

We won't forget the personalities of the Wittmann family anymore - General Schneidarek, Ignác Wittmann, Vojtech Wittmann and Katharine Wittmann.

General Joseph George Schneidarek, Ignatz Wittmann, Adalbert Wittmann
and Katharine Wittmann.

In 2009, a commemorative tablet was revealed honouring the honourable citizen of the town of Zvolen, General Schneidarek. His daughter Maria, a catholic, was married to Vojtech Wittmann. On this occasion, important personalities, including those from our town, came to pay homage to the almost forgotten General Schneidarek and his granddaughter Katharine Wittmann. Mr. Vladimír Maňka, member of the European Parliament and former mayor of the town, now the district governor, concluded his sincerely meant and beautiful words by saying: "we are very glad to have you here, Mrs. Wittmann,," Today, I can only express my sorrow by saying „unfortunately, Katharine Wittmann is not among us anymore,," Almost forgotten were also the founder of the dairy and „bryndza“ production plant in Zvolen, Ignac Wittmann and his son Vojtech, who managed to make their factory a well-known company in Central Europe and the largest plant producing bryndza and cheese in the pre-war Czechoslovakia. These facts were completely omitted in the last monograph of the town of Zvolen of 1993, as well as in other documents about the town and the state after the so-called „Victorious February of 1948“.

In 1936, however, the then chronicler, not bound by anybody, wrote about the death of Ignac Wittmann into the chronicle of our town: „...the founder of a cheese and bryndza production company, so well known today, I. Wittmann and his son. With his death, the town has lost one of its prominent citizens...“

These days, we would celebrate the 120th anniversary of the company and we would speak about the excellent work of the

predecessors of Katharine Wittmann. As I already hinted, the destiny and an insidious illness changed everything. Katharine Wittmann is not among us anymore since the end of March this year (she would be 73 in this year). When thinking about her predecessors, she often asked herself a question: „...What have I done and achieved, compared to them?“. I can say responsibly that her predecessors would be proud of her. In these days, I am receiving letters from her friends and acquaintances, all of them respectable people. Each from them ranked her among those few people who leave an unforgettable positive impression and this impression will stay in them forever. Schneidarek and Wittmann are both recorded in the town's chronicle and it does not matter whether or not Katharine will be there also. Everybody who knew her more closely knows that we have lost a prominent personality. We can only remember her personal charm, decent behaviour, unceasing activeness and dynamism and personal strength to face challenges, to act honestly and speak openly.

She grew up on a different continent, even though her family had not planned it. She as well as her brother had to work while studying. The family did not take anything from their former home. Modesty was something, which Katharine preserved for the rest of her life. The last 20 years, during which she stayed in Slovakia, were not easy either but she managed to do what she planned to. She never cared about backbiters and I will neither do. I have been studying archives for several years and they will speak for themselves. Just recently, I offered to a newspaper a part of my



findings, a document about the patriotism of Vojtech Wittmann. In an interview about him, Mrs. Katharine described him as follows: „Father was a lover of Slovakian and Czech art, and also that of Vienna. It is visible when looking at the remains of his collections and the names of the authors, when looking at the embroidery from Ocova (village located close to Zvolen) made for President Benes, at the labels of almost all cheeses he made, including those bearing the name Jánošík (legendary Slovakian outlaw) or Pustý hrad (old castle in Zvolen). I grew up in a different world and my relationship to Slovaks or their relationship to me are not important. Through my father and his efforts, these things are very close to me. She concluded by saying (in English) "the link remains unbroken.“

On behalf of all her friends, acquaintances, employees and, of course, members of family, we pay homage to this Lady, a businesswoman, mother and grandmother 'omama' in one person and promise not to forget her.

Mrs. Katharine did not wish for death announcements. Journalists, who did not care much about her when she was alive, however, try to publish this sad news. I had to make up my mind how to react. I have to say even if she did not wish for it, it does mean that she did not regard highly her friends; the thing is, she never longed for dubitable fame in the press, media blockbusters or ceremonies around her person.

The 120th anniversary of the company is the right moment to say, without breaching this wish of hers, that we will not forget the last of the Wittmanns in Zvolen.

Štefan Hvojník, April 13., 2011

In Czechoslovakia: J. J. Schneidarek = J. J. Šnejárek,
Katharine Wittmann = Katarína Wittmannová
Both of them had their names changed abroad.



