



# OUR STORY

## NAŠA ZGODOVINA

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## CELEBRATING 15 YEARS

### 60th Anniversary of the Slovenian Summer Camp

Milena Soršak with Mark Ferkul

This year marked the 60th anniversary of the Slovenian Summer Camp. Who would have thought the humble beginnings of a swamp would eventually



become a glorious refuge for a community of people with Slovenian origin? The SSC provides individuals with a place to create lasting memories with their families and friends through the continuation of many Slovenian traditions.

This year was exceptional. A designated committee was formed to organize various events and activities over six weeks to commemorate the 60th year of its existence. The volunteers involved took their commitment to the extreme and provided an atmosphere for everyone to participate and enjoy.

The celebration kicked off on June 30th with a potluck dinner. It turned out to be a gourmet feast on the sport's deck that lasted well into the darkness of the beautiful summer evening.

A week later, the sport's field in the valley was turned

into a place for stationed activities for "Family Games Day" where the young (and not so young) tried their strengths and skills at mastering the 19 field games.

On July 14th, "Farmival", yet another enjoyable day took place at the sport's field. The carnival atmosphere was emphasized by music, while participants tried to collect as many tickets as possible to score points and win prizes.

For many elders, camping with all its charm was a memorable experience that the committee wanted to revive for the youth of today. A "campout" was planned as one of the celebration's events where camping skills were taught in a very practical and entertaining way accompanied by hot dogs, s'mores and a night under the stars.

On the last Saturday of July there was "Tombola" night where very few left the hall without a prize due to efforts of the organizing staff.

The final event took place on Sunday, August 5th. After mass at the chapel, the crowd rushed to the surroundings of the sport's deck to watch a plane circling the area where a skydiver appeared with an SSC flag. The diver approached the anticipated landing spot in the middle of the sport's field and was welcomed with an enthusiastic applause by the onlookers. In the afternoon there was a conclusion of the events at the gazebo square. The highlight was a presentation by the Koscak-Ulcar family. Members of four generations revealed their memories of the unforgettable times spent at "the farm" as it is still often referred to. All those involved in organizing the events deserve a sincere thank you for job well done.

More photos of the events can be seen on the website: [www.sloveniansummercamp.com](http://www.sloveniansummercamp.com)



## Cookbooks and Archives

Anne Urbančič

Each day this past August, as I walked to my classroom in Siena, Italy where I teach a summer course, I passed a pizzeria with wonderful smells wafting from its front door. Outside stood a large blackboard, where in large but uneven chalk lettering someone had written: *Dobra pica!* followed by a smiley face emoticon. Nothing else except the shop sign over the door saying Pizzeria; in the front window was the inevitable sample pizza Margherita (with the colours of the Italian flag represented in the red tomato sauce, white mozzarella cheese and green basil leaves as garnish). The proprietor was Italian. I wondered each time who had written the Slovenian (or perhaps Croatian or Serbian) words. I wondered why the sign was in a Slavic language but not in any other languages of the hundreds of tourists walking by. And I also began to think about how food items extend from their original birthplace, to travel across the world, and how the miles change them.

The CSHS archives has received a number of cookbooks once used by moms and grandmothers as they established their new life in Canada, especially in the post WW2 era. Many are published in Slovenian but interleaved with copies of recipes cut from Canadian newspapers and magazines or written by hand in English. How did family cooks decide which ingredients to keep, which to adapt with ingredients found in Canada but not in Slovenia?

Cookbooks have often been overlooked as a fundamental part of the history of a family, a community and a culture. This is likely because they have often been considered the domain of the kitchen and of women, and therefore not as important as other books. Nor can they even be counted among cookbooks focused on *haute cuisine* because, Slovenian households, even in Canada, like many other ethnicities, pride themselves on home-style cooking, *kar po domače*. But in recent years, historians have begun to re-evaluate the role cookbooks play in describing a culture, especially an immigrant culture, as it joins and adapts to new environments. One Canadian food historian, Marlene Epp, reminds us that

*cookbooks tell stories, as do all books. Perhaps the stories are not linear; they do not have a beginning, a middle and an end, but they are stories nonetheless. Reading . . . cookbooks, one can learn about changes in the economy, in the social make-up of the society, in women's roles, and in what it means to be a nation state and to be a member of that nation state.* (Epp, Marlene. "More than 'just' Recipes: Mennonite Cookbooks in Mid- twentieth Century North America." *Edible Histories, Cultural Politics: Towards a Canadian Food History*, edited by Iacovetta, Franca et al., U of Toronto P, 2012, pp. 173–188.)

The *Dobra pica* I mentioned above belongs to a Neapolitan cooking tradition but was clearly delicious even when adapted by a Sienese pizza-maker for tourists.

Similarly, many recipes belonging to the Slovenian cooking tradition have become an intrinsic and much appreciated part of Canadian Slovenian households. They are different from the way mama or stara mama made them; in my home, my carefully copied recipe for



*goveja juha* always brings comments that the soup is good but definitely not like my mother makes it. I have more luck with *tenstan krompir* which from the start was anglicized to “tinsel” potatoes in our house, and so I don’t have to compete with my mother’s way of making it.

Check out the cookbooks in your or any other Canadian Slovenian household. As you flip through the pages, think about the stories they tell. How do they indicate your own family’s acculturation to Canada? You’ll delight in the memories as you recall the tastes, the ambience, and most of all the people who prepared them. They tell the story of your family’s cooking history.

But are they Slovenian cooking history? Are they Canadian cooking history? Perhaps you can start a discussion about cookbooks over Thanksgiving turkey....

## Captain John’s Harbour Boat Restaurant

Anne Žagar

Captain John's Harbour Boat Restaurant was located on the MS Jadran, a former Adriatic passenger ship that was permanently docked on Toronto’s waterfront at the foot of Yonge Street at 1 Queens Quay West in Toronto. It was owned and operated by John Letnik, a refugee from Slovenia who arrived in Canada in 1957.



This floating restaurant was a very popular destination for weddings and other events, and also hosted many prominent diners, such as Bob Hope, Mel Lastman, Brian Mulroney and others. It attracted many people for close to forty years.

On August 8, 2018, at a special ceremony to mark the waterfront site, Captain John Letnik presented the city with a unique memorial fashioned out of the ship’s bell and one of its three large anchors. The event was coordinated by Joe Mihevc, city of Toronto councillor, and his office staff. In attendance were also the former mayor of Mississauga, Hazel McCallion, and former mayor of Toronto, David Crombie. All three spoke eloquently of John Letnik’s contribution to the city of Toronto and of his vision of the waterfront as a vibrant locale that would attract visitors and tourists.

(Picture taken by Ivan Marentic)



## **Inside the Archives: Connecting to Family through Records and Discovery of the Holy Name Society**

Emily Chicorli

One of the exciting current projects happening at the CSHS Archives is the creation of an inventory for all the archival collections. Over the summer and into the fall I have had the wonderful opportunity to find very interesting historical records from different individuals, families, and organizations – including my own!

My maternal grandfather, Vinko Levstik, was born on December 1, 1923, in Prigorica. He was a Domobranc and later came to Canada in 1948 where he first worked on the railway in North Bay and Sudbury and then worked in Toronto installing antennas, assembling DC-10 airplanes, building and subway's Yonge line, and later installing aluminum windows and doors. He married my grandmother, Slavka Levstik (née Petek) in November 1951. My grandfather passed away on March 12, 1991 – when I was only a baby. I never knew him but have always felt like I have a strong connection to him through the stories my mom, Marie Chicorli (née Levstik), told me. According to my mom, my grandfather loved reading (like I do), he was hard worker (like I am), and that he was a very patient man (not like me at all, unfortunately).

One afternoon in July I happened to open a box that had a series of handwritten notebooks entitled, 'Zapisnik'. Further investigation of the notebooks written in Slovenian revealed that they were meeting record books for the Holy Name Society in Toronto (also known as slovensko društvo najsvetejšega imena jesusovega). Gently looking through the notebooks also led me to find a bunch of signatures from secretary, V. Levstik.

Knowing that 'Levstik' is a common Slovenian last name, I wasn't sure if this specific notebook was actually written by my grandfather. I sent a few photos to my mom and she confirmed it was his signature.

Elated at finding records from my grandfather who I never had the privilege of meeting but have felt connected to; I invited my mom to come look at the notebooks in the CSHS Archives so she could see them in person. The notebooks reveal that my grandfather was secretary of the Holy Name Society from May 1953 to April 1954. He may at one time also have been President for a short term. My mom was also able to help translate some of the text and identify that the actual writing of the meeting minutes was done by my grandmother and signed by my grandfather! He

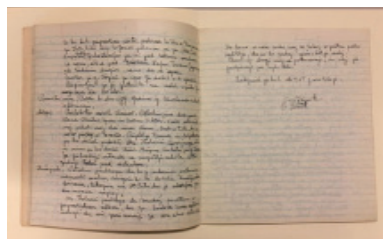
must have written notes in shorthand and then my grandmother expanded the notes fully.

My mom told me that seeing the notebooks written by her parents brought her back to the early beginnings of her parents' new life in a new country. She remarked how amazing it is that a small group of Slovenian refugees were able to build a new life in Canada while still keeping their faith and Slovenian culture alive.

The Holy Name Society in Toronto was a men's organization that started in 1949 as a way to keep the connection between members' faith and homeland, as well as to help prepare for the first Slovenian parish, Marija Pomagaj, which was established in 1954. With the records and current knowledge we have at the moment, it seems the organization in Toronto was started up by Rev. Jakob Kolarič, C.M., and was active between 1949 and 1959. The members may have met on a monthly basis, which sometimes included meetings, lectures on various topics regarding the church, life, and Catholicism, and organized local events and pilgrimages to places such as Midland and Marylake.

Sometimes working or researching in the archives can bring about an unexpected connection to communities and families. I feel very lucky to have had the privilege of having that experience.

If any readers have additional information about the Holy Name Society Toronto, please e-mail us at [cshistorical@gmail.com](mailto:cshistorical@gmail.com)



Please visit us on [www.slovenianhistorical.ca](http://www.slovenianhistorical.ca) or follow us on Facebook. You can also receive OUR STORY by email.

*Correction:* In our last issue on page 3 the statement "humble, hard-working and honest" Slovenians should have been attributed to Councillor J. Mihevc,

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