

NSW SLOVENIAN COMMUNITY AWARDS YEAR 2016

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENTS AWARD 2015

MARIA AND MIRKO RITLOP



Mirko Ritlop se je rodil v Črenšovcih staršema Ivanu in Tereziji, r. Hans, kot deseti otrok v družini. Leta 1953 se je poročil v Razkrižju z Marijo Rebrica, ki je doma iz Srednje Bistrice.

Mirko in Marička sta maja 1957 z dvema malima hčerka-ma Marijo in Ivanko pobegnila preko meje v Prekmurju v Avstrijo in po krajšem bivanju v zaporu dobila dovoljenje za delo v Avstriji. Dve leti kasneje so odšli v Avstralijo, kjer so po krajšem bivanju v campu Bonegilla našli stike s prijatelji, družino Kolenko, pri katerih so našli zavetje .

Mirko je kmalu našel zaposlitev v opekarni med tednom in na gradbiščih za konec tedna. Tudi Marija hitro našla zaposlitev v tovarni in prej kot v enem letu sta kupila prvi dom v Newtownu. Hišo sta napolnila s stanovalci in jo tako lažje

odplačevala. Leta 1961 se jima je rodil tretji otrok, sin Mirko Michael. V tem času sta na njenem prvem slovenskem plesu v Paddingtonu našla stike s slovensko skupnostjo.

After having escaped their homeland with two young daughters in 1957 travelling via Austria to Australia Mirko and Marija found work quickly and bought their first home within a year. It was not long before their son was born.

They first became involved with other Slovenians at a Slovenian dance in Paddington. The family had been involved with the Slovenian Association Sydney for about 10 years when there was talk of a new club 'Triglav'. Both Mirko and Marija worked tirelessly to raise money to help buy a block of land to build the new club on. Whilst she in Slovenia in 1972, the Office for Slovenians Abroad invited Maria to represent Triglav at the yearly Migrants Picnic. Soon after the land was bought and eventually the building built. In the years before the opening of the new building the Ritlop family graciously hosted many visiting Slovenian dignitaries in their own home. When the slovenian ensemble 'Slak' came to Sydney Maria even prepared sumptuous meals for up to 40 people. All this whilst working fulltime. As founding members they continued to be fully active till Mirko passed away in 1998 even though an unfortunate work injury had already prevented Maria from physically helping out for a while.

Both Mirko and Maria were also very active at St Raphael's Mission Merrylands and had assisted with raising money for the building of the church by organising dances regularly. Maria still attends church every week. They encouraged their children to attend Slovenian School on Saturday afternoons and performances at concerts. Maria is still a lifetime member and attends Triglav regularly enjoying the activities provided by the club. She is a well respected and liked member of Triglav and their support has been really appreciated.

NSW SLOVENIAN COMMUNITY AWARDS YEAR 2016

OUTSTANDING SENIOR CITIZENS 2015

TONE AND ANA KONDA



Tone Konda, doma iz Gornje Lokvice v Beli Krajini je bil že kot mladoletnik leta 1943 mobiliziran v partizane, v slavno 14. divizijo, kjer je ostal do konca vojne. V vojni je bil trikrat odlikovan za hrabrost in za zasluge za narod in po vojni je še nadalje ostal v vojski. Zaradi kritičnega odnosa do partijskega vodstva je bil v času Informbiroja leta 1949 obtožen veleizdaje, odvzeto mu je bilo državljanstvo in odlikovanja in obsojen je bil na zapor v zloglasnem političnem zaporu Goli otok.

Po 4 in pol letih zapora je bil izpuščen in kmalu zatem se je seznanil z Ano, dekletom, ki mu je kasneje postala življenjska družica. Ker so mu oblasti ponovno začele delati težave in mu niso hoteli dati potnega lista, je pobegnil v Avstrijo in potem v Avstralijo.

Po zadnjih političnih spremembah v domovini je bila obsodba Toneta Konda razveljavljena in izbrisana in povrnjene so mu bile vse odvzete pravice in priznanja.

Tone arrived in Australia in January 1957. His brother Jože followed him with his own fiancé Jelka and also Tone's girlfriend Ana; they arrived on Christmas Day 1957 and Tone and Ana got married three weeks later. They soon got in touch with the Slovenian community at places where holy Mass was celebrated in the Slovenian language. They regularly attended Mass and helped at church functions, cooking, baking, serving etc.

As the family grew, the boys helped at the church as altar boys. As two of the boys had started playing instruments, they were often performing together with the boys from Stariha family, and very early on formed a band called "The Ministrants" (The Altar Boys). Tone and Ana had to work in shifts, so one of them was always at home with the four children. That didn't stop them joining the group of volunteers, helping at the church community, especially after the Slovenians had bought an old church at Merrylands. It took a lot of volunteer work to complete the repairs, then came the cleaning, cooking and serving at functions to raise more funds.

Later whilst the new church at St Raphaels Slovenian Mission, Merrylands was being built, there was still more work. Alongside this the Slovenian language school (Slomsek School) started, so the children had to be brought to Merrylands, be fed, looked after and entertained, so mothers were cooking and baking and men doing the heavy work. Ana was a good cook and she baked a lot and entertained visitors, sometimes for months at the time. With her friend Tončka Stariha they performed at concerts, short comic sketches they wrote themselves. Even as they were getting older, they still stayed well involved in the community even doing light cleaning serving coffee and tea, reading scripts at mass.

Sadly Ana had a stroke and on 8.08.2014 she passed away. Tone is still doing his part albeit without the best life partner he could have imagined. Ana is sadly and sincerely missed by her husband, her family and by all of us.

NSW SLOVENIAN COMMUNITY AWARDS YEAR 2016

OUTSTANDING ACHIEVER OF SLOVENIAN BACKGROUND IN AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY

HILDA ŠIREC



Hilda was born to migrant Slovenian parents Joža and Irena Širec. Hilda has three other siblings and her family comes from a strong and proud Slovenian culture which exists to this day. She treasures her Slovenian roots and culture and she often visits her parents' home country and keeps in touch with relatives in Slovenia, in particular those in Maribor and Ptujška Gora Stajerska. Hilda's supportive partner Matthew has become part of the family and embraces her Slovenian heritage. Hilda has connections here at Triglav Club as during the time her father was the club's Caretaker Manager, she remembers living near where the statue of Ivan Cankar used to be. Also a young girl, she attended Slovenian school and performed in various Slovenian function and celebrations. For Hilda, Triglav and the Slovenian community here is like being at home.

Hilda is a strong believer in aspiring for high achievement in Australia. She has taken the advice from her parents that "they came to Australia and worked hard so that we children have it easier to achieve great things"

From that advice also comes Hilda's strong community focus where she has been a Federal Agent in the Australian Federal Police (AFP) for close to 15 years. Her career commenced in Canberra working in Criminal Investigations where she obtained her Detective Designation and was awarded Investigator of the Year in 2010. During her time in Canberra, she was also a qualified Bomb Technician.

In 2012, Hilda deployed to Afghanistan where she worked closely with European Union Police (EU-POL) to help train and build capacity within the Afghan National Police. Then in 2014, Hilda was part of the initial response to the Ukraine for the crashed Malaysian Flight MH-17 which claimed the lives of 298 people, including 38 Australians. Hilda worked with multiple international agencies to lead, plan and develop the search and investigation response whilst an active war was ongoing in the crash site.

Hilda has received medals and awards for her contributions and has represented the AFP in Australia and internationally to train and participate on various courses.

Currently, Hilda is one of the investigation managers in the Sydney Joint Counter Terrorism Team which is responsible for responding to, preventing, disrupting and investigating terrorism offences. She also holds a Bachelor of Science degree and is currently completing a Masters in Leadership and Management to complement her career.

Although Hilda is busy with her career, she and her partner Matthew ensure family comes first and are always looked after. Hilda will always aspire to do the best she can and is proud to acknowledge that her heritage as Slovenian makes her the successful and motivated person she is today.

NSW SLOVENIAN COMMUNITY AWARDS YEAR 2016

OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS IN EDUCATION 2015

DANICA GRŽELJ



Danica je bila rojena kot prvi otrok v avstralski /slovenski družini Jerice in Ginota Grželj. Njeni starši so prišli v Avstralijo iz slovenske pokrajine Primorska in nikoli niso pozabili domovine.

Zgodaj so se vključili v slovensko skupnost, posebno v Slovenskem Misijonu sv. Rafaela Merrylands, kjer je Danica obiskovala Sobotno Slomškovo šolo.

Šola je še utrdila Danicino znanje slovenskega jezika, katerega se je naučila že v domači hiši. V vseh letih osnovne šole pa se je naučila tudi čitati, pisati in tudi peti v slovenskem jeziku. Svojo izobrazbo je nadaljevala tudi v Sobotni srednji šoli v Bankstown kjer je tudi diplomirala iz slovenščine

Danica's love of the Slovenian language blossomed during childhood as both her parents, Gino and Jerica Grzelj spoke to her only in Slovenian. Her Slovenian flourished as she attended Slovenian school at St Raphael's Slovenian Mission every Saturday during her primary school years and was involved in all the performances for special occasions.

Danica continued to nurture the Slovenian language by attending the Saturday School of Community Languages at Bankstown and successfully completed Slovenian to HSC level in 1984. As Danica began her teaching degree, she gave up her Saturday afternoons to teach where she had first learnt at St Raphaels and taught Slovenian there for seven years to primary school children of Slovenian background. In the early 90's she also travelled to Slovenia to improve her language skills and attended a Summer School for the Slovenian language.

She also taught Slovenian at the Saturday School of Community Languages, Bankstown for many years where she tried to instil a love of the language into her students and was very proud of their achievements. Eventually, the school was moved to Parramatta and Danica continued to teach there. Danica also returned to teach at St Raphael's Slovenian Mission Merrylands in the early 2000s.

To Danica, teaching the Slovenian language was about opening the mind, touching the heart and inspiring a love of the Slovenian language, its culture and its people. Danica is also a member of Southern Stars Choir, who sing at monthly masses, celebrations at the church and the slovenian organizations for events such as Anzac Day and Independence day and they have even performed at NSW Parliament house.

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OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS IN EDUCATION 2015

DANICA ŠAJN



Danica Šajn izhaja iz družine, ki ima dolgoletno in močno tradicijo delovanja v slovenski skupnosti v Sydneyu. Njeni starši, Sofija in Danilo Šajn so bili med ustanovitelji kluba Triglav in podeljeno jim je bilo dosmrtno članstvo v klubu.

Vsa družina je bila že od zgodnjih let aktivna v slovenski skupnosti, najprej v Misijonu sv. Rafaela Merrylands, kjer je Danicin oče - gradbenik veliko pomagal pri gradnji cerkve, kasneje pa tudi v klubu Triglav, kjer sta Danica in njen brat Joško redno nastopala v proslavah, otroških igricah in drugih kulturnih in družabnih priložnostih, saj so starši poskrbeli, da sta oba imela dobro osnovo slovenščine.

Danica attended Slovenian language classes at Triglav in the 1970s, and then at Canley Vale Public School. After the establishment of the Saturday School of Community Languages in 1979, Danica began attending classes which were held on a Saturday, completing Slovenian to a HSC level.

She graduated as a science teacher in 1987 and began her formal teaching career in 1988. She also began teaching Slovenian at the NSW Department of Education - Saturday School and taught Slovenian there for 4 years. Danica also helped to restart Slomskova Sola, Merrylands in the 1990s where she was involved for another 4 years with the teaching of Slovenian and preparing the children for cultural events. In addition Danica was also chosen to twice attend the Slovenian Teachers' Summer School, organised by the Slovenian Department of Education. In 1986 Danica had also attended the Students' Slovenian Language Summer School in Kranj. In 1997, Danica taught English in Ljubljana to Slovenian adults for 3 months, at the well known Berlitz Institute.

Danica Šajn is a strong believer in both education and lifelong learning, and strongly believes that education is the future of Australia. She lives this belief in her own life, as well as her professional life, and has attained a Bachelor of Applied Science in Environmental Biology, a Graduate Diploma in Secondary Education and in Business Administration. She has also completed a Masters degree in Environmental Law and a Certificate 4 qualification in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages from Cambridge University. Having a beautiful voice herself, Danica was one of the original founders of the choir "Southern Stars" in 1999.

Two years ago she opened her own tutoring business specialising in remedial Maths and English for children and students from Kindergarten to Year 12. We wish her well in her educational business endeavours and hope and trust she continues to be involved in the Sydney Slovenian Community for many years to come.

NSW SLOVENIAN COMMUNITY AWARDS YEAR 2016

OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS IN PROMOTING SLOVENIAN CULTURE 2015

WALTER ŠUBER



Valter Šuber je bil rojen v Kopru, Slovenija, v družini Albina in Alde Šuber. Pri starosti 3 let se je družina preselila v Avstralijo. Valter je z materjo ostal v Campu Bonnagilla, medtem, ko je bil oče poslan na delo v železarni v Port Kembla. Tri mesece kasneje je oče našel stanovanje v Cringilli in družina je dobila svoj prvi dom v Avstraliji.

Pet let kasneje se je družina vrnila v Slovenijo, vendar so se po šestih mesecih odločili, da se ponovno vrnejo v Avstralijo, tokrat za stalno. Valter je začel osnovno šolo v Coniston Primary in odločili so se, da spremene ime v obliko, bolj prikladno za sošolce in avstralsko življenje, Walter Šuber. Sprememba je bila samo zunanja, Walterjeva zavest in korenine so bile in ostale trdne v Sloveniji, v slovenski kulturi in tradicijah.

The Šuber's were one of the most active members of the growing Slovenian community in Wollongong, with Walter contributing much of his time and effort to his family and his community. After his family purchased a poultry farm in Thirlmere, Walter continued his schooling in Picton and eventually went on to become a Metallurgist trainee at BHP Steelwork. His career only flourished from there, with jobs spanning across quality assurance, the export department and customer service. 3 years after working in Research and Technology at John Lysaght, Walter moved to Sydney in 1985 to take on a role as a Technical Representative.

Even whilst heavily focused on his flourishing career, he never lost sight of his family or community, and continued his involvement even when in Sydney. Triglav club and St Raphael Slovenian Mission in Merrylands were thriving then, and Walter enthusiastically involved himself with all that was happening. He joined the Slovenian folkloric dance troop headed by Mr Ivan Koželj, where he met a vivacious young Slovenian, Kristine Berginc. The two young dance partners eventually married in 1989 and have three beautiful children, Daniel, Stephanie and Andrew. Walter's commitment to his involvement in the community led him to join the advisory board at Triglav, at the time of the Panthers group acquisition of the club.

The "Slovenian of the Year Award" was actually Walter's idea to begin with, the aim was to recognise and celebrate the accomplishments and efforts of Slovenian/Australians, young and old, who had pride in their achievements and community spirit. Walter invested his own time and efforts to draw on his Slovenian network, garnering interest across the clubs of NSW and the ACT, as well the St Raphael's Slovenian Mission Merrylands. Walter had worked tirelessly on the awards for 7 years, and it is due to his perseverance and drive that we are all sitting here together today.

He took a small period of time off to focus on his increased work commitments, however returned to the Advisory Board when Mounties lent their support and acquired the club from Panthers. Walter continues to be a passionate and committed member of our Slovenian community, and we count ourselves lucky to have his support. This award is definitely well deserved!

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OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEER 2015

MARIA RUDOLF



Marija Rudolf je bila rojena v Novem Mestu v Sloveniji. Kot kvalificirana kuharica je več let delala kot šef menze v domačem mestu. V tem času se je spoznala z Ivanom Rudolfom, ki se je odpravljajal, da bo odšel v Avstralijo. Ostala sta v pismenih stikih in leta 1973 je odšla za njim in leto kasneje sta se šla poročiti v Slovenijo.

Po povratku v Avstralijo sta si ustvarila dom v mestecu Wollongong. Že mesec dni po prihodu se je zaposlila kot kuharica v Port Kembla bolnici in na tem delu je ostala 30 let- do upokojitve. V tem času je poleg zaposlitve skrbela za družino- moža in dva otroka- hčerko Rebeko in sina Roberta, hkrati je bila tudi največja pomoč in podpora možu Ivanu, ki je bil in je še sedaj eden najbolj delavnih članov Slovenske skupnosti v Wollongongu in velik del teh let tudi predsednik Slovenskega kluba Planica Wollongong.

Največkrat je bilo odvisno od nje, da so pogosti ugledni obiskovalci bili primerno sprejeti in pogoščeni, pa naj so to bili politični zastopniki iz domovine ali pa nastopajoče glasbene in kulturne skupine. Enako je tudi redno skrbela za slovenske duhovnike, ki so prihajali iz Merryandsa ali drugod opravljat sveto mašo.

Maria was from the start deeply involved in the Slovenian Community in the Illawarra area, alongside her husband Ivan. She made sure, that their children learnt to speak Slovenian and she used to transport them to Slovenian language classes in Sydney every weekend.

With the other members of her family Maria has been for the past 40 years strongly involved in many community events, including participation in Slovenian cultural parades, literary and art events, Slovenian radio and concerts as well as assisting with operational duties both at the Slovenia Club Planica and Catholic Church in Figtree. Maria regularly travels back to Slovenia and makes time to visit organizations which support Slovenians abroad such as Slovenska Izselska Matica (Office for Slovenians Abroad).

Prior to retiring in 2004 Maria worked fulltime as a chef-cook at a local Hospital. While maintaining a busy household, she always made herself available for volunteering in the local community. Maria regularly visits the elderly and needy and has in the past worked with organizations that shelter and feed the homeless in the Illawarra (soup kitchen in Warrawong)

She is deserving of the recognition for outstanding volunteering work.