

A Rewarding Journey Outside of My Comfort Zone *by MacLean Lunko*

In 2015, I began a journey not normal for someone like me; I decided that I wanted to learn the Czech language. Learning a foreign language is not something that someone with a background in engineering normally does, but I also have a passion for history, and that passion led me to discover the history of Czechoslovakia.

Growing up in western Pennsylvania, I was surrounded by second and third generation immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe. Hundreds of thousands of people from the region had emigrated to Western Pennsylvania between 1880 and 1914 to work in coal mines and steel mills. Church festivals and fundraisers selling Slavic food were common in my hometown. Every Saturday and Sunday morning polka music filled the airwaves on local radio stations.

The churches of my hometown were centers of Slavic culture, and they kept the community together. However, by the 1980s and

1990s, few people were interested in learning the languages of their ancestors, so the language classes closed.

While I love history, economic reality dictated that I follow a different career path. So I studied engineering. After earning a degree in Manufacturing Engineering and moving to South Central Pennsylvania, I got an excellent job that allowed me free time to pursue my passion for history.

Many of you may not be aware, but when Czechoslovakia was founded in 1918, it controlled 70-80 percent of all of the heavy industry of the Austro-Hungarian empire. This new nation became a manufacturing powerhouse overnight.

My interest in history, my vocation in manufacturing engineering, and my childhood growing up immersed in Slavic culture came together to fuel my interest in learning more about Czechoslovakia.

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Wooden life-sized Nativity in Vrchlabí, see page 8 to read more

CALENDAR OF EVENTS



REGULARLY SCHEDULED ACTIVITIES

CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE SCHOOL

In the fall semester we returned to our regular weekly schedule. Classes are being held virtually. Beginners or fluent speakers are welcome to join us regardless where they live.

- Czech Classes are held from 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm on Friday evenings.
 - Slovak Classes are held on Sunday mornings.
- You can enroll at any time. Check CSHA's web and Facebook pages for details and schedule or email us at info@cshamaryland.org.

FAMILY FUN NIGHTS

These events won't be possible this fall, but we will return to them as soon as it is safe – hopefully soon!

ADULT LANGUAGE SCHOOL

CSHA is one of the few organizations in the USA that offers language instruction for adults. Beginning, intermediate and advanced classes are offered virtually for spring, beginning January 16. Classes are held on Saturday mornings. To register or ask questions, please contact Lois Hybl at 410-243-1710 or e-mail: LHybl@verizon.net.

HERITAGE SINGERS

When it is safe to resume, rehearsals will be announced on our web and Facebook page.

HLAS - If you have any suggestions or comments or want to contribute to the Hlas by writing an article, email us at info@cshamaryland.org.

CSHA ONLINE - For more information about any of these activities or to register for classes, you can contact CSHA at: info@cshamaryland.org. CSHA's Communication Committee will respond promptly to answer your questions and provide information, and we are eager to hear your ideas and suggestions. Also, please check our website www.cshamaryland.org and follow us on Facebook at [Czech and Slovak Heritage Association of Baltimore](https://www.facebook.com/CzechandSlovakHeritageAssociationofBaltimore).

DECEMBER 2020

MIKULÁŠSKÁ - December 6th, 2020 - this event has to be canceled due to the Covid Pandemic. We look forward to hearing all the children's poems and songs in 2021.

CHRISTMAS CONCERT - December 13th, 2020 - this event has to be canceled due to the Covid Pandemic.

CHRISTMAS COOKIES FUNDRAISER - Check our website and Facebook pages to get details on how you can order delicious homemade cookies. Not only that you can sit down with a cup of coffee or hot chocolate and enjoy the delicious taste of the cookies, but you can also enjoy the warm feeling that comes from supporting CSHA. The donations go a long way, helping us to provide events for you or help support our language schools.

PAJTASI online virtual concert is available on CSHA YouTube channel. It was recorded specifically for our CSHA community. Check our website to find out more.

JANUARY 2021

GENERAL MEETING - January 24th, 2021 at 4PM. Virtual link will be provided via email. We encourage all our members to join us, and to get involved with CSHA. The future is full of possibilities for the Czech and Slovak communities in Baltimore. We need your help to bring them to life.

APRIL 2021

CSHA members appreciation picnic - outdoor event with live music - Date TBD.

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President's message:

Dear members,

In the end-of-the-year message, I was planning to look back at our accomplishments throughout this year. However, 2020 was not an ordinary year. I dare to say it is one of the most extraordinary years of our lives. The pandemic has completely changed the way we live and play, and it has certainly robbed us of many joys and rituals that we used to take for granted. Combined with stress brought on by the combative political climate, our mental and physical well-being has suffered a great deal. It looks like the pandemic will be challenging us for a while longer, but I believe that we will come out of this stronger and unified. Friendship, mutual understanding, and closeness between Czechs and Slovaks could be a great example for the people of the United States during this difficult time.

I would like to again mention a big passion of mine - sports. Actively pursuing physical exercise and following my favorite teams and athletes has been my lifelong joy and a hobby. As my running days were cut short by chronic back pain, cycling became a new sport I took on this year. It helps me to stay fit, get some fresh air and clear my head when needed. These days, every time Slovakian Peter Sagan, one of the world's best cyclists, wins a race, I immediately get a feeling of delight and pride. Sagan, three-time world champion, keeps reminding me how day-to-day focus and dedication to our pursuits can bring fruitful and exciting results. Ultimately, it does not have to be a famous athlete or celebrity who lifts our spirits. More often, it is

something or someone close to us. These days, I am amazed by my children. Virtual learning has not been easy for them, as they miss being with their friends and teachers. They also greatly miss their family back in Czechia and have days they are down and tired of the pandemic. Yet, often I hear them laugh and sing some new song or they come to show me a new dance routine they learned on TikTok. They inspire me by finding joy in the little things life has to offer. This shows me that they are able to adapt and deal with this great challenge. They deserve recognition for their resilience. I am proud of them and all of us as we try to do our best under present circumstances.

While the fall is my favorite part of the year, I look forward to the winter holiday season. Even though many traditional events will not happen this year, we all can try to enjoy the festive decorations, good food, and other delights the season has to offer. May the winter festivities bring you and your families much joy and peace, and may you enter the year 2021 with great optimism. I wish that our Slovak and Czech community here in Maryland stays strong, safe, and healthy. I cannot wait until we get together next year.

I wish you all a wonderful holiday season.

S pozdravem,



Petr Justin - CSHA president

Adult Czech and Slovak Language School

by Lois Hybl

We miss meeting in person and sharing a coffee break, and we especially miss the students who can't connect virtually. However, having our classes on Zoom and Google Meet has actually increased the enrollment in language school. It



is not only convenient and safe for Maryland students, but it also accommodates long distance students. Natalia Karlinsky's Beginning Slovak class includes students from North Las Vegas, Nevada, and Eatontown, New Jersey. The Beginning Czech class has two sisters enrolled from different locations. Virginia and Pennsylvania are also represented. Iva Zicha links in her parents in the Czech Republic to challenge her Advanced Czech Conversation classes.

While trying to learn grammar and conversation, we also have some fun. Andrea Kletetschka asks students to report on the news in Czech. We even heard about a Coronavirus-shaped dessert served by a Prague restaurant.

Petr Justin's help with Google Meet is really appreciated. And thanks to Raymond Novak and Iva Zicha for use of their Zoom accounts. Our fall semester ends on December 12 and the spring semester begins January 16. So think about using the registration form in this HLAS to join us.

Raketa - Magazine for Children of Smart Parents

RAKETA is an original Czech magazine intended for children from about 6–12 years of age published by the Labyrint publishing house in Prague. It has been published every three months since December 2014, for a total of 24 issues to date. In each issue, you will find 52 colorful pages filled with stories, comics, fun games, tasks, crafts, cooking, poems and other content. Raketa does not contain any advertising. All content is dedicated to children.

The content of the magazine is invented by two editors, Radana Litošová and Johana Švejdlíková, together with a team of permanent and occasional authors and artists. All content is original. Raketa mainly supports Czech and Slovak authors and artists, but on the cover of the magazine here and there it will also feature authors from abroad.

Each issue has its own theme, which is then reflected in all contributions – everything from comics and stories through educational contributions and games. For example, recent issue themes have included: Beetles & Co., The Universe, Food is Joy, The Hairy Number, Botany, Sports in a Beanie, and Film. The creators are not afraid of thorny topics such as disabilities (issue number 9: In Other Eyes) or divorce (issue number 16: Family).

Recently, we interviewed editors-in-chief Radana and Johana. Here's what they had to say.

How did the Raketa come about, and whose idea was it?

Radana: In September 2014, the publisher Joachim Dvořák from Labyrint came up with the idea to make a children's magazine and to name it Raketa. He brought together longtime friends, Johana and I - to take on the project. We both had ambitions to create for children and sent him our ideas and examples of creation independently. Joachim's daughter was four years old at the time, and he wanted to create an original magazine he had seen abroad for her. Nothing like this existed in the Czech Republic at the time.

The subtitle of Raketa is "Magazine for Children of Smart Parents". What exactly do you mean by that?

Johana: It is sort of a hyperbole. We actually inherited the slogan from

the Raketa line of children books "Books for the Children of Smart Parents", under which children's books have been published in the Labyrint for many years. What we want to say is that a smart parent is interested in what to present to his child. And that's why parents choose their children's reading materials with the same care they choose quality food.

Many contributions in Raketa are educational. Is your goal to educate children?

Johana: It's definitely not the main goal. Children have enough curriculum at school. The Raketa is mainly intended to entertain and inspire children to want to learn something. We do it non-violently in the form of a game. In order for children to solve a quiz or task, they are motivated to read something first. We want them to be curious about the secret and to be happy when they solve the quiz. If they find out anything else about it and the information sticks, then it's absolutely great.

Where do you get inspiration from? Do you two come up with the whole magazine?

Radana: We really come up with a lot of it ourselves. But our authors also come up with a lot of beautiful ideas. Johana and I always come up with a topic. Then we brainstorm, put together the basic points that we would like to have in that issue. We then pass on the topic to our authors and they also bring their own ideas, from which we then choose the best. The authors of comics create their own stories on a given topic. Then we have a lot of work to do with adjustments and finetuning everything. I take care of the texts that I write or edit, Johana prepares the graphic form of the magazine and also draws.

There is no advertisement in your magazine. Can a magazine without advertising prosper at all today?

Johana: It's not easy. We cannot do without a support at all. Part of the cost is covered by the magazine's sales. We have a nice subscriber base, even abroad. We are also supported by friends around the Labyrint publishing house. And we are excited to receive the support of the Ministry of Culture for the second year in a row.



RAKETA je originální český časopis určený dětem asi od 6–12 let. Vychází každé tři měsíce od prosince roku 2014. Na kontě má už 24 čísel. Na 52 pestrých stránkách najdete příběhy, komiksy, zábavné hry, úkoly, tvoření, vaření, básničky i různé zajímavosti vždy na jedno konkrétní téma. Unikátní je v tom, že neobsahuje žádnou reklamu. Celý obsah je věnovaný dětem.

Obsah časopisu vymýšlejí dvě šéfredaktorky Radana Litošová a Johana Švejdlíková spolu s týmem stálých i příležitostných autorů a výtvarníků. Všechny příspěvky jsou původní. Raketa podporuje zejména české a slovenské autory a výtvarníky, ale na obálku časopisu tu a tam osloví i výtvarníky ze zahraničí.

Každé číslo má své téma, které se zračí ve všech typech příspěvků od komiksů a příběhů přes naučné příspěvky a hry až po výlety. Namátkou jmenujme například Brouci & spol., Vesmír, Jídlo je radost, Chlupaté číslo, Botanika, Sport v kulichu nebo Film. Tvůrci se nebojí ani ožehavých témat jako jsou handicap (číslo 9 téma: Jinými očima) nebo rozvod (číslo 16 téma: Rodina).

Položili jsme šéfredaktorkám Radaně a Johaně několik otázek:

Jak Raketa vůbec vznikla, či to byl nápad?

Radana: S nápadem udělat časopis pro děti a pojmenovat ho Raketa přišel v září 2014 nakladatel Joachim Dvořák z Labyrintu. Napadlo ho spojit nás - dlouholeté kamarádky mne a Johanu, abychom se projektu ujaly. Obě jsme měly ambice tvořit pro děti a posílaly mu nezávisle na sobě své nápady a ukázky tvorby. Joachimově dceři byly v té době čtyři roky a právě pro ni chtěl vytvořit originální časopis, jaké vídal v zahraničí. U nás nic podobného nevycházelo.

Podtitul Rakety zní „Časopis pro děti chytrých rodičů“. Co tím přesně myslíte?

Johana: Je to taková nadsázka. Slogan jsme vlastně zdědily po stejnojmenné edici Raketa „Knihy pro děti chytrých rodičů“, pod níž v Labyrintu vycházejí knihy pro děti už spoustu let. Tím podtitulem vlastně říkáme, že chytrý rodič se zajímá o to, co svému dítěti předloží. A proto dobře vybírá stejně jako kvalitní jídlo.

Hodně příspěvků v Raketě je naučných. Je vaším cílem děti vzdělávat?

Johana: Určitě to není hlavní cíl. Učiva mají děti dost ve škole. Raketa má hlavně bavit a inspirovat děti chtít se něco dozvědět. Děláme to nenásilně formou hry. Aby děti vylustily nějaký kvíz nebo úkol, jsou motivované si nejdříve k tomu něco přečíst. Chceme, aby byly zvědavé na tajemku a měly radost, když kvíz vyřeší. Když se u toho ještě něco dozvědí a ta informace jim ulpí v hlavě, tak to je úplná paráda.

Kde berete inspiraci? Celý obsah časopisu vymýšlíte vy dvě?

Radana: Opravdu velkou část vymýšlíme samy. Ale se spoustou krásných nápadů přicházejí i naši autoři. My s Johanou vždycky vymyslíme téma. Pak si uděláme společný briefing, kde dáme dohromady základní body, které bychom v tom daném čísle rády měly. Téma pak předáme našim autorům a i oni přinášejí vlastní nápady, z nichž pak vybíráme to nejlepší. Autoři komiksů si příběhy tvoří na dané téma sami. Nás pak čeká velká práce s úpravami, aby vše ladilo. Já se starám o texty, které píšu nebo upravuju, Johana připravuje grafickou podobu časopisu a také kreslí.

Ve vašem časopise není žádná reklama. Může časopis bez reklamy v dnešní době vůbec prosperovat?

Johana: Není to snadné. Bez podpory se úplně neobejdeme. Část nákladů pokryjí prodeje časopisu. Máme pěknou základnu předplatitelů, dokonce i v zahraničí. Dále nás podporují přátelé okolo nakladatelství Labyrint. A také se už druhým rokem těšíme podpoře Ministerstva kultury.



Raketa editors - Radana Litošová and Johana Švejdlíková

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Unfortunately, I immediately ran into a roadblock: not much of Czech and Slovak history was ever written in the English language. I read what I could and tried using Google Translate, but the results were unsatisfying. In desperation, I searched online for Czech speakers in eastern Pennsylvania who might be able to help me with translation. I found a group of Czech and Slovaks in the Philadelphia area who met once a month in a brew pub to practice their native language. I showed up to one of their meet ups, and they told me about an adult language school in Baltimore.

Baltimore is 60 miles from my house, but I could see that if I wanted to learn the history of Czechoslovakia, I needed to speak the language. So I searched online for the school in Baltimore and found the CSHA website. I contacted Lois Hybl and got more information. The next fall, I enrolled and started taking Czech 101 with Iva Zicha.

The first few weeks of class were a mixture of excitement and confusion. I was excited to finally be on my way to learning Czech, but I was also confused by cases, genders, declination, *háček*s, *čárka*s, *kroužek*s, animate and inanimate, declination, singular and plural, formal and informal. If not for Iva's skills as a teacher, I might have thrown my hands up in frustration. With Iva, it became a challenging but manageable process.

As each week, and then each semester has gone by, my knowledge has increased and the confusion has cleared. While I still make mistakes, and I don't always remember to use the correct case, my knowledge of Czech has increased to the point where I reach for the Czech-English dictionary more than I reach for my Czech grammar charts.

Along the way, I have become friends with my classmates and teachers. The adult school has become a community for me. Even though I drive an hour each way, I look forward to what new things

we learn each week. One day in Czech 101, we were studying the names of body parts in Czech. When we got to "teeth" I erupted in laughter. When I was a small child, and was getting ready for bed, my mother would ask me "Did you brush your zubbies?" I always thought the word was made up; I had no idea that "zuby" was the Czech word for "teeth."

Through CSHA's adult language school, I learned about the Summer Language School for Compatriots held in the Czech Republic. I applied for and received a scholarship to attend the month-long school in 2018. Through that experience, I came back to the adult language school even more motivated to learn.

Now, I attend Iva's Czech Conversation class, and even though the language is oftentimes too advanced for me, the classes challenge me to work harder during the week to improve my vocabulary.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the adult language school has moved online this year. Every week, instead of two hours in the car, I log onto Zoom and see Iva and my classmates. We have good discussions in Czech about our lives and how the pandemic has affected us. Also, Iva is able to share news articles about current events in the Czech Republic. We often play trivia games or Jeopardy in Czech to make the class lively.

Since no one was travelling this summer, we extended the Adult Language School and had a summer semester. This was great for me since I don't normally have anyone to practice with when school is not in session. I use Duolingo to practice during the week, and while it helps my vocabulary, it is no substitute for real conversations.

Originally, my journey to learn Czech was "a means to an end," because I wanted to study the history of Czechoslovakia. But, it has become a journey in and of itself – a journey toward belonging to a tiny group of people who can say "I speak Czech, what's your superpower?"



Dobruška class of 2018

Czech and Slovak School for Children

by Zuzana LaBuff

We are excited to let you know that after some time we are able to offer you Slovak classes for kids. In a short time, we got 8 new students, some of them from as far as Philadelphia. Our wonderful teacher, Janka Galkova is teaching all the kids from Tampa, Florida.

Right now we offer 2 classes, which are held on Sunday mornings, beginners class at 9:00 am and advanced at 10:00 am.

And of course our Czech Language classes continue as well. Our students come as far as from Canada.



Victoria LaBuff attending a virtual class

Czech and Slovak Recipe Corner:

by Dana Petran

Pulled Strudel (Tažený štrůdl)

With Christmas around the corner, it is time to think about baking. While Christmas cookies are the must for most of our households, there is another famous traditional European specialty. It is called pulled strudel, and unlike other types of strudels, this one can be even made with low sugar, low fat and is still very tasty. Our family will definitely have pulled strudel on the Christmas table, and we hope that you will give it a try as well.

INGREDIENTS: Dough:

3 cups all-purpose unbleached flour
3 tablespoons butter or coconut oil
2-3 tablespoons of vinegar
2 eggs
1 tablespoon sugar
Pinch of salt
2/3 cup water

Filling:

3-4 lbs. apples (peeled and sliced) for 10 logs
For each log:
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 cup raisins
1 cup white bread crumbs
1/2-1 cup ground walnuts or almonds
1-2 tablespoons sugar (optional)

DIRECTIONS:

- Mix melted butter or coconut oil, vinegar, sugar and salt with 2/3 cup of lukewarm water in a large cup. Combine this mixture with flour and add eggs, mix first using a wide knife and then work into the dough by hands for 10 minutes. When the dough is smooth, shiny and spongy, make 8-10 small balls, brush them lightly with butter and cover with warm bowl or pot. Let the balls rest for an hour when they will be ready for the next step. (You can also store the balls in refrigerator for a few days, wrapped in foil or a plastic bag).
- When you're ready to bake, place the dough balls on a cotton or linen towel and roll out with a roller into a flat circle about 6 to 8 inches across. Then pull the flattened dough from center outwards, working around few times. When the dough is very thin, sprinkle it with melted butter and bread crumbs, cover the middle 2/3 of the surface with apples, top with cinnamon, raisins and nuts, and sprinkle again with butter. Roll the dough into a log using the towel. Wrap both ends under to prevent any of the filling from spilling, and carefully move each log to a slightly greased baking sheet. Brush the surface of the logs with butter, sprinkle with ground walnuts or sliced almonds (optional) and bake in a preheated oven at 350-375 °F for 30-45 minutes, depending how many strudels you bake at the same time, until they are golden brown.
- When you take them out of the oven, partially slice each log on its top to let steam escape. Finish slicing after a few minutes. Sprinkle with powdered sugar mixed with vanilla sugar. Eat warm, but it also stores well in the refrigerator for a number of days.



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Vrchlabí - Přijďte pobejt! (Come and visit)

by Dana Petran

Christmas time is approaching, and preparations begin. At this time, it's nice to stop, look back and remember the places we came from, the people we loved and love, the places we call home in our hearts. For me, it is Vrchlabí, lying at the foot of the highest Czech mountains – Krkonoše. Here we lived before immigrating to the USA, and here we still have our lovely families and many friends. To us Vrchlabí remains a place full of memories and wonderful magic.

Many famous personalities come from this region, whether they are classical Czech writers or politicians such as Jan Amos Komenský or Dr. Karel Kramář, as well as famous musicians and composers, painters, scientists and photographers, and world-renowned athletes like snowboarder Eva Samková. Our children grew up in this magical world of fairy tales, a place that has seen many film adaptations. Krakonos, the mythical ruler of the region, is kind to good, hardworking mountaineers, and he protects all plants, flowers, and all living creatures in his forest kingdom. He also and punishes bad and dishonest people. When he gets really angry, he unleashes a mighty storm from the clear sky, so powerful is the ruler — and often such a storm leaves as fast as it came.

In the center of Vrchlabí stands a Renaissance chateau, the construction of which was started by Kryštof of Gendorf in 1546. There is an English park around the chateau, reconstructed after 1998

in the spirit of the original design. In 2015, a famous attraction was added to center of town: a wood-carved Krkonošský Bethlehem. Life-sized sculptures are made of heavy oak. The sculptor, Pavel Tryzna, together with a number of dedicated people, installs a special set of the Krkonoše nativity scene in the castle garden every year. I was lucky enough to see this exhibition during my January visit to the Czech Republic. You can see Krakonoš himself; the three kings; a band of musicians; a mountain bearer; a grandmother; Count Morzin, the former ruler of the Vrchlabí estate; and several more figures. The dominant feature remains a beautiful cottage, in which the crib contains not a baby Jesus, but rather a pair of twins, Jeníček and Mařenka, two well-known characters from a local children's story. You can sit along with in a horse-drawn beer carriage with three beer kegs loaded on a four-meter truck, with the figure of a man. "I wanted each statue to tell a story from the mountains. That's why I like it when a woman comes and says, this is our whole uncle Francek," explains Pavel Tryzna. He is inspired by the typical figures of the mountains. "This Bethlehem is about people from the Krkonoše hills," he says. "Once a lady stopped me and said to me: 'I come here every day and watch people look at your nativity scene. And do you know that no one frowns here? Everyone is smiling!'"

It is difficult to translate into English the typical address by which we invite friends to our homes, so let me add again: Přijďte pobejt! (Come to be with us)

See picture on the cover page