

► REFLECTIONS

WE JUST LEARNED... that one of our own SNF Board Members, Ray Vukas of Schererville, Indiana, was awarded the State of Indiana's highest honor in 1979 by then-Governor Otis Bowen. Ray was named Sagamore of the Wabash when he was an Indiana State Trooper. The decision to appoint a Sagamore belongs solely to the governor and is given to those who render distinguished service to Indiana citizens. Among those who have received Sagamores are astronauts, presidents, ambassadors, artists, musicians - citizens who have contributed greatly to Hoosier heritage. Ray shares this honor with impressive company, such as David Letterman. Having known Ray much longer than he has had this award, we think it's important to note we learned of it only by accident, which says a lot about his unassuming character.



INTERNATIONAL WRITER – Thanks to our Home Office buddy Milos Rastovic,

the SNF got publicity in Serbia through a reprint of Milos' article on Novak Djokovic's honorary membership. "The article about Novak Djokovic and the SNF was published in the daily Politika," said Milos. The reprint included the classic photo of Milos with Novak, presenting the plaque. It was also picked up by RTS (or PTC in Cyrillic). Great work, Milos!

GREAT STATS – Also on Novak, one of our Pittsburgh contacts, George Topich, sent us a magazine clipping on the tennis star. We don't know the name of the mag, but under Men's Tennis it simply said Nole had the best season of any male player in 2015 and they cited the stats to back it up: 16,585 points earned (doubling Andy Murray's 8,945); 82-6 record for the full season (.932 winning percentage), and a whopping 11 titles won, seven of which were earned against #2 and #3 players, Murray and Roger Federer. He reached the finals in 15 out of 16 tournaments, and earned \$21 Million...an ATP record.

TRAVEL IDEAS - According to scribe Marija Vukcevic in Lewiston, New York, a recent issue of Town and Country Travel lists "100 Hotels That Will Change Your Life" on page 66. "Lo and behold, among all those elegant resorts with price tags to match is Aman Sveti Stefan, Montenegro. They say it isn't the beach that's the main attraction but staying in the 15th century village which has been "masterfully restored." Hold onto your wallet, rooms start at \$826.

HAPPY NEW YEAR – Young Stana Topich of Pittsburgh hosted a unique New Year's Eve Party celebrating the turning of the calendar page. Ringing in the new year was done with her invited guests from Shadeland Summer Camp. In attendance were campers from Steelton, PA Lackawanna, NY and closer to home her contemporaries from Monroeville and Pittsburgh. Stana found a way to make the cold January night seem warmer with friends and thoughts of summers past and future.

DON'T MISS IT – Be sure to read the story "This Brickie says 'Srečna Nova Godina'" on page 5, written by Steve Hanlon, who has been covering high school sports for years for the Northwest Indiana Times. He writes about Aleks Novakovich who plays basketball at Hobart High School, goes to St. Sava and belongs to the SNF. His father Zeljko said, "Aleks is a member of the Serb National Federation, or what some call the 'Serbian Olympics.' He's met a lot of former players and learned from them. It's a language, a culture. It's really good to meet other kids from around the country."

KEEP IN TOUCH....
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THOUGHTFUL MEMORIAL

A little over a year since the passing of American airman Curtis Bud Diles, Jr., Aleksandra Rebich shared pictures of his gravestone, decorated at Christmas-time and added these notes:

Although I'd rather have all of the Hal-yard Mission's "Forgotten 500" with us still, there is consolation in the fact that their contributions to history remain unforgotten in the legendary true life story of General Draza Mihailovich, his Chetniks, the Serbian people loyal to them, and the American and Allied airmen whom they saved from the Nazi enemy during the dark days of World War Two.

Staff Sgt. Curtis "Bud" Diles, Jr. of the USAF has a beautiful family that continues to nurture this WWII veteran's remarkable legacy, and the marker on his gravesite will remain a constant reminder of the fact that he never forgot his debt of gratitude.

The inscription on the Diles gravesite marker reads:



CURTIS DILES Jr.
Staff Sgt US Army Air Forces
WWII-Purple Heart
Jul 15 1925 - Sep 10 2015
ONE OF THE FORGOTTEN 500
RESCUED BY SERBIAN CHETNIKS

AMЕРИКАНСКИ СРБОБРАН



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