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Czech Heritage Foundation, Inc.
P.O. Box 761, Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52406

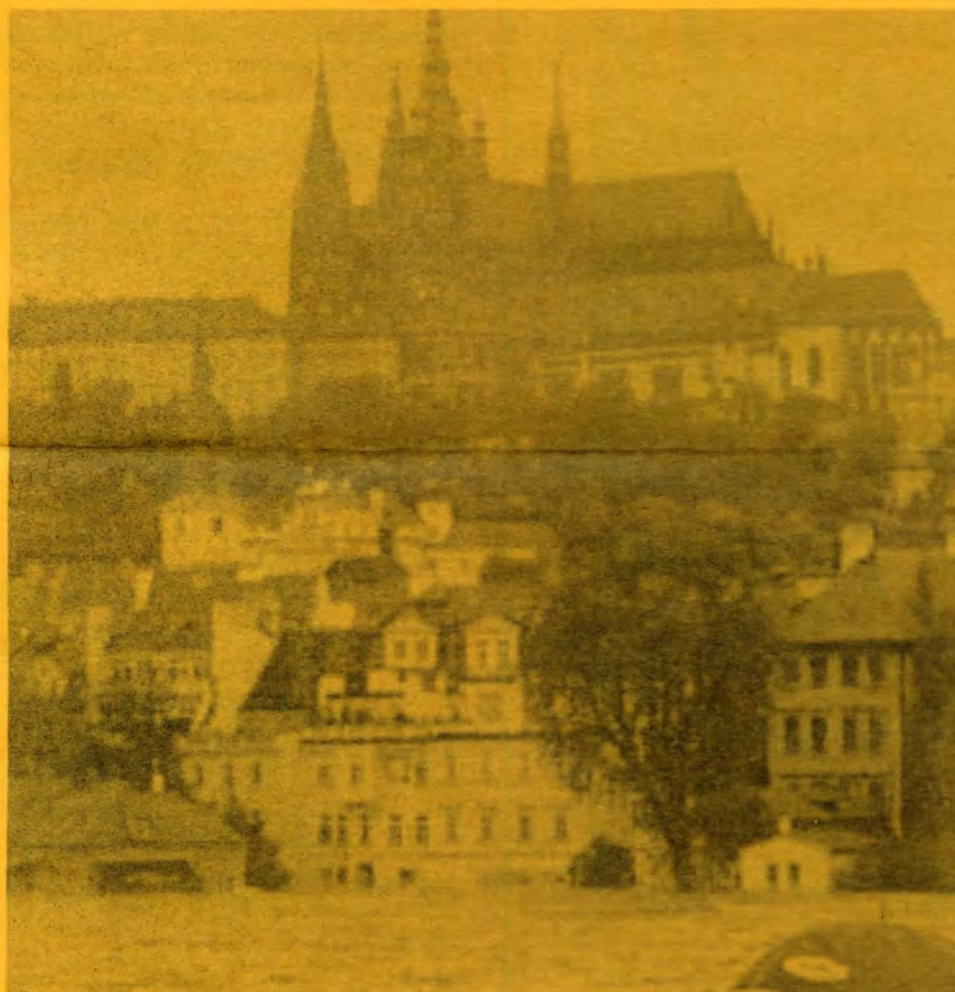
NAŠE ČESKÉ DĚDICTVÍ

OUR

CZECH

HERITAGE

Special Flood Report Edition



Record Floods in Europe

Daily Reports on the August 2002 Floods in Europe (See pages 3-9)

Volume 27 – Number 3 – September, 2002



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NAŠE ČESKÉ DĚDICTVÍ

OUR CZECH HERITAGE



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Nase Ceske Dedictvi

Subscriptions for the newsletter are not sold. Members of the Czech Heritage Foundation who pay their annual dues of \$3.00 per person receive *Nase Ceske Dedictvi* free. Dues are renewable on January 1st of each year and expire December 31st. The newsletter, which is mailed quarterly, serves to inform its members of its activities, people, and places. Dues received in September apply to the following year for new members.

Editor's Message - by Russ Novotny

SPECIAL FLOOD REPORT ISSUE – This issue of the Newsletter focuses on the recent devastating floods in Europe. News coverage here in the United States was "light" to say the least. We knew that our readers would appreciate some extended coverage (especially with the many pictures we were able to include).

Unfortunately, we had to remove several of our regular Sections from this issue to provide space for coverage of this rare event. Expect to have these Sections back in our next issue: Czech Language Lesson, Historic Perspectives, and Featured Stories.

WEB SITES TO "CZECH" OUT – As I was testing out the Web sites we list on our back cover, I was again reminded of the wealth of information here. The links to lists of Czech & Slovak-related Web sites are amazing!! Please take the time to try some of these sites out.

"CZECH" THIS OUT - While "surfing" these sites, I noticed that on the official Czech Republic web site, they refer to the Czech Republic as "CR". Here, we often refer to Cedar Rapids as "CR". Quite a coincidence!

Please contact us with your ideas for articles at:

Newsletter Materials
Czech Heritage Foundation
P.O. Box 761
Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52406

Newsletter Volunteers

By Frank Novotny

It is always enjoyable getting together to prepare the *Nase Ceske Dedictvi* for mailing. We want to express a sincere thank you to all who helped getting the activity organized. The past issue volunteers were:

Emma Davidson, Norman Eherle, Lenora Jiroutek, Peg Merta, Arlo & Joyce Netolicky, Frank Novotny, Darlene Trachta, and John & Adeline Volesky.

We welcome anyone who wishes to join us for future issues.

I. Special Notices:

Homestay Applications Due By 1/9/03

Do you know of a student interested in being awarded a month-long trip to the Czech Republic where they will live with a host family? See our enthusiastic reports by this year's Homestay Ambassadors in this Newsletter. You can obtain an application from your High School Counselor's office, or call Jeanne Fee at [redacted].

II. Cover Story:

Daily Reports on the August 2002 Floods in Europe

By Dusan Neumann

EDITOR'S NOTE: Deusan Neuman distributes a newsletter every few days by e-mail. In it, he focuses on the events in Eastern Europe. He calls this newsletter THE POTTSVILLE INTERNATIONAL. His reports during the recent flooding in Europe were filled with great pictures and commentary. We are including them here in their entirety. Send Deusan an e-mail to thank him for these articles, and maybe even request that he add you to his distribution. His e-mail is dneu@ptd.net.

For additional news articles on the floods and their aftermath, go to: http://news.yahoo.com/fc?tmpl=fc&cid=34&in=world&cat=czech_republic

Monday, August 12, 2002 FLOOD IN PRAGUE

The Czech republic is being flooded. A consistent rain lasting since we left the country brought the worst flooding in 50 years. Three river dams above Prague that were in past able to control floods are full and water has to be released from reservoirs for safety reasons. The culmination of flooding in Prague is expected around midnight this Monday.



Prague's Venice "Kampa" as we visited it only a few weeks ago



The same "Kampa" of additional 7ft of water



**What is a river today is normally a
waterfront boulevard**

Some subway lines had to be closed for rising water in tunnels.



**The Charles Bridge – built 1348 –
spanning tame Vltava River**



Charles Bridge on Monday morning

Tuesday, August 13, 2002 MOSTLY WATER TODAY



Not only Prague, but the whole Central Europe and Southern Russia suffers from floods. Of course, the situation in Prague and in Southern Bohemia – where I have relatives and friends – concerns me most.

Parts of the historic center of Prague were under water tonight and 50,000 residents were ordered evacuated as rivers swollen by more than a week of near constant rain wrought destruction across Central and Southern Bohemia.

Nine people were killed by high waters so far in the Czech Republic.

In Russia alone, 58 people have died in flooding caused by some of the heaviest rains in memory.

With the worst rains since 1890 pelting the Czech Republic, Prime Minister Vladimir Spidla declared a state of emergency in nearly half the country. The government itself had to be evacuated from its buildings on the river bank.



Smetana's Museum



Modern Art gallery

Prague's Lord mayor, Igor Nemec, said Mala Strana, the carefully preserved heart of the Old City, could be flooded by Tuesday afternoon because heavy rains had forced the opening of three dams farther south on the River Vltava. Since yesterday a public transportation in Prague – the one still running – is free. The subway line crossing under Vltava River was closed when the entrances were threatened by rising water.

The mayor ordered residents to start leaving as soon as they could and said city schools would open before dawn to accommodate evacuees. The Vltava River, which wends through the center of Prague, flowing fast through the arches of the historic Charles Bridge, was already more than five feet above its normal level and was expected to rise six and a half feet more by Tuesday. Normal Vltava flow is 250 cubic meters of water/min, at today's peak it reached staggering 5,150 cubic meters (A cubic meter = approx 30cu/ft)



Bridges as I have never seen....

High embankments protected much of the city center, but the floods expected on Tuesday covered historic Kampa Island, a favorite tourist destination, and flooded a Modern Art museum located there. Curators worked feverishly through the morning to move their collection of modern art to higher floors. By late afternoon, a huge wooden chair from the museum's collection, which once stood on a concrete pile in the river, was half submerged. (I had a picture of it yesterday). Also parts of the Old Town near the medieval Jewish Cemetery, the working-class districts of Liben and Karlin and all the main islands in the Vltava were tonight under water.

Librarians evacuated books and rare documents from the basement of the National Library, the Klementinum, and from the basement of the Czech senate in the Waldstejn Palace.

In Austria, at least three people died as the Salzach River burst its banks south of Salzburg and threatened to inundate the city at the height of its famous summer festival, forcing authorities to close most bridges and

major roads. Floodwaters rose in Hungary and Germany, and in northern Austria the authorities halted river traffic on parts of the Danube.

In Linz, Austria, 120 miles west of Vienna, rescue workers lowered baskets from helicopters to rescue people stranded in their homes, and a fireman was swept away by roiling waters in Mariapfarr, near Salzburg. In the eastern German city of Leipzig, firefighters and soldiers helped residents battle rising waters as the Pleisse River broke its banks.

German tourists fleeing the Austrian flooding found the autobahn between Salzburg and Munich under as much as five feet of water. Three people died in Germany today, including an 8-year-old girl who was hit by an uprooted tree, and a state of emergency was declared in parts of the German states of Bavaria and Saxony.

In Switzerland, the river port of Basel was shut after part of the swollen Rhine River was closed to navigation, and in France a sodden mountainside gave way, sliding into a highway near Moutiers in the French Alps.

In southeastern Russia, where at least 58 people died when flash floods swept vacation resorts near the Black Sea coast over the weekend, authorities today began vaccinating residents and vacationers, fearing an outbreak of hepatitis A and typhoid.

In Prague, soldiers and police officers were helping fill sandbags in a last-minute effort to protect pubs and residences dating back centuries on Kampa Island. Some residents said the government had moved too slowly to protect them.

By late evening, floodwaters had risen in several historic towns, including Cesky Krumlov, a Renaissance jewel near the Austrian border, and the fez-making city of Strakonice, whose 12th-century castle sits on an island in the middle of the normally placid Otava River. There, the regional governor ordered 4,300 residents evacuated from the city center, and the authorities feared that it might take until dawn to move them all.



Cesky Krumlov – Downtown

Wednesday, August 14, 2002 THE FLOOD SPECIAL

I decided to make this special edition almost without words. The pictures tell the story. Most of the pictures were taken by my friend Ondrej Neff, the publisher of "Invisible Dog" electronic magazine.



In 1890 flood damaged the Charles bridge



Statue on Vltava River in the angry waters



Frank Ghery's dancing house "Ginger and Fred"
in background behind almost submerged
Jiraskuv Bridge.



Aluminum wall and sandbags hold river from flooding St. Agnes Monastery – the house the Gothic Art Gallery



Aluminum barrier in front of the National Theater



... and a few hours later on the opposite side of the river



Flood culminates at 2:00 PM, Wednesday



SMICHOV – on Vltava's left bank looks like Venice



Communication arteries are closed.

Four subway stations are completely flooded, but water is kept from tunnels by watertight emergency locks. Transportation authority says that clean-up can take a few weeks.



Hotels on Kampa Island under the Charles Bridge



Plzen – (Pilsen)



Cesky Krumlov when we were there
only fourteen days ago



..... and today
(note same pointed tower in both pictures)



Waiting for the
river

Saturday, August 17, 2002 AFTERMATH

I thank everyone who expressed concern about my mother, relatives and friends. They all are all right – they all live at elevations that only a flood of biblical proportions could reach.

The situation in Prague is stabilized and the city is painfully returning to normalcy. The flood level peaked Wednesday evening and has begun to recede but will take up to a week for the river to return to its normal level.

The Government of the Czech Republic is in a permanent crisis session in order to react flexibly to the quickly changing situation. The Cabinet carefully considers the list of needed items, and seeks to ask the International community only what is of dire need. At this point, there is a demand for 130,000 units of hepatitis B. Suction pumps, sludgers and technical driers are also needed.

Damage is extensive. 16 subway stations are out of the commission, some being flooded to the ceiling. It is estimated that it will take at least four months and 70 million dollars to put the subway system back to the order. Prague Mayor Igor Nemec told journalists that damages in the capital are likely to be "in the tens of billions of crowns."



Escalator in Krizikova station
disappears in the water.

The floods have caused extensive damage to the archives of the Military Historical Archive, the Academy of Science, the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Czech Statistics Office. Thousands of shelves with unique and irreplaceable documents are likely to have been destroyed.

Many cultural historical sights in Prague, among them the 13th-century Old-New Synagogue and the Pinkas Synagogue in the Jewish quarter along with the National Theater, have been affected.

All major Czech insurance companies claim having enough funds to pay affected households. Industrial damages will be much more difficult to assess. Two over hundred years old multi-story buildings in Karlin have collapsed. Civil engineers are afraid that the foundations of more building were damaged. Therefore inhabitants of many downtown buildings are not allowed yet to return home.



Family houses in Prague's suburbia.
The flood level is still visible on the walls.



Prague's southern suburbs on Wednesday



While the flood left Prague it brought an immense devastation to all towns and villages alongside Vltava and Labe (Elbe) rivers. In Usti n/L the water level raised 36ft. Some bridges were destroyed, other just disappeared under water.

The town of Zalezice, 30 kilometers north of Prague, saw 90 of its 120 buildings damaged, 30 of which have been leveled. Fifteen houses collapsed in the town of Melnik, also north of Prague. Terezin, northern Bohemia, was completely cut off by floodwaters, and the adjacent memorial at the former Theresienstadt Nazi concentration camp is completely under water. In the south, where waters are receding, roughly half of historic Cesky Krumlov's houses have been flooded. Pisek Mayor Lubos Prusa is estimating damage there at 4-8 billion crowns, including the loss of a statue from the oldest stone bridge in the country, a 13th-century structure spanning the Otava River.



Downtown in Usti n/L

The Czech Republic is getting help. The EU has announced that it is earmarking 58 million euros (nearly \$57 million) for immediate aid. Meanwhile, aid offers and help continued to arrive from all over the world. Six Belgian experts equipped with pumps and ventilators arrived in Prague, and France announced it is also sending pumping specialists. They will be joined by similar specialists from Slovakia, Finland, Denmark, and Sweden. In Poland, 120 firefighters are awaiting orders to leave for the Czech Republic.

The Hungarian Foreign Ministry announced it has set aside 5 million forints (nearly \$20,000) from its budget in aid for Czech flood victims, and the Budapest mayorality offered accommodation to 200 children from Prague. Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi offered resources and experience in saving the cultural heritage.

The French Red Cross launched a fundraising campaign. Aid offers also came from Taiwan and other Asian countries. Charity funds were established in most European countries.

Madeleine Albright, Henry Kissinger and Milos Forman are organizing fundraising in the United States, while Washington generously donated fifty thousand dollars. (I am not joking).

For those willing to help, an account has been opened by the American Friends of the Czech Republic in co-operation with the Czech Embassy. Tax-deductible contributions can be made by writing a check to "AFoCR - Prague-Needs-Help-Flood Relief Fund" and sending it to "AFoCR - Prague-Needs-Help-Flood Relief Fund", Citibank FSB, 1901 Wisconsin Ave. N.W., Washington, DC 20007.

The following account number can be used for transfers: 1507-4188, routing No. 254070116. American Friends of the Czech Republic is a 501 (c) (3) organization.

The Czech National Bank opened a flood relief account No. 9025-001/0710, swift code: CNBACZPP.

For more information, please contact Petr Janousek, Press Secretary at the Czech Embassy at 202 - 274 9112 or 202 - 413 7625.

Cedar Rapids Federation of Czech Groups Raising Funds for Flood Relief

By Olga Drazahal

The Federation of Czech Groups in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, is sponsoring a fund-raising activity to benefit the flood victims in the Czech Republic. The event will take place on Sunday, Nov. 3rd at St. Wenceslaus Hall from 12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. There will be live entertainment, many area bands will perform and a full dinner will be available to satisfy your hunger. All area lodges will be contacted in the near future as what their role in this fund-raising activity could be. Formulative plans are now under way for this important event. For further information, call Mike Papich, President of the Federation of Czech Groups:

Slovakia Needs Your Help!

By Ambassador Martin Butora, Slovak Embassy - US

LET'S HELP SLOVAKIA -
EVERY DOLLAR FOR FLOOD RELIEF!

We have just returned to the U.S. after visiting our dear homeland. Even during July, sad news spread about the devastating impact of heavy rains in 35 towns near the rivers Hron, Vah, Bodrog, Hornad, Torysa, and other smaller rivers mainly in Central and Eastern Slovakia.

The inhabitants of Nespaly, Lehota pod Vtáčnikom, Lubietova, Jovice, Čierny Balog, Hronec, Myto pod Dumbierom, Banská Bystrica, Brezno, Nemecka, Rimavská Sobota, Matejovce, Betlanovce, Janík, Poprad, Hnilec - to name just a few towns from those hit by local floods - are coping with the unfortunate situation and will need a lot of energy and resources to rebuild their homes and compensate for losses suffered from this natural disaster.

Obviously, this presents a special challenge for elderly people, the Roma, small farmers, and other vulnerable groups of the population. Moreover, some human losses will need a long time to be healed.

By the time we were returning to Washington, the situation in our country, similar to other Central European countries, became even more critical. As you certainly know, due to the recent destructive floods, more than 200,000 people have been displaced from their homes. Despite all human effort, huge cultural and economic losses could not be prevented in the Czech Republic and Germany. As you can imagine, there has hardly been a person in Slovakia who does not feel deep compassion and sorrow after seeing the devastation of the Kampa in the Old Town of Prague.

Thanks to several fortunate circumstances, including an incredible mobilization of many Slovak citizens, Bratislava, our capital, was spared the worst. However, some other smaller towns, among them the town of Devin situated at the confluence of the Danube and Morava rivers, were heavily afflicted.

All in all, floods in Slovakia have caused a damage of 1.72 billion crowns (almost \$40 million). Another 152 million crowns (almost \$25,000) was spent on rescue and prevention work. Needless to emphasize, this presents a heavy burden for a country which is presently coping with the painful social impacts of economic reform, including 18-percent unemployment.

Therefore, dear friends, we take the liberty to ask you for assistance. Please, help our beautiful country overcome the impact of the natural disaster. Take part in the campaign "Let's Help Slovakia - Every Dollar for Flood Relief". Your financial contribution, even the smallest one, would be welcome and highly appreciated by people afflicted by the floods.

Let's join forces and close the first decade of Slovakia's independence with acts of true human solidarity and compassion.

You can contribute in one of the following ways:

1) Make your check payable to "Slovak Flood Relief" and send to:

Embassy of the Slovak Republic
3523 International Court, NW
Washington, DC 20008

2) Wire money directly to the Embassy's "Slovak Flood Relief" account:

Riggs Bank, NA
Washington, DC
Account Name: Slovak Flood Relief
Account #: 254 46447
ABA/Routing #: 054000030

3) Donate on-line through Friends of Slovakia, a 501(c)3 organization:

<http://www.guidestar.org/partners/networkforgood/donate.jsp?ein=52-2313422>

4) Make check payable to "Friends of Slovakia", send to:
Friends of Slovakia
4401-A Connecticut Ave., NW, PMB 220
Washington, DC 20008

III. National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library



Kroje "Hangs" Around Till 2003

By Jan Stoffer Tursi

Due to the overwhelming response and incredible popularity of their special summer exhibition, *Kroje – Dress for the Dance of Life!*, the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library has decided to extend the run of the show. The exhibition, which was scheduled to close October 13, 2002, **will now close January 19, 2003.**

Visitors from all over the United States, including California, New York, Vermont, and Oregon, and countries such as the Czech and Slovak Republics, Thailand, Ireland, and Germany have commented on the wonderful display. Widespread interest was generated from Czech and Slovak fraternal and Sokol groups, many of whom have planned and are planning motorcoach trips to Cedar Rapids just to see this exhibition.

"We are delighted with our visitation this summer," commented Laurie Robinson, NCSML director of development. "We knew this was going to be a popular exhibition, and are thrilled to extend the run so those who haven't been here yet may have an opportunity to see it."

IV. Special Reports:

Czech Heritage Scholarships

By David Faltis

The Czech Heritage Foundation has awarded six (6) individuals with scholarships. Congratulations to these students:

Sara Fiala of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. She is attending the University of Iowa, in Iowa City, Iowa.

Stasia Krivanek of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. She is attending North West College, in Saint Paul, Minnesota

Joyce Kutin-Solberg of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. She is attending Hamilton Business College, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Megan Waldrop of Temecula, California. She is attending Cornell College, in Mount Vernon, Iowa

Eric Sudol of Nashua, Iowa. He is attending Cornell College, in Mount Vernon, Iowa

Cassandra Jerroll of Two Rivers Wisconsin. She is attending Cornell College, in Mount Vernon, Iowa

We congratulate and extend our best wishes to these individuals as they work toward their goals to improve their knowledge and find their success in the future.

Students from Czech Republic

The Homestay Program has turned into a real "exchange" program. The Foundation has been sending students to the Czech Republic for years, and just last year and this year, we are starting to have Czech students visiting the US. Many of these students are past host brothers and sisters of our Homestay Ambassadors.

The Czech Heritage Foundation is sponsoring three high school students visiting from the Czech Republic this fall. While here, they are visiting Prairie High School with their hosts. Our guests all were part of the families that recently hosted our Homestay students in the Czech Republic. Our guests are:

Jan Hodr – Jan is 15 and arrived August 23rd from Prague. His father, Karel, is a music editor and his mother, Marcela, is an economist. He is being hosted by Craig & Chris Tripkosh, and sons, Jon & Joe. Jon recently returned from his Homestay visit to Jan's family in the Czech Republic (see Jon's Homestay memories on page 11).

Katerina Holoubkova – Jan lives in Dobris, south of Prague. She is 17, and her parents are Martin and Ivana Holoubek. Her host family is Rodger and Becky Nehaus, Sarah, Andy, Shane, and Lindsey. Katerina's family hosted Nathan Votroubek on his Homestay visit (see Nathan's memories of that trip on page 12).

Alena Simonovska – Alena is 17, and is the daughter of Josef and Bohumila Simonovska. Her parents own a construction firm and live Dobris. Alena is hosted by Thomas and Jean Sippy, Grace, Pat, and Rachel. Alena was part of the host family for Tony Ziskovsky (see Tony's report on his trip on page 13)

For information on the Homestay program, or to register as a future host family, call Jeanne Fee at

Homestay Student Reports

Our Homestay students are back from another memory-filled stay in the Czech Republic. As many state in their reports that follow below, this is an experience that is filled with lifetime memories.



At the airport before coming home.

Front row: Jon Trpkosh, Tony Ziskovsky, Nathan Votroubek, Ondrej (Nathan's Czech brother).

Back Row: Honza (Jon's Czech brother), Martin (Honza's friend), Tomas Herczog (Tony's Czech brother who stayed with Tony's family in July/August 2001), Kate (Nathan's Czech sister), Alena (Tony's Czech sister) and Peppa (Tony's Czech brother)

The Czech Heritage Foundation has sponsored over 50 students on these month-long stays with families in the Czech Republic. The objective is to give the students a real taste of life in the Czech Republic, truly becoming a member of their host families. We know you'll enjoy their stories, but possibly not half as much as they enjoy living them.

Homestay Memories

By Jon Trpkosh

Hello. My name is Jon Trpkosh. This summer the Czech Heritage Foundation gave me the opportunity to travel to the Czech Republic. I look forward to telling you about my trip, but first I'd like to tell you a little

about my self. I am seventeen years old and am in twelfth grade at Prairie High School. There, I am president of my class, vice-president of SAVE (students against violating earth), a member of National Honor Society, play in the band, a chess club participant, and a member of Amnesty International. I live in Ely with my dad, Craig, my mom, Christine, my brother, Joe, and my grandma, Rachel.



My trip to the Czech Republic was simply incredible. I stayed in Prague with the Hodr family. My Czech family was Karel, a radio producer, Marcela, a television producer, Honza, a fifteen-year-old student, and Matej, an eleven-year-old student. I lived in a 5-room apartment that was built shortly after World War II. It was small, but very comfortable. We were far enough outside the city that there weren't any tourists, but downtown Prague was a ten-minute train ride away.

I had a pretty nice daily routine. I would wake up around eight or nine in the morning, have a light breakfast of rolls and meat, and then head into town. Most days I would see sights, but some days I just wandered around the city. Around one in the afternoon I would meet Honza. He would take me to places that I hadn't visited or couldn't find. At about six or seven we would head home for dinner. After dinner, we would occasionally go to a park and play soccer or chess. On weekends, we would go to the Hodr's cabin (but more about that later).



Statue of St. Wenceslaus in St. Wenceslaus Square

There are so many things to see in Prague. The picturesque Charles Bridge, with it's many statues, and the grandiose Prague Castle are among the most famous. One of the lesser-known sites, and possibly my favorite, was the Jewish Museum. This was a group of six synagogues that have been converted into museums and the Old Jewish Cemetery. Each synagogue has a unique exhibit in it. There are three synagogues that particularly stand out in my mind.

The first is the Old-New Synagogue. What makes this building unique is the fact that it is the oldest synagogue in Europe. The Pinkas' Synagogue is one of the most moving places I have ever been too. The inside of the synagogue is almost completely bare. On the walls are written the names of all the Jews who died in the Nazi concentration camps. The Spanish Synagogue was my favorite part of the Jewish Museum. Inside is a history of the Bohemian Jews. The exhibit, however, is overshadowed by the richly decorated interior. It is jaw dropping how beautiful the inside of this synagogue is. I had to have spent twenty minutes just staring in awe at everything.



The Old-New Synagogue

The Old Jewish Cemetery was also very fascinating. In the fifteenth and sixteenth century, Jews were restricted to a small quarter of the city. As the Jewish population grew, space became scarce. This lack of space meant that only a small area could be used as a cemetery. This inevitably meant that people would have to be buried on top of each other. The cemetery is now home to 12,000 tombstones with an estimated 100,000 people buried there.

On the weekends, we left the hustle and bustle of Prague for the Hodr's cabin. Located at the source of a small river, the cabin was a great place to relax. It was small, but had everything you would need. Most of the time, we would swim in the river or play soccer. One time, I went with Matej on a five-kilometer bike ride. I also read quite a bit at the cottage. On the drive to the cabin, we would sometimes stop at a Castle. The castles were huge. How they built these without modern machines is beyond me. Karlstein Castle would have to be my favorite. The castle was originally built as a home for the Holy Roman Empire's crown jewels. The castle itself is gigantic, with incredible architecture and beautiful frescoes.

My trip to the Czech Republic was incredible and it wouldn't have been possible without your support. It was the most unique and memorable thing I have ever done in my life. You have willingly given your money and time to create this experience for me and other students. Thank you again.

My Czech Experience

By Nathan Votroubek

"A quiet beauty." That is the only thought that went through my tired head as I walked through the town of Dobris, Czech Republic, on my first day in the country. I'm Nathan Votroubek, and I was lucky enough to be selected as a Czech Home-stay

Ambassador. I soon found out after that first day that the land that my ancestors called home wasn't always so quiet, but definitely beautiful.



I lived with a wonderful family in a small town (population 7,000) called Dobris. My Czech family consisted of a mother named Ivana, father named Martin, brother named Ondrej, and sister named Kate. Fortunately, they all spoke English pretty well and I became very close with all of them. Unfortunately, though Ondrej had to be in Croatia for most of my stay with them, so we didn't get to hang around with each other all that much.

My Czech dad is a manager at a construction company in Prague, while my Czech mom works for a Finnish company selling hospital equipment. Kate is now 18. She is an excellent artist, loves rock concerts, and is very athletic. The whole family is very athletic, they ski several times a year, and ride bikes often. We had a Babi who does not speak English at all, but the language didn't matter, it was clear that she just wanted to feed me at every opportunity (I let her of course). They live in a nice town house with wood floors and nice furniture.

They lived very similar to my family, with the same technology. The biggest difference in family life for me was the home cooked meals. My family at home doesn't get the chance to eat as a family and talk for an evening, but it was an everyday experience for them, and it was a nice way to feel accepted into the family, talking with them at night. We didn't stay at home all that much though; my Czech family was determined to show me ALL the sites.

It is impossible to pick my favorite site. I saw 11 castles and took numerous trips to Prague, which has its own culture. One trip that stands out in my mind, however, is our hike to Mt. Snezka, the tallest mountain in the Czech Republic. My host mother took Kate and I, along with Tony and his host sister Alena, up to a bed and breakfast in northern Bohemia, near the Poland border. I had been waiting to go mountain climbing there ever since I learned that there were mountains in the Czech Republic.

The view from the mountains was amazing; to the southeast, I could see for 50-100 kilometers, and to the north, more gorgeous mountains. We arrived in the evening at what is used as a ski resort in the winter. The only way to the Bed and Breakfast was to use the ski lift to climb the steep slopes. We spent the night playing darts and talking, but to tell you the truth I was half dazed by the fact that I was able to be in the Czech mountains. It was certainly one of many dreams that came true on this trip.

The next morning, we set out on a 23-kilometer hike that would take around 7 hours of straight walking to accomplish. From our cottage, it was 11 km to Mt. Snezka. The path curved along mountain ridges, climbing summits and descending through valleys. Snezka itself is the Czech-Polish border, so climbing it, I was able to eat lunch in Poland. The view was amazing, so peaceful, and so serene. Along my climb, I found a trusty walking stick, which I was able to bring back on the plane, as a souvenir. Once we had taken some pictures from atop Mt. Snezka, we headed for our cottage. Another 3-4 hours of hiking later, we returned to rest our feet. Now at this point I should say that both Tony and myself were through for the day, but the ladies were doing fine, walking is certainly a staple of the Czech culture. We took the ski lift down to the village, and then walked to a swimming pool to relax for the evening. The water refreshed us all, and the car ride back to Dobris was very fun.



Tony, Alena, Kate, Me, and my host mother at the Summit of Mt. Snezka.
Alena is very scared of heights.

This experience will always stay in my mind, our outgoing hosts that brought us there, and the sheer awe of being in the beautiful mountains was amazing. Looking back on the whole trip, from the rock concerts to the nature, I can start to appreciate the diversity of the Czech lands as well as their people. I would never have even dreamed of being able to make this trip before I heard of the Czech Homestay Scholarship, and I would like to thank everyone in the Czech Heritage Foundation for his or her support and for making my dream come true.

Homestay Memories

By Tony Ziskovsky



First off let me thank you all for giving me the chance to participate in this incredible trip. It all began with an exhausting plane ride that was probably 12 hours long, give or take a couple that were lost in layovers and time changes. Then finally we reached our destination and the words "PRAHA" were like a welcoming sign on top of the airport

facility. As soon as we found all of our luggage, which took the help of some English speaking Czechs that were also on our plane, we went into the lobby, and I was greeted by part of my Czech family; I say part, because I never really found out how large the family was. Of course I knew that there were the two parents and 3 children, but it seemed every day that a cousin or aunt would stop by the house and I got to know them almost as well as I did my immediate family.



Tony's family: Bohumila Simonovsky, Alena Simonovsky, Josef Simonovsky and Josef (Peppa) Simonovsky.
Missing from picture: Petr Simonovsky.

As with many Czech men, my host brother Peppa's main love was soccer. He was a 16 year old boy with a very unique personality that always put a smile on my face and inscribed in my brain forever the phrase, "I speak English very good, but I am very bad at American." Every opportunity we received, Peppa was adamant about three things: playing soccer, going to the pub (to play video games), and going swimming. My most memorable thoughts about him were swimming in a lake by the house and playing soccer in a beautiful stadium, which they referred to as "Cow Stadium" because it was basically pasture land located right next to a cattle shed.



Vojta, Tony and Peppa after "Learning the game of football". Nathan and Tony tried to explain the game, but the translations were lost somehow and it became a rugby match.

Although I would have loved to spend all of my time with Peppa, I was also very fortunate to have host sister that showed me around many of the sights in the Czech Republic. Alena was a 17 year old girl, who had a quiet personality but was a real joy to hang around, after I got to know her. Together, Alena and I, as well as Nathan Votroubek and his host sister, traveled around the Czech Republic, with one of our parents, and saw a variety of different sights, from castles, to soccer stadiums, to famous landmarks. Many long hours were spent with us four and a parent inside our family's Skoda Octavias (A Czech manufactured car that has some resemblance to a 4 door Ford Focus).



**Tony's brothers and sister in Czech Republic.
Front Row: Tony and Petr (age 13);
Back Row: Josef (Peppa, age 16) and Alena (age 18)**

Probably the most memorable part of my trip, or at least the one in which I will never be able to forget was my very timely trip to a Czech hospital. I use the word timely, because I was able to make this trip on the very last day I was in the country. It all started when a couple of my Czech friends and I were browsing through stores in Prague looking for last minute souvenirs. All of a sudden it started to rain and we decided to make a run for the subway, because one, we were ready to go home, and two, it would be out of the rain. So I took off at a sprint, and within 5-10 feet of the stairs leading down to the subway, a thought crossed my mind, "Running + Rain +

Stairs= Not good!!" In a last minute effort to slow my self down, I reached both of my hands for the railing and stumbled my way successfully down the stairs. Unfortunately, my efforts did not come to me free of cost. At the top of the stairs, while I was running my arms down the railing, my right forearm caught something, and sliced open my arm. Once I reached the bottom of the stairs, I realized the severity of the incident and fortunately one of my friends had an extra t-shirt, and Nathan had brought his ace wrap along with him, so we were able to apply pressure to the wound very quickly.

To make this long and detailed adventure end quickly, we, after some wait, met up with Nathan's host Mom (who wasn't far from where we were), and she drove us to a nearby hospital. Once there, I waited in a lobby a while, but was then seen by a very professional doctor who thoroughly cleaned and stitched my wound, and also provided a calm and soothing voice that explained to me, as best he could, what he was trying to do while he worked.

So the next day, I boarded a plane home, and after 24 hours in a plane, countless hours playing soccer and traveling in a car, 4 movies, numerous bus tickets, 9 stitches, many cartons of orange juice and 28 days, I returned home to be greeted by 90 degree, 70% humidity weather, only to think to myself, "Man, it's good to be home in Iowa." Of course the very next day I wished I was back in the 75 degree, 20% humidity weather of the Czech Republic, but the weather was not the only thing I missed. I missed my host family, who were very generous and loving. I missed my new found friends, who I promised I would see again, and I missed the bargain of seeing movies on screens double the size of Wynsong's, for just 3 dollars anytime. All in all, this was an awesome experience, and each time I see something from my trip, a rush of faces, conversations and places flood my mind, and remind me how fortunate I am to have received this opportunity.

There is so much more that I have done and seen, but I hope this has given you a glimpse of my experience. I would again like to thank the Czech Heritage Foundation for giving me this chance, to experience first hand a culture that until then I had only heard about in text books.

Czech Heritage Contributors

Donations With Membership Applications - The following have graciously included donations beyond the basic membership fee with their membership applications.

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Please check the proper item: Renewal _____ New _____ Gift _____

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Why not consider a gift membership for someone special? Your dues and generous donations help to fund several worthwhile endeavors such as Czech Prince and Princess sponsorship, financial support for the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library, adult Czech language classes, the Homestay Program, along with publishing the quarterly *Naše České Dědictví*, and other numerous publications. The list of Czech Heritage projects goes on and on.

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Please renew today! A Bargain at \$3.00 per year

Calendar of Events

-
- Sept. 6-7 **Kroje Symposium** – Museum, 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM
10 **Czech Heritage Foundation Annual Picnic (everyone welcome)** – ZCJB Park, 6:30 PM
-
- Oct. 6 **Czech Heritage Foundation Meeting** - Museum, 7:30 PM
11-12 **Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International (CGSI) Annual Membership Meeting & Conference**
- Cedar Rapids, NCSML Museum Oct. 11th, Collins Plaza Oct. 12th
13 **Czech Homestay Ambassador Reports** – Museum, 2:00 PM
-
- Nov. 7 **8th Annual NCSLM Fall Dinner** – Address by His Excellency Martin Palouš, Ambassador to the United States from the Czech Republic, and a keynote presentation by Michal Lukeš Director General of the National Museum in Prague. Reception at Museum 5:30 PM, dinner at Collins Plaza 7:00 PM
12 **Czech Heritage Foundation Meeting** - Museum, 7:30 PM
-
- Dec. 7 **Svatý Mikuláš (St. Nicholas Day)** – Event features an afternoon puppet show performed by the Eulenspiegel Puppet Theatre Company. Meet Sv. Mikuláš, the angel, and the devil as they wind their way up and down Czech Village to the NCSML. Holiday Events in Czech Village, Cedar Rapids, IA
10 **Czech Heritage Foundation Meeting** - Museum, 7:30 PM
14 **Museum Guild 4th Annual Cookie Walk** – Museum, time to be announced
-
- Jan. 9 **Deadline to submit Applications for 2003 Homestay**
20 **Czech Heritage Foundation & NCSML Annual Meetings** - Museum
19 **KROJE – Dress for the Dance of Life Exhibit Closes** – Museum

CZECH HERITAGE FOUNDATION, INC.

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Czech Out These Web Sites

Travel to the Czech and Slovak Republics from the comfort of your own home. Read a Czech newspaper (in Czech if you want). Research your Czech/Slovak roots. The web contains more sites and information related to our heritage than any of us will ever have time to fully explore. Try some of these sites out.

Lists of Links to Other Czech & Slovak related Web Sites

<http://www.ncsml.org/links.htm> - Provided by the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library)

<http://www.slavophilia.net/> - Slavic and Eastern European Links. Includes Czech Republic and Slovak Republic

Cedar Rapids Gazette Features

<http://www.gazetteonline.com/special/village/index.htm> - Czech Village (Gazette articles, clickable map, village-related web sites, recipes, photo tour)

<http://www.gazetteonline.com/special/czech/index.htm> - Dedication of National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library - Special reports and related articles (1995)

Official Governmental Sites

<http://www.czech.cz/> - Czech Republic

<http://www.slovakembassy-us.org/> - Slovak Embassy in USA

Other Sites of Interest

<http://www.ncsml.org/> - National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library.

<http://www.afocr.org/> - American Friends of the Czech Republic