

## Press Release

**Czech Center Houston**, in the Museum District

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*Effie M. Rosene*

*"Building the future...remembering the past...leaving a legacy,"*

*"May the work I've done speak for me!"*

The front page of the current publication of *The News of the Czech Center* features a headline story of our new Czech Center building entitled *A Star is Born* along with a story about member Jaroslav Belik, engineer and artist. For many of you that will not have the opportunity to witness in person what your support has meant, I would like to give you a "virtual" tour of your new Center and so:

### ***Welcome to the Czech Center Houston***

We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational cultural organization first envisioned on February 28, 1995, incorporated as an entity in the state of Texas on March 8, 1996. A \$4.5 million capital campaign was and still is in progress. We had raised \$2.3 million and began construction of our three and half story beautiful Baroque typical European style palace building in March 2002 with monies at the time to build the shell of the building, but only finish out the first floor. A \$900,000 gift from member Louis Hanus and family allowed us to finish out the second floor and to receive our occupancy permit with a move in on September 1, 2004. As mentioned, we need to continue a vigorous campaign to fund an endowment and finish the remaining floors for occupancy.

After receiving much needed encouragement from our Honorary Czech Consul, Raymond J. Snokhous, our earliest and continued supporter proved to be Thelma Burnett Maresh helping us set our sail in memory/honor of her late husband Dr. Henry R. Maresh who wrote the legendary book *Czech Pioneers of the Southwest*. We have been an all volunteer operated organization since inception of a much needed center to leave a legacy recognizing the people of Moravia, Bohemia, Slovakia, and Silesia in Texas, the United States and indeed the world.

Our main entry includes a low-boy credenza, one of three fine antiques from palaces/castles of Europe, a rose marble topped gold/wood sculptured table holding the CCCH International Community Service Award from the Czech Government in June 2003 and an award from the Houston Museum District Business Alliance in December 2003.

The "partner" desk is a historical replication hand painted and holding a beautiful world globe made of various gemstones conveying our international status as we are closely identified with the Czech Embassy, the Slovak Embassy and the lands of our ancestry, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The pottery collection is fine art authentic to Biblical times painted by a Moravian academic artist for which we hope to attain underwriters. The small etagere filled with antiques is a gift from members now deceased. The walls will be utilized to hold marble gold engraved names of contributors of \$5,000.00 plus beginning with the Club 200 Group.

The main hall is the Brno Art Gallery underwritten mainly by Mrs. Maresh. It includes a winding brass and wrought iron scrolled grand staircase. A mahogany baby grand "Klasik" Petrof piano made in the Czech Republic for hundreds of years invites music of Dvorak, Smetana and others to be played. The grand chandelier and three others are made in Kamenecky Šenov north of Prague of 35% plus fine Bohemian lead crystal. Other furnishings include the round hand painted table, three lighted mirrored etageres, a Viennese military officer's antique desk with a rendition of great, great grandfather Czech leading the Slavs from the East to Rip Hill where they established the "hradčany" or government seat of Prague. The young lady depicts one of the known characteristics of the Czech or Slavic People the love of music. Other appointments include a known Moravian artist, a graphic art of young girl in Kroj (regional folk costume) and Prague in needlepoint.

The Prague International gift shop offers beautiful gift items from Czech garnets, jewelry, enameled art-pieces, crystal and pottery. The very top shelves hold museum pieces depicting various glass and ceramic artifacts and a charming sculptured wood *Betlem* nativity scene. A reading corner holds many informative books and opposite collectible porcelain patterns all for sale. Additional Art work for sale hangs on the walls.

The Presidents Room meeting room holds three additional etageres of Czech crystal and an incredible collection of fine pottery made for export between the two world wars 1918 – 1939. While holding art pieces on easels, this is a meeting room or party room as all our spaces are multifunctional for rental purposes and most efficient use of space. The Presidents Room holds paintings commissioned from a fine Moravian artist of President Tomas Masaryk, he who negotiated with the Habsburgs in 1917-1918 to allow the Czech lands sovereignty and President Vaclav Havel writer, poet who lead the movement against communism to freedom in the then Czechoslovakia leading to the Velvet Revolution on November 17, 1989.

Wenceslas Chapel is ecumenical, show casing the good King Wenceslas patron of the Czech lands in the year 900. He holds the banner of the time – the two tailed lion of Bohemia; the checkered male Moravian Eagle and the gold female Moravian Eagle. The black eagle represents Silesia a country no more as it was incorporated by the Czech and Polish regions eventually. The bull and fortress represent Lusatia, also a country no more. Wenceslas Chapel also holds the American, Texas, Czech and Slovak Flags reminding us of our ancestry and heritage. This King Wenceslas painting is a sculpture on Wenceslas Square in Prague in front of the National Muzeum. The credenza holds three very fine hand cut, blown crystal vases signed by the artist and dated representing Moses at the Burning Bush, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection. Books are a Czech Catholic Hymnal/Prayer book and Czech Protestant Bible. Eventually, we will have Jewish artifacts as well. Artwork is a painting of the first Czechs on Rip Hill and the Holy Spirit Dove in Rome (purchased in Brno). The Czech wedding chest is an authentic antique. The hunt-board is one of the three castle antiques we have donated from one family. It holds a fine Royal Dux porcelain figure and crystal chalice and plate set. The third major antique is the mirrored door hunt-board which houses a collection of antique blown glass art figures collected by and gifted to the Center by a lady in Seattle. The hunt-board also holds a fine sculpture of a bust of a little Czech rascal "rostak" from friends in the Czech Republic and a bust of Tomas Masaryk. The rest of the first floor holds one of two

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catering kitchens, another public facility the Comenius Library/Conference Room and a small administrative work area. Various art works hang on the walls.

We take the elevator to the second floor Prague Hall underwritten by the Louis Hanus family very adaptable to wedding receptions, family reunions, business meetings or for any other grand occasion. It too holds a walnut baby grand Petrof piano from the Czech Republic, two lovely Bohemian crystal chandeliers and a collection of beautiful Alfons Mucha lithographs from the Czech Republic purchased by the contributor at a private Mucha exhibition of famed Czech tennis star Ivan Lendl. Czech artist Alfons Mucha became famous in Paris commissioned even by Americans actress Sarah Bernhardt and numerous industrialists. He is known as the Father of the Art Nouveau Movement in late 1800's early 1900's. His magnificent floor to ceiling paintings depicting the Slavic Epic is located in an ancient castle of Moravsky Krumlov near his home village. It is very worthy of a memorable visit. The large painting of a beach scene woman and child is a fine art donated by Brandon's Designer Furniture, which was our resource for all the contemporary fine furniture purchased. All these furnishings are the result of pooled contributions from various members and friends. The second floor also holds a small executive dining room or changing room furnished with pieces from the estate of a deceased member.

The four hundred fine Banquet chairs and fifty plus tables are the gift of Julie Halek Kloess who also provided for the grand chandelier, Petrof piano, etageres and crystal collection. Julie is among our major contributors. Please know however, that some 6000 individuals and several organizations have given to the Czech Center Houston through almost ten years, either through membership, Gala donations and memorial/honor tile and of course through volunteer hours. Each and every one of those contacts helped make us what the Czech Center Houston is today a one of a kind.

Please note the lovely restrooms two downstairs, two larger restrooms upstairs; the quality of wood molding and solid mahogany doors all negotiated for the best quality for the best price.

We teach the Czech language here as we have always, award four \$1,000.00 scholarships annually, and award Comenius (the Moravian-born father of Education to the world) educational recognition. We provide concerts, receptions for visiting dignitaries, lectures, socials, interact with local museum and colleges/universities and with the general community as a whole to teach our mission of good citizenship in the world instilling pride in ones roots whatever they may be.

We hope you have enjoyed your tour with us and that you, your family, friends and employers might wish to enjoy this palatial building as well. We would be gratefully privileged to meet all of you here at the new Czech Center Houston. *S panem Bohem!*

## Czech Family Histories Book

The Texas Czech Genealogical Society is gathering family articles and stories which will be published in 2005 as a high quality hard cover indexed book. (A former autobiographical endeavor in soft copy was produced by the Texas Czech Heritage Society under the auspices of historian Robert Janak some three years ago.)

Articles should be submitted to Charlene Hurta, [fhurta@brazosport.edu](mailto:fhurta@brazosport.edu) or Sylvia Laznovsky, [Sylviajean12@cs.com](mailto:Sylviajean12@cs.com). The society holds its *They Came, We Seek* Genealogy Conference, July 21 – 23, 2005 in Caldwell, Texas.

The TCGS is a genealogical society founded by Texas Czech genealogists dedicated to helping you with your Czech genealogy.

President Charlene and an ardent working group produce the very informative quarterly, *Czech Footprints*.

For those interested in joining this organization membership and information can be found on their website: [www.TXCZGS.org](http://www.TXCZGS.org).

## Get the Word Out!

Dear Members and Friends: Please help us get the word out about your **new** Czech Cultural Center Houston and the new Prague International Gift Shop in the Museum District! Have you told your children and relatives of the value of preservation of our precious heritage? Help us to reach them by your gift of a membership.

**Marilyn and Charles Sikora sent in memberships for their three daughters and family and for their Aunt.** It made us realize that we need your help to reach others. Bill and I have long involved our grown children and grandchildren in our Czech Center. Maybe you haven't even thought of it, but it would be very helpful at this point in our organization's life to involve them. It opens new doors for them.

Help us and help them at the same time to be proud of their heritage and yours.

For information call 713-528-2060 or come see us at your new Czech Center, 4920 San Jacinto, Houston, Texas 77004.

We are all citizens of one world. To dislike a man because he was born in another country, because he speaks a different language, or because he takes a different view on this or that, is a great folly. Let us have but one end in view, the welfare of humanity.

**Jan Amos Komensky (Comenius) (1592 – 1670)**