552/[tlkamn92@gmail.com](mailto:tlkamn92@gmail.com)

Hello to All! After several months, Branch 89 held a Zoom meeting in October. Some topics of discussion were annual donations, membership, the annual Bake-less Bake Sale, the slate of officers for 2021-2022, and observing St. Nicholas Day for our junior members.

It is great to announce that we have 60 adults, 10 juniors and 2 international members. Our one and only fundraiser, the Bake-less Bake Sale is underway.

Officers for 2021-2022 are as follows: Julie Harback, President; Fran Morrison, Vice President; Rose Bell, Secretary; Terry Kamnikar, Treasurer; Mitzie Banich, Mary Jane Gunderson and Paula Snell as auditors; and Terry Kamnikar, Reporter.

Sadly, our members gathered to bid a final farewell to member Flossie (Gardin) Argubright, 85, who passed away unexpectedly on July 24, 2021. Flossie lived her entire life in Oglesby, Illinois. She married Tom Argubright on February 15, 1958. They were married for 63 years. Flossie traveled to Slovenia to visit family and friends and enjoyed making potica, going to daily Mass, and spending time with her family and friends. She is survived by her husband and her 7 children: Jane (Dennis) Ortinau, Tim Argubright, Jeff (Trudy) Argubright, Peggy Argubright, Sally (Greg) Gillan, Danny Argubright, and Paul Argubright. Survivors also include 11 grandchildren, a brother Don (Carey) Gardin, and an aunt, Eleanor Nieslawski. Our deepest sympathy to her family.

Our sincere condolences to members Kathy Utz on the loss of her husband, Tom, and to Chris Sabotta on the loss of her mother-in-law, Toni Sabotta.

Lastly, the Holidays will be here soon. Tis the season to gather and enjoy your family's favorite Slovenian dishes and traditions!

To all our members near and far, be well, stay safe and May 2022 be good to us all!

TERRY KAMNIKAR

---



---

**BRANCH 93 - New York, New York**

Contact Information: Kathleen Simmonds  
917.780.9412/[kathleensimmo@gmail.com](mailto:kathleensimmo@gmail.com)

We recently voted in Rachel Finamore as the Member Representative for Branch 93. We are incredibly excited to have her on board. Welcome Rachel!

Member Kathleen Simmonds has recently released her latest documentary series *It Couldn't Happen Here* on AMC+ and Sundance TV. The show travels to seemingly idyllic small towns and looks into shocking murders that happened there. Each episode includes original interviews of experts who have investigated and studied the various cases, as well as the family members of victims and people wrongly accused of the murders.

October saw us gathering at the world premiere screening of *Wild Slovenia* at the 11th annual Wildlife Conservation Film Festival with Ambassador Tone Kajzer. Filmmaker Matej Vranic has beautifully captured the diverse fauna and flora of Slovenia across its five ecosystems – the Alps' mountains, Karst's underground caves, the Adriatic's sea coast, the Dinaric forests, and the Pannonian plains. The documentary is a stunning and educational journey following more than 50 animal species over the period of one year– hunting and eating, courting, fighting, mating, and caring for their offspring.

Resident Rockstar Jan Kus graced the stage of New York's famous Rockwood Music Hall in October as part of Play\_Ground – a musical laboratory which fuses the youthful creative spontaneous playfulness of PLAY, and heavy, groovy and tradition-rooted grounding of GROUND. This unique band melds together electronic beats from Puerto

Rican Bomba, Balkan music, Jazz, Funk, and Hip Hop, giving life to its founders' love for visual art, philosophy, Latin Jazz, backstreets of New York, jungles of San Lorenzo, Slovenian glacial lakes, outer galaxies, and much more.



*PLAY\_GROUND: Slovenian born Jan Kus (saxophone, keyboard), Justin Salisbury (keyboard), Dan Martinez (electric bass) and Abel Tabares (drums).*

Now that the city is open and thriving, we would love to hear from our Branch 93 community. Please send us your ideas for future events. It's time to come together and engage again!

KATHLEEN SIMMONDS

---



---

**BRANCH 108 - National Capitol Area**

On August 15, 2021, the Slovenian community of the National Capital area gathered to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of Our Lady of Brezje Chapel at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC. Despite the National Shrine just reopening in June after closing for 15 months due to the pandemic, and the mask mandate, the Slovenian Chapel was filled once again with Slovenian voices singing traditional hymns and a litany to honor Marija Pomagaj, Our Lady of Brezje, Patroness of Slovenia in the largest Catholic church in North America.

This monumental day happened exactly 50 years to the

*Zarja - The Dawn*



day since the dedication on August 15, 1971, when several thousand people, including SUA members, came by busloads, cars, and planes from across the United States, Canada, and Slovenia to attend. It was officiated by two Slovenian Bishops and a Mass of Thanksgiving was held in the upper church of the Shrine with over three thousand pilgrims from across the United States, Canada, and Slovenia.

In my reflection following the Mass celebration, I shared the important fact that at the Slovenian Women's Union National Convention, held in Washington, DC on May 24 through May 28, 1967, the dream of the chapel began to take a promising turn to move forward concretely with



**25th Chapel Anniversary: Corinne Leskovar and Bernadette Fitzsimmons.**

**1967 Branch. 103 - Washington DC Charter Members.**

a campaign plan. The convention was organized by the members of The SWUA Branch 103, Washington, DC branch, of which Irene Planinsek Odorizzi, Nika Kovacic, and Bernadette Kovacic Fitzsimmons are living charter members. The National Board of the SWUA adopted at this convention a resolution pledging moral support to the idea of the Slovenian Chapel and participation in a nationwide campaign to collect the necessary funds. Spearheaded by the SWU's late Supreme President, Mrs. Antonia Turek, of Wickliffe, Ohio, by its Supreme Secretary, the late Mrs. Albina Novak, of Chicago, Illinois, and by the late editor of its monthly *Zarja*, Mrs. Corinne Leskovar, also from Chicago, the nationwide campaign was soon under way.

The chapel details unfolded during my childhood years, and I remember the inspiration, love, and devotion that spread across the Slovenian communities throughout the United States during my childhood years with no internet, e-mail, or social media that we know today. It was done through Slovenian newspapers, the monthly *Zarja - The Dawn* magazine, snail mail, phone calls, and radio broad-

casts. With tremendous generosity, hard work, dedication, and prayers, the dream planted in the hearts of Slovenians in the 1960s became a reality in 1971. The importance and

the devotion of Marija Pomagaj of Brezje continues from one generation to the next, honoring Slovenians who came to the New World for various reasons, and immigrants in the Slovenian community who left their Slovenian homeland due to political and religious oppression to build a new life in the United States.

We were deeply honored to have Mr. Tone Kajzer, Ambassador of the Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia, in attendance at the celebratory Mass, along with his embassy staff. He graciously addressed the Slovenian community and joined us with prominent staff from the Slovenian Embassy in Washington, DC for a celebratory luncheon at a nearby restaurant. We were very thankful for the Slovenian Embassy in Washington's generous contribution of both a walnut potica and a *pehtranova* (poppy seed potica) to share for the luncheon.

Among the participants present at the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Mass were a total of nine members of the Slovenian community who were present at the Dedication of the Chapel of Our Lady of Brezje Chapel on August 15, 1971, three of whom are still SUA members today: Nika Kovacic, Bernadette Kovacic Fitzsimmons, and Richard Terselic. Mike and Bonnie Pavsic (SUA Branch 108 member)



*Ambassador Tone Kajzer at front altar of Our Lady of Brezje Chapel.*



*Group Photo: Our Lady of Brezje Chapel 50th Anniversary Celebration.*

also attended, and Mike shared his memory of donations being collected for the Slovenian Chapel at his school while growing up in Cleveland. Mike said, “Everyone was expected to contribute to the milk carton that was passed around, no matter how small. The importance of the chapel being built in DC was engrained in us.”

The National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception is Our Lady’s home church in America, representing the embodiment of the Mother of God depicted in the national chapels from around the world, along with the other nations represented, who also express our bond with Mary. Our Lady of Brezje, Patroness of Slovenia, continues to inspire many visitors from Slovenian communities and throughout the world. The National Shrine represents the legacy of our Slovenian ancestors of their great vision of hope and love in the miracles of Brezje from Slovenia to America to hold in our hearts, as we continue to pray to Marija Pomagaj, Mary Help of Christians for generations to come.

BERNADETTE FITZSIMMONS

---

### BRANCH 109 - Twin Cities (TC) of Minnesota

Contact Information:

Elaine Barthelemy [elaineab@yahoo.com](mailto:elaineab@yahoo.com)

After many months of Zooming, we were finally able to gather in person to celebrate the 30th anniversary of Slovenian independence. Honorary Consul of the Republic of Slovenia, Miro Medved, and his wife, Karen, welcomed a large group of us to their home for this consulate event.

On a perfect, sunny autumn day, we enjoyed delicious Slovenian cuisine, wine and beer, balinanje matches (aka “bocce ball”), and the camaraderie we have missed for months. The Dream Team entertained us with the Slovenian and American national anthems and other Slovenian tunes. With Karen Medved, Cindy Gauthier, and Denise Perhay



*Back: Hosts Karen and Miro Medved;  
Front: Matt Barthelemy, Father Jim Bernard,  
and Bina Medved.*



*Perfect day for our 30th Anniversary Fete.*



*Dream Team singers.*

working behind the scenes in the kitchen, Rick Pisa and Mike Koski orchestrating the balinanje tournament, and many busy volunteers doing the set-up and take-down of tents, tables, and chairs, the event went smoothly. Thanks to Miro and Karen for being the perfect hosts and to everyone else who facilitated this event!



**Bocce Ball Tournament winners.**

Our first in-person monthly meeting in well over a year brought forty-plus members to the New Brighton Community Center to hear our speaker, Norm Setnicker, talk about climbing Mount Triglav. At 2,684 meters in altitude, it is the highest peak of the Julian Alps and is featured on the Slovenian flag. First Slovenian President Milan Kučan

once proclaimed that it's the duty of every Slovenian to climb Triglav at least once in his or her lifetime, and Norm and Mary Ann decided to satisfy that goal in September of 2011.

Norm began his presentation by sharing a video featuring a Triglav mountain climber, and we sang along to a piece appropriately called *Triglav* that praised the beauty of the scenery. Norm and Mary Ann even danced the polka as we clapped along. Then Norm talked about their adventure on which they were joined by his younger brother, David, from Biwabik, Minnesota, and guided by distant cousin Marjan from Polhov Gradec, Slovenia. In advance, Norm and Mary Ann had done some training on hills near their home, but they were nonetheless challenged by the climb.

Marjan had them begin at the Pokljuka plateau in Krma Valley located 1400 meters above sea level. Unfortunately, the day before the climb, a bee on an apple Mary Ann was eating stung the inside of her lip. This caused tremendous pain and swelling but didn't hamper her determination. The next morning as the group maneuvered the steep and rocky paths, they enjoyed the beautiful scenery, encountering a flock of sheep and seeing ibex in the distance.

When they reached Vodnikov dom, (1817 meters), Mary Ann was exhausted from dealing with the pain of the bee bite and decided to rest there instead of climbing further. Her lips swollen, she slept through the afternoon and then again all night, eating only *jota*, a Slovenian soup/stew made with sauerkraut, ham, beans, and potatoes. The men continued on to the Lodge in Kredarici (2515 meters)



**Norm Setnicker talking about Mt. Triglav.**



*Happy attendees at our October meeting.*

where they spent the night. They picked up a rested Mary Ann the next morning on the way back down.

Although they didn't reach the topmost peak, they were proud of their accomplishment and have bragging rights for climbing Mt. Triglav. In closing Norm remarked, "The climb created a stronger sense of my Slovenian identity and my connection to beautiful Slovenia!"

Twin Cities Slovenians will meet at the Medveds' home in November to celebrate Martinovanje and in New Brighton in December for a Christmas program with Sue Rademacher. We will Zoom in January, February, and March to compensate for potential bad weather and to allow our snowbirds to join us.

One last thing... as you read this, winter will be here with colder weather and possibly snow for many. However, as I write this in mid-October, the sun is shining in Minnesota, and I am still driving around with the top down on the red Toyota Camry Solara 2006 convertible I bought in August. If you ride with me, I can offer you a choice of six different



*Me in my Solara AKA "Red Rover."*

colors of scarves as we "Thelma and Louise" or "Audrey Hepburn" our way around. Living life!

ELAINE BARTHELEMY



**Marta Stemberger, MA**  
*Translation Wizardess*  
marta.ls@arinnainc.net

**Bridging SLOVENE + ENGLISH Languages**

SUA members receive 10% discount on provided translation!



*Join Us Today*



WE *slovenian*

OUR MEMBERS

<https://slovenianunion.org>

**SUA  
is now on  
Instagram!**

**Follow us at  
slovenian\_union\_of\_america  
or scan the code with your smartphone.**

Follow us for more content on  
Slovenia and Slovenian heritage!



SLOVENIAN UNION OF AMERICA

# Cultural Interest Groups

A CIG constitutes a group of SUA members with a shared interest in a specific activity, area of knowledge, area of learning, or characteristic. SUA CIGs will usually meet on Zoom or on a similar virtual platform.

A new way to connect!

No geographic limitations.

Find a topic that interests you!

Topics can include food wine art singing, and much more.

Do you have an idea for starting a CIG? SUA CIGs are started by regular members who have a Slovenian cultural interest they want to pursue. Contact an SUA Board member (listed on inside cover of Zarja) if you need help getting started OR check out the SUA website's main page where there is a banner with information about SUA CIGs and how to start one!

## SUA Zoom Book Group

The first SUA book club discussion was held Tuesday evening, October 19th to discuss “The Women of the Copper Country” by Mary Doria Russell which highlights the active role of Annie Klobuchar Clemenc in the Copper Country Strike of 1913–1914. Thank you to co-hosts Stephanie Petkovsek (discussion leader) and Lynn Zalokar, both from Branch 93-NYC, for organizing. To join the group, please email [suabookclub@gmail.com](mailto:suabookclub@gmail.com) or email [sua.members@gmail.com](mailto:sua.members@gmail.com) (to make sure the SUA has your email to hear about future discussions via the weekly Feature Friday emails).



During the summer of 2021, the SUA Board approved the creation of Cultural Interest Groups (CIGs). Historically, SUA has been organized geographically by branches. CIGs provide the membership with the ability to connect with others according to cultural interests, regardless of geographic location. All members, whether they live near a branch or not, can connect and enjoy events by joining an existing CIG or by creating a new CIG that focuses on an area of interest.



# SUA Zoom Book — Group —

## *Come Join Us!*

A book group that will meet quarterly on a weeknight with either a book discussion or speakers is forming. The books the organizers have in mind will be easy to find in most public libraries and relate to the immigrant or the immigrant ancestor experience of most members (the Ellis Island and post WWII periods) and also other books before or after that time period. The books may be specifically about Slovenians or well-known books that relate to the time periods of Slovenian immigration.

If you are interested in participating, please send an email to [suabookclub@gmail.com](mailto:suabookclub@gmail.com) with your name, branch number, and city. If you have book suggestions, send those too!

# EAST OF THE EAST SIDE

A TRUE STORY BY CHRISTY LESKOVAR



From Slovenian peasant farms to the glittering Paris opera to the copper metropolis of Butte to the Flathead Indian Reservation, *East of the East Side* tells the remarkable true story of courageous immigrants swept by the tide of history and shaped by war, greed, and outsized personalities as they chase the American dream with surprising turns along the way.

FARCOUNTRY PRESS | **sweetgrassbooks**  
an imprint of FarCountry Press

WWW.FARCOUNTRYPRESS.COM • 1-800-821-3874

WWW.CHRISTYLESKOVAR.COM



## Want More Out of Life?

KSKJ Life is a Christian, community-focused life insurance company that has provided financial security to its members and their families since 1894. We offer competitive life insurance products and retirement solutions, premier personalized service and meaningful member benefits and programs. As a not-for-profit organization, KSKJ Life makes a difference by reinvesting back into local communities and is dedicated to continuing its mission by helping families achieve financial security.

## Connect With Us Today!

1-800-843-5755

[kskjlife.com](http://kskjlife.com)

KSKJ Life, American Slovenian Catholic Union, is an Illinois fraternal benefit society located at 2439 Glenwood Ave., Joliet, IL 60435. 2021.07.Z

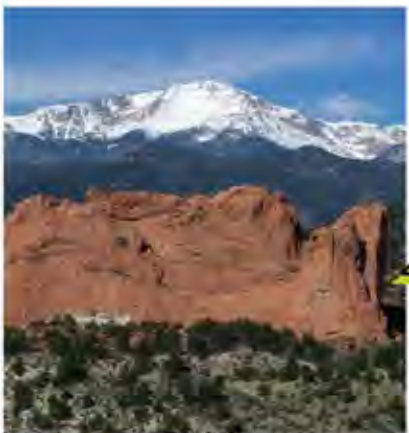
PERIODICALS  
POSTAGE  
PAID  
LASALLE, IL

# 2023

## MAKE IT A FAMILY AFFAIR!

PUEBLO, COLORADO WILL HOST THE UPCOMING 2023 SUA NATIONAL CONVENTION ON JUNE 15-17. LOCATED IN SOUTHERN COLORADO, PUEBLO PROVIDES EASY ACCESS TO A MULTITUDE OF COLORADO ATTRACTIONS. START PLANNING YOUR VACATION TODAY!

GET OUT FOR A HIKE WITH ENDLESS VIEWS



VISIT THE TOP OF PIKE'S PEAK - AMERICA'S MOUNTAIN

CATCH A TROUT IN THE ARKANSAS RIVER



AMBLE DOWN THE PUEBLO RIVERWALK

SCAN THIS CODE TO SEE OUR GUIDE TO COLORADO:

