



### Czech Easter (Velikonoce) By Dana Shanberg

The following is based on my experience of Easter in the Northern Moravia region.

Children finish school on **Ugly Wednesday (Škaredá středa)**, which is a good idea because they need to spend some serious time on making Easter what it should be. In the evening of **Green Thursday (Zelený čtvrtek)**, every boy in the village equips himself with a wooden rattle (řehtačka), which is specially made for the purpose, the boys form a group and walk through the village, rattling their rattles vigorously, so the noise can be heard from afar. The meaning of the rattling is to chase away Judas. The same procedure repeats on **Good Friday (Velký pátek)** and one more time on **White Saturday (Bílá sobota)** when the boys don't only walk through the village but stop at every house in the morning and rattle until they're given money, which they then split between themselves.

**Easter Sunday (Neděle velikonoční)** is a day of preparations for Easter Monday. Girls paint, color and decorate eggs if they haven't done so already, and boys prepare their pomlázkas!

In my family, decorating Easter eggs is a simple affair: dip some hardboiled eggs in water filled with boiled onion peels and then place store-bought Easter stickers on the eggs.



**Easter Monday (Pondělí velikonoční)** is a day off, the day of the pomlázka.

The origin of the pomlázka tradition (pomlázka meaning both the whip and the tradition itself) dates back to pagan times. Its original purpose and symbolic meaning is to chase away illness and bad spirits and to bring health and youth for the rest of the year to everyone who is whipped with the young pussywillow twigs. Boys would whip girls lightly on the legs and possibly douse them with water, which had a similar symbolic meaning. An Easter carol, usually asking for an egg or two, would be recited by the boy while whipping. The girl would then reward the boy with a painted egg or candy and tie a ribbon around his pomlázka. As the boys progressed through the village, their bags filled up with eggs and their pomlázkas were adorned with more and more colorful ribbons.

This tradition is still largely upheld, especially in villages and small towns, although it may have lost its symbolism and romance and is now performed mainly for fun. The reward has also changed - money and shots of plum brandy (slivovice) are often given instead of or in addition to painted eggs and candy. So by early afternoon, groups of happy men can be seen staggering along the roads... All that aside, Easter remains one of the most joyful holidays on the Czech calendar.

Happy Easter! - Veselé Velikonoce!

## **The Burning of the Witches, April 30: This peculiar Czech custom that says a final farewell to winter can still be witnessed in many Czech villages**

Contributed by Petr Chudoba ([www.myczechrepublic.com](http://www.myczechrepublic.com)):

On the evening of April 30th, Czechs gather to build a bonfire and prepare an effigy of the witch that kept winter around so long. Czechs used to believe that the power of witches would weaken as the weather got warmer. So they thought that if they made something that looked like a witch and burned it, they could finally get rid of the cold weather. First, they tie two large sticks together to form a cross. Then they stuff old shirts, pants and socks with straw and place a pointed hat on the top of the stack. The witch is tied to a broomstick and set aside until darkness falls. When the fire is roaring, people roast sausages on sticks, strum guitars, and sing their favorite songs. Everyone looks forward to nightfall, when they will face the spirits of the witches. As soon as it's dark, the effigy of the witch is brought out and held up for all to see. Then, with a heave of the arm, it is thrown on top of the bonfire. As the witch burns, so does the last of winter's chill.



[http://www.myczechrepublic.com/czech\\_culture/czech\\_holidays/](http://www.myczechrepublic.com/czech_culture/czech_holidays/)



**Monthly Unit Meetings: First Tuesday of the month, 7:00**

**@ Sokol Cultural Center**

- April 3-7      Gymnastics Spring Break camp (details below)
- April 4        Unit Meeting
- May 6         Memorial service for Br. Frank Turchan. 11:00AM at Cherry Hill Presbyterian Church (24110 Cherry Hill St, Dearborn, MI 48124) and a lunch at the church follows.
- June 22-25   American Sokol Slet in Cedar Rapids, Iowa

## **GYMNASTICS**

Bring your kids, neighbors, grandkids, & check out SOKOL gym today!

### **Open Gym - Friday Nights 7 to 9 p.m.**

Must have parent forms on file at the gym. Download them and bring them with you or parents can fill them out at the gym (forms are on the Gymnastics page)

### **GYMNASTICS CAMP**

9am to 5pm - Parent Forms must be on file.

Cost is \$35 per day or \$150 per week (5 days).

April 3 - 7, 2017.

### **We are hiring Preschool, Gymnastics & Tumbling Coaches!**

Please send your resume to [sokoldetroitgymnastics@gmail.com](mailto:sokoldetroitgymnastics@gmail.com) or bring it into the gym.

## Sokol Detroit Unit Meeting Minutes

March 7, 2017

First Vice President, Sr. Carol Brandon, called the meeting to order at 7:04PM. Fourteen members were in attendance. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. It was reported that Br. Victor Hurych is ill, and Br. Nebojsa Dimic is recovering from an injury. Also, Sokol Greater Cleveland member, Br. J. J. Vencel, is seriously ill,

**Correspondence:** Newsletters were received from Sokol Greater Cleveland, Sokol St. Louis, Sokol USA Times, the Czech Catholic Union, and the winter issue of the National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library. We received a request from Sokol Spirit to include an advertisement in the 13th Annual Sokol Spirit Exhibition booklet. The event will be held on March 25, 2017. Tomas Pfeiffer of Prague sent a gift of a book and DVD.

**Applications:** Br. Alex Novacek presented an application for Eriq and Alejandra Frommert. Each has participated in the required two Sokol activities prior to this application submission. Members present accepted this application, and it will be turned over to Sr. Melanie Mily, Membership/Interviewing Director.

**Financial Secretary,** Sr. Kirsten Conely, was excused, and Sr. Carolyn Sabados read the list of resigned Sokol members.

**BOI:** Sr. Sharon Stanek reported. A camp was held during the mid-winter break, and another is scheduled for the first week of April. Two meets are scheduled in March: a fun meet at Downriver Gymnastics in Southgate on March 11; and an AAU meet on March 19 at High Flyers Sports Arena in Howell.

**UPC:** Br. Alex Novacek reported on the recent UPC Meeting. All Camp dock space owners are compliant with the latest rules. The Sokol Center roof leak has been repaired. While Br. Novacek did not ask for approval of the Budget Forecast project expenses at this time, he listed the upcoming repair/maintenance projects: Center chair replacement; partial Center parking lot repair; gym floor refinishing. For the Camp: road gravel purchase; concession stand siding; bathrooms repainted; kitchen floor redone; general kitchen repair/maintenance; caretaker cottage/icehouse sided and door enlarged; Sokol sign by hill repainted; Marshall road sign repainted or improved

**Library:** Sr. Diana Balint reported. The Sokol Library continues to receive donations, sometimes without warning. Many keys exist to this facility, and sorting and shelving work may not be evident to those unlocking the door. The collection is always being evaluated and maintained despite surprises. Sr. Balint asked and was given membership permission to explore the expenses involved in the digitization of our library collection. She and Br. Ronald Balint brought a few interesting photographs and ledgers to the meeting – one was a class book listing pupils in the Sokol Detroit Czech School from 1935-1955. Sr. Ann Marie Hurych suggested that a committee be formed to organize all of the Sokol Detroit historical items.

**Czech Language School:** Br. Petr Peska turned in school fees to the Treasurer. Presently there are seven students in his class.

**Old Business:** Sokol Cedar Rapids Slet: A reminder that the American Sokol Slet in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, will be held June 22 through June 25, 2017. The host hotel for the Slet is booked up as of this time, but other area hotel accommodations are available. Membership had approved in February a full-page Sokol Detroit advertisement in the Slet's souvenir booklet.

**New Business:** A Memorial Service will be held on Saturday, May 6, 2017, for Br. Frank Turchan, Sr. The service is scheduled for 11:00AM at Cherry Hill Presbyterian Church (24110 Cherry Hill St, Dearborn, MI 48124) and a lunch at the church follows.

Br. Novacek reported that there are two new membership forms: a new Membership Application, revised and rewritten to match the updated Bylaws; and a proposed new form -Membership Upgrade - to be given to first-year members at the time of their initiation. This is needed to move them to voting members in some way. First-year members will have to be tracked. The form will list the Sokol events in which they participated, any committees on which they have served, any observations they had during the preceding year. It will be decided who will monitor them after this one-year period. The Executive Board will get advanced copies of these new documents for review before the April Unit meeting. Also, the Bylaws Committee did not address the application process for "gym" members. This will be addressed this year and updated in October.

The 2016 Annual Report was distributed, and a digital version will be available to members upon request. Please contact an Executive Board member for a copy. The February 2017 minutes were approved as submitted.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:54PM. The next meeting will be held at 7:00PM on April 4, 2017, at Sokol Center.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose Wiggle, Co-Recording Secretary

John Krista, who lives in Brownstown, has a collection of 78RPM Bohemian available—free!

Contact John Krista at 734 992-3261

From Gorton Greene:

Thank you to Carol and Harold Rappold for a \$100 donation to the Endowment Fund in memory of Lorraine Wimmer.

## Sokol Detroit Donations

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

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Email Address (receipt will be sent electronically):  
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In "Memory" or "Honor" of: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Please mail to:**

**Scholarship Fund Donations:**

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Dearborn, MI 48124

**Endowment Fund Donations:**

Gorton Greene  
7325 Cold Spring Ln.  
W. Bloomfield, MI 48322

**Building Fund and Camp Donations:**

Ann Marie Hurych  
13433 Mulberry Trail  
Taylor, MI 48180



It's time to submit college scholarship applications!  
Please contact Bruce Singley  
for an application at  
[brsingley@comcast.net](mailto:brsingley@comcast.net)  
Applications are due by mid  
May 2017.

Join Petr Peska on Saturdays at 9:00 a.m. at the  
Sokol Cultural Center Club Room!

Email Petr if you have questions:  
[ptrpeska@gmail.com](mailto:ptrpeska@gmail.com)



Visit us @ [SokolDetroit.com](http://SokolDetroit.com)

Find us on Facebook @ [Sokol Detroit & Sokol Camp](#)

### **SOKOL - Detroit Unit**

Sokol Cultural Center  
23600 W. Warren Ave.  
Dearborn Hts. MI 48127

### **Sokol Camp**

11641 Sokol Camp Rd.  
South Lyon, MI 48178

### **Address or email changes?**

Please notify Kirsten Conely  
by phone @ 734-459-3321 or  
by email @ [kas0968@aol.com](mailto:kas0968@aol.com)

Submit information for publication  
by the 15th of each month to:

[SokolDetNews@gmail.com](mailto:SokolDetNews@gmail.com)

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Sokol Detroit  
23600 W. Warren  
Dearborn Heights, MI 48127

" The Mission of the American Sokol is to provide fitness and community for individuals and families through physical, educational, cultural and social programs."

-A non-profit Organization

