

# A WOMAN TO REMEMBER: MARIE PROVAZNÍKOVÁ

## April 10, 2022

### WHO IS WHO

(in order of appearances )

#### *Producer / Welcome*

**SUZANNA HALSEY**, a native of Karlovy Vary, an alumna of Charles University in Prague, and a New Yorker since 1978, is a woman of many trades. Since the 1980s, she has taught the Czech language, including a course at New York University. As an administrator of the [Friends of Czech Greenways](#) nonprofit organization, she has helped promote cultural and environmental preservation along the Prague-Vienna Greenways route. As a board member of the Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences (SVU), New York Chapter, she produces events that present Czech and Slovak intellectual history. Suzanna is proud of her brainchild, the SVU NY 6-*Minute Challenge* program, presenting talented and creative Czechs and Slovaks in New York. She has enjoyed working with Anna Polesny and Petr Dudek on this event and learning more about Sokol and its amazing *náčelnice* Marie Provazníková.

#### *Directors / Moderators*

**ANNA VA POLESNY**, MS, MFA native of Mlada Boleslav, is a granddaughter of Marie Provaznikova. After the communist putsch in 1948, her family left Czechoslovakia, lived as refugees in Germany and West Pakistan, and ultimately came to the United States to join Provaznikova in NYC. The family settled in Flushing, NY, and became members of the local Sokol community. Anna is an accomplished visual artist using materials, words and images to convey thoughts, make statements and engage the imagination. Her work has been exhibited in major museums and recently featured at the Bellevue Art Museum, the Museum of Art and Design in NYC and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, where she is represented in the permanent collection.

**PETR DUDEK**, PhD, is a Prague-based radio journalist in charge of special broadcasts on [Czech Radio](#) (Radiožurnál and [Radio Plus](#)). Before joining Czech Radio, he worked at the *Týden* (Week) magazine, the Czech BBC in London and Prague, in *Lidové noviny* daily. Dudek studied Czech and English at Charles University in Prague. After the Velvet Revolution, he taught briefly at the university's Department of English and studied for one year as a graduate student at the University of Illinois in Chicago. He is the author of two excellent radio plays about Marie Provaznikova: *Vzletem sokolim (Falcon's flight) 1948* and *Vzletem sokolim 1968*.

## **Guest Speakers**

**HARRY BLUTSTEIN**, PhD, former Adjunct Professor in the School of Global Studies, Social Science and Planning at RMIT University, is a fellow at the University of Melbourne, Australia. Since 1972, he has been a freelance journalist and published feature articles in op-eds in major Australian newspapers on various topics. He is also the author of *Games of Discontent* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021) on the 1968 Olympic Games, *Ascent of Globalisation* (Manchester University Press, 2016), and [Cold War Olympics](#) (McFarland Books, 2021) on the early postwar Games.

**ZUZKA POLESNÝ EGGENA**, MD, is the eldest granddaughter of Marie Provazníková. Dr. Eggena followed in her parents' medical profession footsteps receiving her M.D. and MPH from the University of Michigan. She worked at the Los Angeles County Dept. of Public Health; as Chief Physician II she was the Health Officer for the 1.9 million residents of the San Gabriel and Pomona Valleys, and as Director of Quality Assurance established a performance monitoring and improvement program. She started attending Sokol as a six-year old *žákyně* in Mladá Boleslav right after the war, participated in the 1948 XI<sup>th</sup> slet, learned to ski as a little girl when her mother taught Sokol skiing courses, continued in Sokol in the refugee camp, and later in Astoria, NY. under her grandmother's leadership. Zuzka and her husband Peter, a biophysicist, have two sons and four grandsons.

**ROBERT J. TOMANEK**, PhD, is Professor Emeritus of Anatomy and Cell Biology at the University of Iowa, where the area of his research has been cardiovascular science, with an emphasis on coronary circulation. During the last decade, he has written books regarding Czech culture (*Moravia the Gem of the Czech Culture*; and [Czech Immigrants and the Sokol Movement](#)). He is currently on the board of the Sokol Museum and Library, which features a virtual (online) museum. His research regarding the Sokol movement has enlightened him about the extraordinary contributions of Marie Provazníková. Tomanek is the son of Czech immigrants, and has traveled often to the Czech Republic to visit relatives.

**VÁCLAV ŠOTOLA** is a retired History and Physics professor at Canajoharie High School, Albany NY. A native of Prague, he defected to the United States in 1981 and settled in Albany, NY, where he studied history at SUNY at Albany. In Albany, he met Dr. Alena Polesny, daughter of Marie Provazníková, who helped him gather information about Provazníková's life. Inspired, Šotola later wrote an essay and his M.A. thesis (1996), *The Struggles and Development of the Women's Sokol Movement as Illustrated by the Life of Marie Provazníková*.

**KATEŘINA POHLOVÁ** is the executive manager of the Education Department and the head of the Historical and Documentation Centre of the [Czech Sokol Organization](#). During her eight years of work in Sokol, she founded and edited a magazine about the history of Sokol, launched a website/database of Sokol monuments, and organized the Open Night at Sokol Houses (Noc

sokoloven). She coordinated the oral history project *Remembering Sokol* (Vzpomínky na Sokol), recording personal memories of Sokol members. Katerina writes scholarly articles about Sokol and publicizes its history in magazines and television. She studied history and archival science at Charles University in Prague. Her Master's thesis dealt with municipal administration in the early modern period.

**NORMA ZABKA** is President Emerita of [Sokol New York](#) and a U.S. A. Gymnastics Hall of Fame member for her work in the development and progress of Rhythmic Gymnastics in the United States and her services as an international and Olympic judge. She is also an American Sokol National Gymnastics Champion. She studied physical education at NYU and became an Associate Professor at Hunter College.

**IRENE SUHRADA WYNNYCZUK** was born in NYC in the Czech section of Yorkville. At the age of 13, a friend brought her to the Sokol New York Junior girls gym class, and thus began her lifelong involvement and dedication to Sokol. She attended and taught at Sokol Instructors' Schools, Junior girls' classes in N.Y., and was Director of the Women Program. She met Sis. Provaznikova, when she came to New York in 1949. Later, she became Irene's lifelong mentor. Irene taught herself calisthenic compositions so that she could participate in *Slet* rallies. She has been President of American Sokol's Eastern District for ten years.

**JITKA ZOBAL RATNER**, MD, is a Pediatric Ophthalmologist in Albany, New York. She came to the United States in 1968 as a child after the Soviets rolled their tanks into Czechoslovakia on August 21, 1968, to crush the Prague Spring. Her parents were friends with Provazníková's daughter and son-in-law. For several years in the mid-1970s, she went to the Sokol summer camp (tabor) in East Haddam, CT, where Provazníková was the director. Thanks to her, she learned to read and write the Czech language. Her father was Provazníková's physician in her later years while she lived in Schenectady.

**MILAN KOCOUREK**, born in Liberec and a member of Sokol London and Sokol Kolín, is a journalist who worked as a broadcaster with the BBC Czechoslovak Section, World Service, Bush House, London. He met Marie Provazníková at the 5th Slet of Sokol International in 1982 in Vienna, and became her sincere admirer. They exchanged many letters. Unlike many politicians, Sister *Provaznice* could convey inspiring, great ideas and speak without notes.

**ALEX SCHAY**, born in Salem, OR, is Marie Provazníková's great-grandson. *Prabába* moved in with his family when she was eighty-eight and he was nine years old and lived with them for nearly a decade. She moved to Oregon ostensibly to teach him Czech. He has many fond memories of that time together. Alex lives in Portland, OR with his wife, Mari, and his seeing-eye dog, Frisco. Here, he runs his company, [Carbon Solutions Northwest](#), and provides consulting services at the intersection of dirty renewable energy and forest products. He enjoys hiking, reading, and drinking wine. He has spent nearly 10% of his life in Ukraine. Slava Ukraini!  
[www.carbonsolutionsnorthwest.com](http://www.carbonsolutionsnorthwest.com)

**JEAN A. DUSEK** is a member of Sokol of Greater Cleveland and instructor of artistic and rhythmic gymnastics and fitness for seniors and will be presenting the words of her husband **Peter Paul Dusek, Jr.**, retired professor of Physical Education at Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland, who received his PhD from the University of Utah in 1981 with the publication of the authoritative biography of *Marie Provaznikova: Her Life and Contribution to Physical Education*. A lifelong member of Sokol, Dusek was also a member of the Sokol Board and the Sokol Northeast District Director of Men. He became acquainted with Provaznikova while teaching at the American Sokol Organization instructors training School.

**MARTIN KLEMENT** is a historian at the [Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague](#). He studied history at Charles University in Prague and Free University in Berlin. In 2019, he graduated from Charles University with a thesis focusing on the "völkische Weltanschauung" in the German gymnastic unions in Central Europe. Martin's primary research focuses on the German and Czech gymnastic movements, the history of Northern Bohemia, and museum education. He is also responsible for the systematization of the archives in the Czech Sokol Organization.

**JEAN HRUBY** grew up in the Czech community of Berwyn, ILL, and became a youth in the local Sokol unit at the age of three. Raised under the European traditions of sport and music, playing the piano, trumpet and baritone, practicing figure skating, hockey, and gymnastics, Jean later became the first woman President of the [American Sokol Organization](#) in 2014, after serving as its Business Manager. Through her efforts, Sokol has gained worldwide recognition. She also holds the position of President of the [World Sokol Federation](#) until 2024. Jean is a graduate of Michigan State University with a Bachelor's degree in Communication and is currently working towards her Master's in Education at Lewis University. She is a Middle School Math Teacher in the Archdiocese of Chicago.