Laurie Barnes:
Building Bridges And Forging Friendships

THE EARLY BEGINNINGS The organization, first known as the International Women's Club of Prague, started as an independent, non-profit organization and was officially founded in early 1991. Due to changes in legal requirements, the IWCP ceased to function as a legal entity in November 1997, and in an effort to meet the requirements of our host country, a new organization called the International Women's Association of Prague was established, with new bylaws and operating guidelines and was officially registered in early 1998.

The seeds for forming a group for expatriate women in the Czech Republic predated the 1989 revolution when international women, which at that time consisted almost exclusively of ambassador's wives, would hold coffee mornings or informal brunch gatherings in private homes.

As shared by Barbara Dale, first president of IWCP, "even under communism, the city of Prague always held an attraction for international visitors – as well as foreign businessmen and diplomats. It never ceased to be an exciting place to live. Scenically, architecturally, historically, and gastronomically, Prague was ever a bright star in an otherwise darkened central Europe. Socially however, particularly for the ladies of the international community, Prague has its restrictions – due to prevailing political inhibitions it was difficult to integrate properly with the Czech people and there were few venues where ladies could meet for sporting, educational or purely friendly purposes. Socializing was confined to the constant round of dinner parties, diplomatic receptions and coffee mornings."

When communism fell, foreign companies poured into Czechoslovakia, creating a sudden influx of international corporate wives and so later during that first full year of freedom, on November 12, 1990 a small group of six like-minded women met to discuss possibilities for the formation of the IWCP and, according to Dale, in so doing "set about changing one of the facets of Prague life forever."

The first Steering Committee meeting was held on January 11, 1991 in the home of Barbara Dale (UK) and those present also included Stella Hooker-Haase (US/Netherlands), Peggy Krikava (US), Trudemarie Lordereau (France/Germany), Koko Matsumara (Japan), Tudy McLaine (Canada) and Helen Vincent (Australia). Suzanne O'Keefe (UK) wife of the British Ambassador, was unable to attend the meeting but was always extremely supportive during the early days of the club's existence.

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Later that month the first General Meeting was held at the Canadian Ambassador's residence on January 22, 1991. A popular venue for many of the monthly General Meetings from the early days to the present has been the beautiful Kaiserstejn Palace on Malostranské námestí — also the site of the Tenth anniversary celebration held on October 11, 2001.

It was their initial vision and determination that brought so many women of different nations together, which created that first commitment to build bridges of mutual understanding that has sustained us through the challenges and adventures of these past 10 years and so it is that we salute these women of vision and are so very grateful for their investment of time and energy.

Eighty-eight women from 22 countries including Czechoslovakia as host country, attended that first meeting. One year after establishment IWCP had 310 members from 53 nations including 32 from our host country of Czechoslovakia.

According to Barbara Dale, "prominent Czech ladies were keen and active members right from the early days." Czech members who have provided key leadership and input into the functioning of the group have included, Magdalena Dietlová (who served as the first Vice President of the IWCP), Lívia Klausová, wife of Václav Klaus, Jaroslova Kramulová, widow of Czech artist Karel Kramule, Eva Kubátová and Libuše Laštovková. Olga Havlová was also invited to become a patron and serve as Honorary Chairman of IWCP during those early days, but unfortunately, had to decline due to an already full schedule, as wife of President Vaclav Havel.

Within ten months the Evening Group for the business women of IWCP was established and had their first meeting on November 26,

1990 at the CD Club. Since then, the Evening Group, under the current leadership of Grace deLorenzo-Vyborny, has continued to meet the varied and collective needs of the working women of Prague.

PURPOSE AND GOALS

The guiding principles upon which the organization was originally founded included the desire to promote friendship, enhance cultural understanding and assist local charities in an effort to build bridges between members, as well as within the local community and throughout the world.

It is interesting to note that the IWAP logo which includes a stylized version of one of the many bridges crossing the Vltava River in Prague, so perfectly illustrates the concept of building bridges, strengthening friendships and expanding community outreach, the key principles upon which the IWCP/IWAP were founded.

■ *This article will be continued in future editions of the Magazine. Be sure to save your copies, as this wonderful history of our organization will surely be a collector's prize some day!*

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Dear IWAP Readers;

It has been a great honor to have been given the chance to join the Executive Board and work once again more closely with so many of our talented ladies. Earlier in September, I found myself, yet again, drawn like a magnet to the IWAP office in Polska 28 for more regular visits which ended up with Suzanne and Jacquie asking me to take on the responsibility of managing the Advertising Section. Thank you for the opportunity!

I have always worked since I graduated and after 16 years as a career woman, I actually welcomed a break with the only status of mum and housewife (student as well). No, it hasn't been easy raising a family with three children, working on higher degrees, whilst building a career for myself. Trying to be there for everyone at the same time was a real daunting challenge on more than one occasion, having to face years of pressure and the race with time, combining both career demands and family needs.

Nonetheless, I was equally happy to be once again involved and be able to extend my help in any way possible which would assist members and IWAP in fulfilling its initial "raison d'etre", being of good service to the local communities, promoting friendships and creating a better understanding of both the Czech culture and all other international cultures so widely diverse in the Czech Republic and represented in our own IWAP membership.

On this occasion, I would also like to take the opportunity to publicly note our appreciation of all our valued advertisers, with whom I look forward to working even more closely, nurturing good cooperation and mutual benefit, serving the welfare of the communities and creating awareness of one another's strengths and capabilities. I would like to thank Maria Sykora, Dawn Falcus, Marcella Munoz and the Charity team, giving them a BIG CHEER for the tremendous hard work put into organizing our October Trade Fair, and also for the excellent occasion they provided for networking and for people getting to meet one another. The Tenth Anniversary Celebration gave us a chance to further cement those relationships and we look forward to providing more of these sorts of social opportunities in the future. I would like to commend Dagmar Gorman and Suzanne Formanek, for making this event truly a magical one for everyone! Also our thanks to the most generous contributions provided by our esteemed advertisers; Zatisi Group, who certainly proved to be "The Best Caterers" in town! Allied Pickford and Corinthia Towers Hotels, we thank you all for your valued sponsorships and your involvement in making this event a great success!

I have experienced a warm sense of friendship, belonging and care, thanks to so many wonderful current IWAP members who are great friends to have. I would like to thank in particular Jacquie Hawken, Sanna Rapo and Paivi Koli for welcoming me on board the Editorial Team and helping me getting my bearings in the job. I am also looking forward to a closer relationship with so many of you, IWAP members and friends, and I invite you to come forward with your ideas and constructive comments with regard to ways we can further improve the Advertising Section and how I can help you in this area. For those members who have a bit of spare time, we would love your closer involvement and should you feel interested in coming out to assist us, we are currently looking for more volunteers to be part of our advertising team. We offer you the chance to interact, learn, have fun and contribute in many big or little ways to benefit IWAP and the communities it serves... Don't delay, give me a call soon, and we will discuss it!

Sincerely, Wassila Howes
Advertising Manager

IWAP Tenth Anniversary Celebration - An Event to Remember!

By Suzanne Formanek

For those of us who attended the celebration on October 11th, it was an evening to remember! Set in rooms replete with antique furnishings and crystal chandeliers, the Kaiserstein Palac provided an opulent venue for the almost 200 guests that joined us.

We were privileged to have the distinguished company of **Mrs. Eveta Sulca,** the new Ambassador of Latvia, **Mrs. Debi Stapleton**, the US Ambassador's wife, and **Ivana Mazouchova**, wife of the Norwegian Ambassador. A surprising number of members from the first-ever Executive Board were present including the original founder of our organization, **Mrs. Tudy McLaine**, who addressed us with reflections from the past. **Karin Pierrova**, the first Evening Group Coordinator and **Peggy Kriklova**, our first-ever Newsletter Editor were also on hand. Both **Magda Dietlova** of Xantypa, and **Alan Levy** of the Prague Post spoke of their personal connections to our organization. It was a pleasure to welcome many of our guests representing various international and local businesses. For former and current members of the IWCP/IWAP, it was one of those rare and wonderful opportunities to celebrate together.

Of course the event could not possibly have been such a resounding success had it not been for the financial sponsorship of both **Allied Pickford** and **Corinthia Towers Hotel**.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the evening however, was the outstanding buffet uniquely created by **Mr. Suri** and his wife **Ellen** of the **Zatisi Group** as a complementary gift to the IWAP on the occasion of this special milestone. After the event I heard many claim that the culinary experience could not be matched—neither in Prague, in London or New York. For those of us present, it was nothing less than a celebration of food. While Mr Suri had explained to the event organizers beforehand that his vision of catering goes well beyond merely serving food, none of us were quite prepared to be so overwhelmed both by his style and his unstinting generosity. It's fortunate indeed, that we can recapture the experience again by either attending any one of his remarkable restaurants or by using Zatisi Group's catering facilities for company or private events.

While it's hard to imagine fitting any more guests into those beautiful rooms at the Kaiserstein Palace I do regret, knowing that it will be a long time before we can again create such an event, that we couldn't have had every one of our members present.

For all those who worked so hard in making it successful, particularly **Dagmar Gorman**, the committee chair, I want to express my deep appreciation. All who were present at the 10th Anniversary concur: it was indeed an evening to remember!

Photos by Angela Millar

IWAP 10 Year Celebration

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In terms of local community involvement, economic and political changes within the Czech Republic have occurred over time and as a key international organization with many ties to the business and diplomatic communities, the IWCP/IWAP and its members have been a key participant in the economic transformation process of the Czech Republic.

INTERNATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL CONNECTIONS

Over the years, IWAP has also become more involved in the Open Door Organization, an international organization that helps provide newcomers with a contact prior to their move in order to enhance a smoother transition into the new community. As an extension of this greater cooperation between the various International Women's organizations, especially on the European continent, the key position of International Liason Officer was recently added.

IWAP has attempted to consolidate a local presence and has a strong desire to continue to develop co-operative relationships with other organizations and businesses within the Czech Republic. Corporate sponsorship and partnerships remain one of the keys to the on-going success of the IWAP.

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

It was during that original general meeting that officers were elected and a Constitution was drawn up based on those of existing international women's clubs in Warsaw, Moscow, The Hague and Budapest.

Since its founding, the following individuals have served the organization in the role of president

1991 - 92	Barbara Dale
1992 - 93	Malu Fagoaga
1993 - 94	Beatrijs Stikkers-Muller
1994 - 95	Monika Held
1995 - 96	Gull-Britt Lindberg
1996 - 97	Anja Haanpaa
1998	Joan Drabek
1998	Elsa Derham
1999	Suzanne Formanek
2000	Jane Dewey
2001	Snjezana Moze-Pigeon
2001	Suzanne Formanek (Interim)

The Executive Committee consists of twelve members appointed for one full club year and includes President, Vice-President, Recording Secretary, Treasurer, Charity, Hospitality, Membership, Newcomers, Newsletter, Evening Group, Interest Group, Distribution, Diplomatic Liaison, International Liason Officer, and Website Coordinator.

MEMBERSHIP AND INFORMATION SERVICES

Organized meetings are held three times a month including hospitality programs, which are designed as opportunities to meet new people, welcome newcomers and visitors and providing a forum for event announcements, information and organization business.

From the original 85 to the current membership averaging well over 500 the membership has multiplied nearly tenfold in the past ten years, with times that it has swelled to upwards of 800 strong. Original individual membership dues were 500 K... with a current 2001 level of 1500 K... per year.

Annual membership dues entitle members to participate in interest groups and attend general business meetings as well as receive the monthly newsletter. The original content of the newsletter, while providing information about special activities and interest groups, also shared very basic and practical survival tips for living in Prague, including lists of hard-to-find products and services.

A section called "Lost and Found" was devoted to listing needs, or "lost" items which included such things as unpopped popcorn, picture framing (without a three-month wait), mangos and good tires and items "found" which included a couple stores that carried corn flakes and Danone yogourt. In addition another early article was on medical services available in Prague, and other sections shared information about rental agents and dealing with problems of air pollution. In the September 1993 newsletter, there was even a comprehensive feature on tips for giving birth in Prague.

While in many ways the focus of providing information and assistance to its members seems to remain relatively the same and the content is no less valuable, the format and design has evolved from a very basic first edition which was small enough to be produced on a copy machine, to a

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black and white multi-page magazine format, and then with the new millenium in the year 2000, we saw the first edition with color photos incorporated into a new improved design.

In the last year we have also seen the development and launching of the first IWAP website and the use of electronic mail and e-groups as a means to further enhance communication with members as well as newcomers to Prague.

IWAP first rented office space in September 1998 and was co-located with the International Women's Network at U pisecke brany 18 in Prague 6. The move to the current location at Polska 28, Prague 3 was made in February 2000 and has provided a centralized work place and meeting location as well as a place which facilitates the work of organization officers and executive committee members, as well as our first part-time receptionist, Martina Fialová.

With a desire to better serve the membership and determine the needs of the members, regular surveys have been taken. One of the first detailed surveys was done in October 1995 by member Helen Etherington about *Adapting to Life in Prague.*

A focus on newcomers has always been a priority with the first Newcomer meeting held on April 16, 1991 at the Diplomatic Club on Karlova Street. Special newcomers neighborhood coffee-mornings were held twice a year and in more recent years monthly newcomer luncheons have been a popular means to make new friends and find one's way in this new country and culture. From the beginning the desire to support and connect with other women was a key priority with the concept of neighborhood contacts being established during the very first year.

At the same time in an effort to reach out into the community and to better serve newcomers to Prague, IWAP has also regularly participated in the International School Information Fair.

The first new Newcomer's Guide was completed one month after the formal establishment of the IWCP. In addition to practical tips on where to shop and eat, a couple of the most interesting entries includes mention of an Ironmonger (a source for nails, wires, steel material) along with a list of all the current versus previous street names as known under the communist regime.

In November 2000, the first IWAP Yellow Pages, a comprehensive guide to product and services in Prague, was made available to members.

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Addition to The Last Issue

We apologize for omitting, in last month's article, the important information that Karin Pierrová-Menglerová founded the Evening Group.

Bakeshop Praha is Expanding - Get Your Free Cookie!

If, like me, you are a regular visitor to the Prague Bakeshop for their delicious bread, cakes and biscuits, there is good news in store(pardon the pun!). They have taken over the cornershop next door and are expanding not just their premises but also their entire range of foods. In addition to their baked goods they will have ready prepared meals for you simply to take home and serve.

We can look forward to homemade soups - a choice of 2 daily, roasted vegetable casseroles, meat pies, baked chickens (especially imported from Germany) and more.For those Brits like me who continually yearn for the M&S food department this will be a real bonus.

The opening date is expected to be 20th November, but is dependent upon building works so keep an eye on the corner shop. Prague Bakeshop, Kozí 1, Prague 1 (2231 6823).

During December, the Bakeshop will give all IWAP members a free cookie or brownie (depending on availability) with their order. Just take along this magazine or your IWAP membership/name badge.

Laurie Barnes: Building Bridges And Forging Friendships

Since its inception, one of the IWCP/IWAP's most important functions and activities has been a focus on charitable work with and for Czech non-profit organizations. The IWAP has a very active Charity Group (originally called the HELP Group and later Outreach) which identifies worthy causes, coordinates volunteer activities and helps to plans some of the Association's fundraising. According to organization financial records, since its inception over 11.1 million Kc have been given to various charities. The volunteer hours that these efforts represent are beyond calculation.

CHARITY

There have been countless opportunities to do hands-on work, as well as behind-the-scenes support. Because the concept of charity was non-existent under communism, with change came an awareness of a need to do more to help the disadvantaged. So it is rather significant to note that the number of charities in the Czech Republic has grown exponentially over these past ten years, thus presenting the Charity Group with great challenges as they receive many more requests than we can possibly meet. Our only wish is that we could do more.

The group, therefore, has the critical function of assessing needs and recommending to the IWAP Board which charities would most benefit from the Association's financial support. There is a real desire to help the disadvantaged and to show by example what people can do to help those who are marginalized by society and to foster awareness of a variety of needs. There are so many members of the organization and especially those who have served as Charity Co-ordinators, who have invested countless hours and given tirelessly to these efforts.

Charities which have benefited tremendously by the involvement of the IWAP include the Prague Music School (Hudebni škola hlavního mìsta Prahy) in Prague 3 which for the past two years, has been the site of the annual IWAP Charity Fair and has traditionally included a musical concert by the students. The IWAP has also provided financial assistance to the school for the annual production of a CD. Most importantly it provides the opportunity for various charities to market and sell the crafts and products made by those who benefit from their efforts.

Another key charity, which has benefited from IWAP involvement nearly from the beginning, has been the work with the Home of Mother Teresa. IWCP first began supporting the home in November 1991 and has provided not only financial support but has met such practical needs as the purchase of feeding trays, weekly volunteer assistance, and helping with monthly shopping for the soup kitchen which helps to feed the homeless.

One of the first partnerships with local Czech charities was forged with the Olga Havlova Foundation – one of the first and most successful non-profit organizations in the Czech Republic, founded by the former First Lady whose name the foundation bears. The cooperative efforts and charitable support provided over the years have been significant. Mrs. Havlova was also asked early on to serve as Honorary Chairman of the IWCP.

In November 1999 official recognition was given to the IWAP by President Vaclav Havel for the outstanding efforts of the organization to not only promote fellowship amongst women in the international community but to also seek out and assist those in need through helping charitable organizations in the Czech Republic. IWAP's efforts were recognized as "truly admirable."

Other early efforts include specific monies given for historical research through Charles University, enlarging patronage through founding initiatives for the *Friends of the Opera* through the Statni Opera, support for the Prague Children's Choir through a fundraising concert for operating expenses of this formerly state-supported choir, as well as financial assistance to the Mayor's Office for company sponsorship for the improvement of city playgrounds, support of the Sue Ryder Foundation, and a unique effort, providing books do-

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nated by Russian Embassy to children's homes.

Starting in 1999 the annual Charity Ball has become not only one of the major social events of the year but also a key opportunity to raise funds for very specific worthy causes throughout the Czech Republic. Over 1.6 million Kè has been raised for causes such as Motol Hospital and the Olga Havlova Foundation.

There have been various methods used to raise additional charitable funds including the very successful endeavor which involves encouraging members at each Hospitality Meeting, to donate their hellars, all of which adds up and contributes significantly to the total charitable cause. Other unique efforts include a special "plant-a-tree" project as well as the sale of note cards, a recipe book and the production and sale of the professional quality IWAP Calendar, with contribution of photographs by members of the organization.

The IWAP works very closely with the Diplomatic Ladies Association (DLA) which currently organizes the hugely successful annual bazaar, another major fundraising event of the year, from which many charities have substantially benefited.

The original vision and initiative for such an event was provided by Lidia de La Marte who, along with help from those in the Italian community including Ann Camprioglio and Anne Brenke, provided essential leadership in those early days.

In 1993, Olga Havlova (first wife of President Vaclav Havel) opened the bazaar and in her opening remarks, club president Beatrijs Stikkers-Muller, commented, "what strikes me about the bazaar is the spirit of being united by working together. Bonds have been created within nationalities and many new friendships have been made. This alone would have been enough to make this event worthwhile. But the purpose behind the event is the reason for the felt unity – to assist charities in the Czech Republic."

The event has taken on a variety of names over the years and while it was originally known as the International Women's Christmas Bazaar, that was later changed to Winter Bazaar, and later still to Charity Bazaar. Following the legal changes in 1997, it became known as Benefit Day. It is interesting to note that some of the legal issues stemmed from basic questions of meaning in terms of what the word charity implies in Czech culture and organization.

It should be noted that the event has been honored with the participation of two other key individuals when in 1999 Mrs. Livia Klausova (wife of the former Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus) and later, in 1997, Dagmar Havlova (second wife of the President) opened the event.

Bazaar funds have been used to support such worthwhile charities as Lichetenstein Academy, IGNIS, Nadeje, Sue Ryder Hospice, Ethnographic Museum, National Museum Library, Conservatory for the Blind, Childline, Home at Poustevna, the Children's Centre in Topolany as well as donating to the needs of children with disabilities through the work of Vyboru Dobré Vùle but probably one of the most significant contributions was the 1.1 million Kc raised for flood victims in Moravia.

In 1995 one of the recipients of the monies raised through the charity bazaar was the Guide Dog Service for the Blind and so it was that IWAP member and Charity Coordinator, Liz Denny, took on additional very practical duties as she had the privilege of housing and taking care of a guide dog puppy named MIKI.

Tenth Anniversary History:

This article is the last of the three-part series on IWAP History. The previous sections were issued in October and November.
Thank you, Laurie Barnes, for drawing together this wonderful archival document.

Note: If you have more information about the beginnings of our organization, please contact the office.

INTEREST GROUPS

One of the first things that was in evidence in the early workings of the IWCP was the formation of special interest groups. Originally there were 38 groups which, interestingly enough, is about the same number as today. Interests ranged from physical and game-playing clubs, to literary and language endeavors, as well as artistic lessons and appreciation allowing every member of IWCP/

Continued next page

From the previous page

IWAP to participate in group activities which suit her style and interest.

According to Jaroslava Kramulová , one of the most helpful early groups was the weekly language classes which were organized by Canadian Tudy McLaine for Czech members who wanted to learn English. The classes were well organized and very practical, with participants grouped according to prior ability.

Other specific groups have included aerobics, antiques, ballet group, book club, bridge, calligraphy, chamber music, Czech glass, conversation groups, computer, cooking, dressmaking, Czech film club, ecology, folk dancing, gardening, golf, hiking, ikebana, painting, ping-pong, pottery, prayer, riding, singing, sewing, tennis, and yoga, among others.

With women from close to 50 different countries over the years it is no wonder that the development of specific nationality groups has also been a key component of the special interest groups. In recent years, the Spanish-speaking group has been very active and has offered one of the most varied of cultural programs. Other special cultural events organized by different groups include Brazilian dance, a Japanese tea ceremony, Indonesian children's choir, Czech literature studies and the wonderful tours and visits to many historical sites around Prague including Strahov Library, Brevnov Monastary, Barrandov Studios, and Vysehrad.

While originally the group was composed of many from the diplomatic community and upper management, it is also interesting to note that sometime around 1997 with the influx of the second wave of middle management, demographics began to change with more families with younger children. It was about that time, playgroups came into being, as a way to meet the needs of these young families. Women also began coming to Hospitality Meetings with strollers and kids in tow. Currently there are at least eight different playgroups with another unique support group for parents of teenagers just forming.

SOCIAL EVENTS

Recognizing the need for special social events where members can get to know one another on a more personal basis, IWAP has organized a number of special activities during the year which have included balls (the first one was held in May 1994), dinner dances, luncheons, international food fairs, summer picnics, boat tours, annual Christmas parties, visits to various embassies, and health lectures. One of the first social events mentioned in a 1992 newsletter was a bowling party at the Forum Hotel.

MEETINGS

Original monthly meetings were both for the purposes of hospitality and to offer special presentations on various subjects of interest. Early on, these meetings were often held at the Diplomatic Club with the first speaker being the Vice-Rector of the Agricultural Department of Charles University on February 26, 1991 – the title of his speech was *One Must be an Optimist, if he is to be a Czech.*
Over the years, the general meetings have been designed to allow opportunities to provide special programs of specific interest to the membership and have included presentations by Dr. Lucie Kovakalová, wife of the mayor of Prague, Mr. Kondr, Mayor of Prague, the Honorable Jennone Walker, US Ambassador to the Czech Republic, Na Hamolce Hospital on various health issues related to pollution, Dr. Dina Sturbová, a Czech woman mountaineer who climbed Mt. Everest, Alan Levy of the Prague Post, and Dr. Miroslav Pospišil from the Jan Hus Foundation out of Brno.

We have also had presentations by William Lobkowicz, who as a result of his family ancestry and inheritance, following the 1989 Velvet Revolution, took over maintenance and restoration of a dozen Czech castles and palaces in the Czech Republic and heads the American Friends for the Preservation of Czech Culture. A very interesting presentations was made by Mrs. Livia Klausová, wife of Finance Minister Klaus who spoke at the November 29, 1991 monthly meeting on *Privatization in Czechoslovakia.*

Various opportunities to cultivate awareness of understanding and appreciation of Czech culture have occurred over the years, with one of the more significant efforts coming in the form of the ever popular and enriching Czech Study series, organized by Martin Saebek Rovers. Other series, which have fostered social and intellectual enrichment, include a special interest group dealing with issues of our times, a ballet bunch and an opera series, as well as the regular Czech and Slovak literature groups. There is no doubt that many have developed new friendships, taken part in fascinating interest groups and been inspired by a string of dynamic guest speakers.

THE FUTURE

As we look back in brief over the past decade of the existence of IWCP/IWAP – a decade full of challenge, change and tremendous cooperative accomplishments, we also look forward to the future, full of opportunities to forge new friendships, and build new bridges in this beautiful city of Prague. ■