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[www.sloveneamericanclub.com](http://www.sloveneamericanclub.com)

### Facebook Group Site:

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Club (Multi-Cultural) Club 2011

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# S.A.C. NEWSLETTER— JANUARY 2024

## SLOVENE AMERICAN CLUB

### Home of the SAC Button Box/Accordion Club

P.O. Box 517, Allen Park, MI 48101 (313-383-9365)

### Volume 97, Issue 4

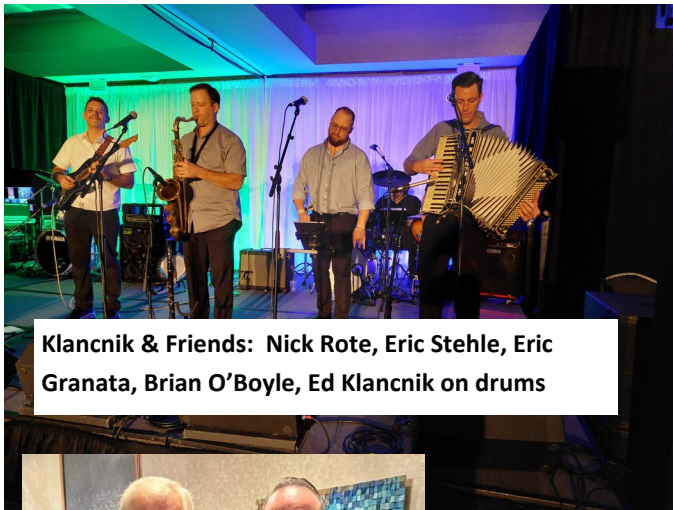
### Cleveland-style Polka Hall of Fame

### Thanksgiving Polka Party 2023

On Friday November 24 and Saturday November 25, the Polka Hall of Fame held the 59th annual Thanksgiving Polka Weekend at the Holiday Inn Cleveland South, in Independence Ohio. The music kicked off on Friday at 2pm with Linda Lee from Frankenmuth welcoming people with her wonderful accordion music, and organized scheduled events went until 12am, but festivities went until 3:30am on Sunday morning due to the exuberance of jam musicians. Some of the bands and musicians who entertained were Fred Ziwich (who plays at our SAC dance on December 17th), Bill Bevec, Eddie Rodick, Klancnik & Friends, Kathy Hlad, Anthony Culkar, Wayne Golob, Rob Deblander/Polka Classics, Joey Miskulin of Riders in the Sky Fame, (Joey played with Frank Yankovic for many years), Walter Ostanek who is Canada's Polka King, and the one and only Denis Novato, the world Button Accordion Champion. As well as all the music entertainment on the schedule, there was a Potica Nut Roll demonstration, a polka mass, and the Polka Music Awards Show which is always a special event..

Awards are given to four "lifetime achievement" winners, and this year these awards went to: Joe Mlakar (posthumously), Dale Bucar, Al Battistelli, and Gary Rhamy. I especially loved Gary Rhamy's acceptance speech and entertainment. Although his Peppermint Recording Studio is famous, he admitted he is not a musician nor a singer, but with his deep, mellow voice he recited a beautiful rendition of "Another Christmas Fruitcake" - very funny. The inductees to the Trustees Honor Roll were: Lipa Park Button Box Club, Wayne Tomsic, The Singing Slovenes, The Haughville Slickers, and Fred Scherz Jr. Two songs were inducted as all-time greatest hits: Keystone Polka (written by Georgie Cook and Jim Kozel); and Pony Tail Polka (written by Frank Spetich Sr.). The prestigious "Tony Petkovsek Award" was presented to Denis Novato, who performed all weekend with John Ferfolia accompanying on guitar. Anthony Culkar arranged the music that was played by the Awards Show Orchestra, consisting of some wonderfully-talented musicians and director Tom Mroczka. And much more!

After midnight on Friday and on Saturday, any musician who wanted to jam could let loose—and they did till the wee small hours. This event was a success due to the hard work and diligence of this year's committee of volunteers: Patty Candela, Tony Fortuna, Rosemary Koss, John Muhvic, Dave Skrajner, George Staiduhar, Joe Valencic, and Joe Wojtila - all under the guidance of Chairman, Denny Bucar. I have missed going to the Thanksgiving Polka Party only three times in the last twenty years (partly due to the pandemic cancelation), and I appreciate so much the work that these volunteers do for our enjoyment. Hvala Lepa! Next year will be the 60th anniversary of this event.



**Klancnik & Friends: Nick Rote, Eric Stehle, Eric Granata, Brian O'Boyle, Ed Klancnik on drums**



**John Ferfolia accompanying Denis Novato,**



**John Ferfolia & Denis Novato**



**Rob Deblander & Polka Classics**



**Look at us! A fun bunch**



**Dennis Uhlik, Andy Miinch, Mike Masten and Ken Dowling—jamming in the room! It was Ken's 75th birthday and he was presented with a birthday cake!**



**Jamming in the ballroom after the scheduled entertainment**

**Cecile and Andy Miinch - cutting a rug, as they say!**



## Retirement Announcement—Millie's Polka Band

For over twenty years, Millie Okopal and her bands have entertained people, especially specializing in the Czech/Slovak music that she is known for. She announced her retirement after the band played a last gig in Sylvania Ohio on October 7, 2023. The decision must have been a difficult one, but in the spring she ripped the muscles in her arms, and it became difficult to play the button box anymore. However, she continued on to finish the booked gigs until the last one in October. In her Facebook announcement she recognized the previous band members and thanked them for their dedication to the band. Among some of the musicians who have played with Millie's Polka Bands over the years are: Bonnie Weber, Jim Kaifas, Dale Zalinski, David Hejl, Jason Hejl, Jerry Rozek, Richie Naparella, Dennis Malak, Tom Torolski, Marty Gazarek, Tom Komon, Lew Wolff, Ed Gajdostik—and more.

Millie's bands have recorded two CDs: "From the Heart" with Millie and the Czech Us Out Band—23 songs; and "Millie and the Firehouse Gang"—20 songs. She led the monthly polka jam sessions in Milan Michigan for many years, and she was inducted into the Michigan State Polka Music Hall of Fame. Millie celebrated her 94th birthday in March 2023, and I think she has earned her retirement.



Dale Zelinsky, Jim Karpas, Millie Okopal,  
David Hejl, Bonnie Weber, Jason Hejl.

Millie leading the jam at Milan Michigan



***Congratulations to Millie on her retirement from all of us at the Slovene American Club, and thanks for the many years of entertainment!***



And another retirement to announce: Del Sinchak, longtime polka band leader from the Youngstown Ohio area. Del and his band have recorded eleven CDs. He is a past president of the Penn-Ohio Polka Pals. He was given a lifetime achievement award by the Cleveland-style Polka Hall of Fame, and he won the award for Band of the Year in 1996 and in 1997. For many years, he has assisted at Gary Rhamy's Peppermint Recording Studio. Del's band always played to the crowd, and Charlie and I really enjoyed dancing to his music. Wishing him a happy retirement!

## **SAC MEMBERSHIP MEETING & HOLIDAY PARTY—FRIDAY, JANUARY 19, 2024 - 6PM**

The next membership meeting will be held at the American Legion in Dearborn on Friday, January 19th. The meeting starts at 6pm, and immediately following that will be our annual Holiday Party with food provided by the SAC. Remember - ***YOU COULD BE THE LUCKY WINNER OF THE ATTENDANCE AWARD OF \$50.00!*** The jam session will begin about 7pm, so stay for the evening and enjoy the conversation, the friendship, the fun, and the music of your fellow members. 2024 membership dues will be collected by treasurer Gayle Chase at any Friday night jam session or dance. You can pay by cash or by check made out to the Slovene American Club, and send to PO Box 517, Allen Park, MI 48101. Membership fees are \$15.00 per person, or \$25 per couple. Benefits of membership include a \$2 discount off price of dance admissions, and you receive our newsletter either by email or snail mail!

## SLOVENE AMERICAN CLUB CHRISTMAS DANCE

On Sunday, December 17, 2023, we were fortunate to have Fred Ziwich and the International Sound Machine entertain for our Christmas dance. The very talented ISM band members, Gary Byndas and Chris Byndas have been with Fred for many years—since 1986 I think he said. Mark Habat, the ISM long-time drummer retired due to health issues, so they were joined by Rich Lee (Fred's high school friend) on drums. Gary plays sax, clarinet, and vocals; Chris plays trumpet, guitar, and vocals; the 3-part harmonies are beautiful. Fred is famous in the polka world, known as one of the most gifted accordion players, music arranger, composer, and studio musician from the Cleveland area. He also plays sax and clarinet and taught himself to play the button box while still in high school. He started accordion lessons at 5 years, and before he could read he was reading music. He is also an internet celebrity on the Polka Jammer Network. Fred, Gary, and Chris have all received many awards - too numerous to mention here!

There was a large turnout of our SAC members and guests, and it was a wonderful afternoon of music and dancing, and meeting up with old and new friends. People were in the Christmas spirit, helped along with the band's large repertoire of music which included all the favorite sing-along Christmas songs as well as Czech, German, and Slovenian-Cleveland polkas and waltzes. The SAC provided free pizza and salads, and our lovely La-La lady, Pat Kalmar, brought three fancy cakes, two kinds of potica, and chocolate covered strawberries for us to enjoy, all home-made. A feast!



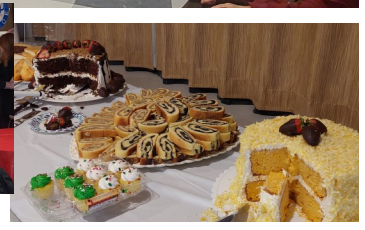
Jason Hejl  
drumming with  
band



SAC musicians at intermission



Good crowd



## THE SLOVENE AMERICAN CLUB BOARD OF DIRECTORS

We don't realize all the work that is done behind the scenes to keep our SAC as vibrant and healthy as it is. Just because we sold the clubhouse does not mean the club is finished. Your Board of Directors has worked tirelessly to ensure that we can still enjoy all the good times, the friendship, and the music. And a wonderful job they have done! We are still able to have our Friday night jam sessions and our dances due to their hard work and diligence. Many ballrooms and halls have been closed, yet our Board has always found meeting places for our get-togethers. They decorate, set up tables, arrange entertainment and food, and so much more. And they are all volunteers - they do it for us!

Front L to R: Diana Lewsick, Trustee & Sergeant at Arms; Gayle Chase, Treasurer & Corresponding Secretary; and Bonnie Weber, Recording Secretary; Back L to R: Herb Schroeder, President; Mike Masten, Vice President; Absent from picture were trustees Paul Perko and Andy Machcinski.



Please show your appreciation for our Board of Directors. Come out to the membership meeting on January 19th. The meeting starts at 6pm and there is free pizza. It is always a fun evening with Ken Dowling leading the music after the meeting. Show your support for these hard-working people.



## DONATIONS TO THE CLUB

The SAC Board members have very graciously chosen to donate their quarterly salaries (a total of \$1,260) back to the club. We are very grateful to them for the efforts and the work that they put in on behalf of the club.

Frank Stancic - \$5.00

Val Boganowski— \$50.00 in memory of Eddie Adamic

## MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF THE CLUB WITH HEALTH ISSUES

The SAC has a number of members and friends of the club who are dealing with health issues at this time. We would ask that you keep the following people in your thoughts and prayers.

Annie Bauer

Andy Machcinski

Kurt Schroeder

Bill Bernocco

Mary Ann McNulty

Gerry Stachowiak

Liz Kiss

Bill Romanski

Rita Zdeb

Bob Kiss

Frank Sabo

Viktor Zakrajsek

## DECEASED MEMBERS & FRIENDS OF THE CLUB

**Marino Lorenz Martin** - Died on November 29, 2023 at the age of 40 years. Marino was the son of Rene Martin, and nephew of Rudy Martin, of Martin Brothers Band fame. Marino followed in his father's footsteps as an accordion player.

**Shirley Laurin (Machcinski)** - Died on November 25, 2023. Shirley was a member of the SAC, and wife of Andy Machcinski, one of the Trustees of the club.

**Virgie Ann O'Connor** - Died on November 30, 2023 at the age of 83. Virgie was a friend of the SAC and joined the ladies in song at the jam sessions.

**Rudolph (Rudy) Bernick** - After a long battle with cancer, Rudy died on September 22, 2023 at the age of 87. The Bernick family has a long musical history with the SAC, and Rudy was a well-known jazz accordionist. He began playing accordion at 9 years of age, was a mainstay at the Michigan Accordion Society weekly jazz jam sessions. Rudy had two master's degrees in special education and taught at Groves High School for 32 years. He was also an accordion teacher, having many students over the years, including Gaylord Klancnik. He was a colleague and friend to some of the SAC accordionists, and brother of SAC member Tom Bernick, his only sibling.

**Edward (Eddie) Adamic** - Died on December 15, 2023 at the age of 93. Eddie served as president of the Slovene American Club for many years. He was a very talented accordion player, having had his own band for many years, and also playing with the Martin Bros. Band, the Good Times Band with other SAC members. He was a friend to many well-known musicians, and indeed, Art Perko wrote Adamic's Polka in his honor. Eddie was a very kind and caring man, and during his terms as president of the club, he made everyone who came to the SAC feel welcome. Both he and Fran, his wife of 65 years, worked tirelessly for the SAC for many years. In our next newsletter (April issue), we will pay tribute to Eddie and his musical career. Our condolences go out to his family and to the many friends in the music world who will miss him dearly.



## DECEASED POLKA MUSICIAN



**Robert (Bob) Doszak** - Died on October 30, 2023 at age of 77. Bob hailed from Joliet Illinois. He was the founder of the Illinois Polkafest which has lasted for 35 years. Pictured here with his son Chris, who now organizes the event with sister Kim, Bob began playing accordion at the age of 6, and playing in a band at age 14. The Illinois Polkafest takes place February 2 - 4, 2024 in Schaumburg.

## SLOVENE AMERICAN CLUB CALENDAR OF EVENTS—2023 into 2024

**NOTICE:** We schedule our Friday night jam sessions every other Friday. In many cases it will include the 1st, 3rd, and 5th Fridays of each month. The following dates will be used for the jam sessions unless changed due to conflicts of scheduling. Please watch our Facebook page for any changes to the schedule. For more information you can also contact Mike Masten at 734-368-2240

All Friday night jam sessions will be held from 7pm to 10pm at the

American Legion Fort Dearborn Post 364

3001 South Telegraph Road, Dearborn, Michigan

Friday, December 29	SAC Button Box/Accordion jam session—CANCELLED DUE TO HOLIDAYS
Friday, January 5	SAC Button Box/Accordion jam session—American Legion, Dearborn
Friday, January 19	<b>SAC Membership meeting—American Legion, Dearborn; 6pm to 6:30pm</b> <b>SAC Holiday Party and Button Box/Accordion jam session—6:30 to 10pm</b> <b>Food provided</b>
Friday, February 2	SAC Button Box/Accordion jam session—American Legion, Dearborn
Friday, February 16	SAC Button Box/Accordion jam session—American Legion, Dearborn
Friday, March 1	SAC Button Box/Accordion jam session—American Legion, Dearborn
Friday, March 15	SAC Button Box/Accordion jam session—American Legion, Dearborn
Friday, March 29	SAC Button Box/Accordion jam session—CANCELLED DUE TO GOOD FRIDAY
Friday, April 5	SAC Button Box/Accordion jam session—American Legion, Dearborn
Friday, April 19	SAC Button Box/Accordion jam session—American Legion, Dearborn

*Let's all come out and support the SAC musicians on Friday nights.*

*It's good music, good friends—and it's FREE!*

Our Friday night jam sessions are quickly becoming a great venue for celebrating special occasions. Think about it: you don't have to rent a hall, you get a live band for free, you can bring your own food in, and the bar prices are extremely reasonable. Why not have your next family function here? You will also be supporting the Legion!

One couple who love to dance and who often come to the Friday night jams, recently had a birthday party. Bea Gnida surprised husband Gerry for his 80th birthday. The hall was filled with family, friends, and fellow dancers. On another Friday night, the family and friends of our drummer, Syl Weinclaw, all came to celebrate his 94th birthday. Children, grandchildren, and friends were playing pool, enjoying the music, and having a lunch together. When our SAC friend Roy Monburg passed away, his family, many of whom were from out of town, had a memorial celebration at the club for family, friends, and former co-workers. And the Kiss family arranged to have a get-together at the SAC dance in October, and family flew into town for the occasion. A great way to celebrate those special occasions.



Syl Weinclaw (94) with son Tom. Grandson Paul is also a SAC member.





## **POLKA EVENTS AND NOTES**

**Our Slovene American Club is noted for the very many musicians who are SAC members. These musicians entertain regularly at our club events, and many of them are members of other bands.**

**Many of our SAC musicians are available for hire for weddings, dances, private parties and events - solo or as a band. Please support our members and their bands at polka dances and festivals.**

**The Good Times Band:** Herb Schroeder, Ken Dowling, Mike Masten, and Jason Hejl

Our “house band” at the Slovene American Club functions, and very much in demand. They play a wide variety of music: German, Czech, Slovenian, and American dance music. To book them for an event, contact Ken Dowling at 517-518-4228

**Rob Deblander Band:** Rob Deblander, David Hall, Chuck Rote

Rob is a multi-faceted musician, playing piano accordion, half-chromatic accordion, button box, and keyboards. He specializes in Cleveland-style polka music but is versatile and can play any style. You can call Rob at 734-536-0037

**Bonnie Weber:**

A long-time member of Millie’s Polka Band, she is a talented button accordion player, knows Czech, German, Slovenian, and American dance standards. For more information, call Bonnie at 734-770-4075

**New Brass Express:** SAC member Ed Siwiec

Polish-style polka music is their specialty, however they play a variety of ethnic and American music. For more information call Darrell Welton at 989-658-8280

### **Cleveland-style Polka Hall of Fame events in 2024:**

Kurentovanje Cleveland - Saturday February 10; 10am to 6pm

Sweetheart Ball - Moravcik Band - Sunday February 18; 2pm to 6pm

40th Super Button Box Bash - Sunday, April 21; 12pm to 6pm

Mothers’ Day Ball - Stanger Band - Friday, May 10; 6pm to 10pm

20th Slovenian Sausagefest - Wednesday, September 11; 12pm to 8pm

Harvest Ball - Zolka Family Band - Friday, October 18; 6pm to 10pm

60th Thanksgiving Polka Party - Friday, Nov. 29 & Saturday Nov. 30



### **JAM SESSIONS**

In addition to our own SAC jam sessions, you can go to Milan Michigan on the third Tuesday of every month all year round. Music is played from 7pm to 9pm and they feature Czech/Slovak music. The address is 44 Wabash Street, Milan MI 48160. All are welcome, so bring your accordion, your flat-box buttonbox and join in. For more information contact Bonnie Weber at 734-770-4075.

There is an open jam session on the first Wednesday of every month at the Monroe Senior Center, 15275 South Dixie Highway, Monroe MI. Lunch is available at 11am, the music session is from 12pm to 1pm. This jam session has been going on for fourteen years. The music includes polka, country, and folk—a wide variety. Musicians are invited to join “Bonnie and Friends” for a fun session. For more information call Bonnie Weber at 734-770-4075.

A jam session is organized by John Puhl in conjunction with the Knights of Columbus Fish Fry in Essex, Ontario. It is held on the fourth Friday of each month at the Holy Name of Jesus Church Hall, 146 Talbot St. East, Essex Ontario. Delicious fish dinners are available from 4:30pm to 7pm, and music goes from about 6pm till 9pm. This does not run during the summer months. For more information contact John Puhl at 519-982-0926.

## A BLAST FROM THE PAST



The original Klancnik Brothers Orchestra was formed in 1976, consisting of Gaylord on accordion, Ken on sax and clarinet, Ron Bernick on drums and Dick Poupard on banjo. In 1986 Ed Klancnik joined his father and uncle in the band. Ed is a drummer, and plays guitar and banjo. For over twenty years, the band enjoyed immense popularity, and was awarded trophies as “Michigan’s Best Polka Band”, and Gaylord was proclaimed as “Michigan’s Polka King”. The KBO had many fans and even their own booster club which consisted of several hundred members and followers. In 1996, they parted ways to pursue different musical paths, and at that time, the Gaylord Klancnik Orchestra was formed.

This information was taken from Ed Klancnik’s website [www.ranchrecordings.com](http://www.ranchrecordings.com). There is some great information on that site about the band and about Gaylord’s many contributions to the music and to the Slovene American Club. Gaylord died on December 21, 2005, at the age of 60, as a result of a traffic accident. His loss is still very keenly felt eighteen years later, by his family and his many polka colleagues and friends.

### *The Florida Snowbird Polka Band*



#### **Polka Tuesdays Are Back Again**

The beautiful Paradise Tiki Hut Bar & Grill is once again providing polka music for your dancing and listening pleasure on Tuesdays in February and March 2024.

**Time: Noon to 3:00 p.m.**

**Dates: February 6 - 13 - 20 - 27**

**March 5 - 12 - 19 - 26**

**The Paradise Tiki Hut at the Dolphin Key Resort  
1502 Miramar St. in Cape Coral, FL**

**For more information call: 724-699-2691 or 440 -321 -7390**

If you are planning a trip to Florida this winter and crave some polka music along with your sunshine, come to Cape Coral. The Florida Snowbird Polka Band plays on Tuesdays in February and March, from noon to 3pm, at the Paradise Tiki Hut. You can have lunch and refreshments and dance or just listen to the Cleveland-style polka music. The Tiki Hut is located at the Dolphin Key Resort where rooms are available to stay.

When the band takes a break, there are always some special guest musicians to fill the void. We hear that Ken Dowling and Mike Masten might make an appearance again this year.

THIS NEWSLETTER IS PUBLISHED BY THE SLOVENE AMERICAN CLUB FOUR TIMES A YEAR:  
JANUARY—APRIL—JULY—OCTOBER

Our mission is to keep all members informed of our SAC events and to promote “polka” music. If any SAC members want their music events listed in our newsletter, please send us the information. I want to thank everyone who has sent me information and pictures, and especially Gayle Chase, who helps me so much put this newsletter together for you.

**Send any information to: [polkapromotionsplus@hotmail.com](mailto:polkapromotionsplus@hotmail.com)**



**FRIDAY NIGHT FUN!**  
**MERRY CHRISTMAS EVERYONE!**

