

LYDIA ROSNO

Prague Queen 2018 | Nebraska Czech-Slovak 2018-2019

PRAGUE 2018

The first words I learned in another language were Spánem Bohem, God be with you. These words were often said by my late grandfather, Adolph Nemec, and my grandmother, Gladys Nemec, before we would part ways after a family gathering. I have held onto these words throughout my whole life. These words mean more than just a way to say goodbye, but rather lead me to the image of myself in a kroj.

After the passing of my grandfather, I realized that was his final Spanem Bohem. Growing up in a family who loved their culture and did everything to promote it, I never had a true understanding of the heritage. I knew what kolache were and what a kroj looked like, yet I did not appreciate the beauty and importance behind them. When I was in seventh grade my Social Studies teacher presented us with an assignment to research our family's ancestry, and create a trifold to present at the cultural fair. My mother, who was once a chapter queen, dove right into the project with me. The night of the cultural fair I excitedly dressed up in my mother's kroj, and unwrapped a plate of kolache my grandmother had made in front of my trifold. Although I represented my family's culture that night I did not understand the importance of preserving my Czech heritage or continuing the research of my family's heritage. My seventh grade self was not aware of the beauty in the kroj that I wore, my grandmother's kolache, nor the research I found on my family and the Czech Republic.

Once my grandfather passed away, my sophomore year in high school, I began to appreciate the lengths he went through to preserve my family's culture. As time went by I began to long for just one last conversation with my grandfather. The older I got, the more I understood that I took my time with him for granted. I realized I would never get to hear his stories first hand anymore, nor listen to him sing the Czech songs he so dearly loved. I began to grow an ambition to live out my life, in his eyes. As I began to go to more festivals and observe the love the older generation has for the Czech heritage, I realized that I could live out my heritage in my grandfather's honor. I grew fond of the festivals, and set a goal to learn as much as I could about my heritage.

I jumped towards the opportunity to become a cultural ambassador to keep the culture alive, like my grandparents. When I put my kroj on I am not only representing Czech culture, but also my grandfather. I hope to make an impact on others and lead them to learning more about their heritage. The kroj allows me to be a cultural ambassador, and represent the heritage I love. I wish that my grandfather could see me now. Spánem Bohem dědeček, God be with you, grandpa.



NEBRASKA 2018 - 2019

