

IN THE SPIRIT OF NIKOLA TESLA – SERBS IN AMERICA

Ladies and gentlemen,

Last year during the president's speech to students in Washington D.C. about America, Nikola Tesla was mentioned as having contributed a great deal to his adopted country. Thereby, officially recognizing the great American scientist of Serbian origin Nikola Tesla, for his many contribution towards the industrial and scientific development and success of the United States.

Serbian people from the Balkans have been immigrating to America for over two hundred years. Sailors, shipbuilders and fishermen from the Adriatic Coast, Eastern Orthodox Serbian missionaries and adventurers with a variety of skills, and common laborers were among the first to migrate to the USA. The first officialy registered Serb to enter America was Đorđe Ribar Šagić, a young merchant, who arrived as a stowaway to Philadelphia in 1815. Šagić, who took an American name George Fisher, was a fighter for the independence of New Mexico and Texas, became a director of customs and a judge, founder of a Serbian society and Masonic lodges, writer of one of the best American adventurous novels. As a historical person, Mr George Fisher is included in a museum display in Houston, Texas.

Further, and as a result of Fisher's personal and professional relationship with Sam Houston and Stephen F. Austin, he was selected as a delegate to assist in the laying of the corner stone of the Washington National Monument.

In the beginning of the 19th century Serbian immigrants entered the southern Gulf States of– Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, and Alabama at which time many were called upon to fight for the Confederacy.. They were also found entering California, as it was a haven for agriculture, fishing and mining for gold. Later they continued to the copper and coal mining states Nevada, Utah, Montana, Arizona, Pennsylvania, etc.. and then also a gold mine, so Serbian pioneers conquered Western cities Los Angeles and San Francisco. Slightly they moved towards the continental part - to Nevada, Utah, Montana, Arizona and Pennsylvania.

Many of the early settlers were also from the same region as that of Nikola Tesla, and were conscripted to serve in the US Army during WWI of which one in particular, Col. Louis Cekula was the awarded two Medals of Honor for bravery serving both in the European and Pacific theaters.

Since Nikola Tesla came to New York City in 1902 he immediately began concentrating on his goals and objectives to fulfill his American Dream by introducing his many inventions and patents that would have a positive impact on his adopted country and the world to include alternating current, the radio, wireless communications, remote control technology, etc.. to name a few.

In the meantime, Nikola Tesla became an American idol and world known scientist. Today, he and his many inventions have been mentioned on Google 15 million times. The Museum of Nikola Tesla in Belgrade receives 300.000 emails every year, from fans and scientist alike. Thus in Belgrade it is often said with pride that Serbs in America are – Tesla's people.

For two and a half centuries Serbs have managed to become a part of US history. The early history was written by ship stowaway Đorđe Šagić, and famed scientists Mihailo Pupin and Nikola Tesla. Both of them have established endowments in New York.

Forty-three years have passed since man has landed on the Moon. Names of astronauts Neil Armstrong, Edwin Aldrin and Michael Collins were written in golden letters in the history of humankind. However, not much is known about eight experts of Serbian origin who were instrumental in the design, development construction and launch of the many Apollo space capsules.. Milojko Mike Vučelić was a project manager, and one of the directors of Apollo program from 1966 to 1978, and was awarded the Medal of Freedom by President Johnson for his role as scientific advisor during the rescue of the Apollo 13 from disaster.

In addition to Mike Vucelic as Apollo Program Manager, the following American Serbs were also members of the team:

David Vuich, NASA/Rockwell International Project/Program Coordinator
Danilo Bojic, Systems Engineer, Designer of Apollo Emergency Escape System
Slavoljub Vujic, Avionics Systems Engineer
Peter Gaich, Electronics Engineer
Milosh Subatovich, Structural Engineer
Peter Duich, Project Engineer

Other prominent American-Serbs in the Aviation and Aerospace Industry:

Nickolas Chabraja, President/CEO General Dynamics (retired)
Phebe Novakovich, President/CEO General Dynamics
Welko Gasich, Sr, Vice President, Northrop Grumman,
Chief Aero Engineer for the T-38, F-5, F-20 and B-2 Bomber
Dragisha (Gish) Jovanovich, President McCullough Aviation
Designed the first Gyrocopter
Mike Begovich, President, Litton Industries
George Vucrovich, V. President, Lockheed/Martin Information Technologies
Vern Pupich, Test Engineer, Chief Test Pilot of DC-3 Douglas Aircraft
Dan Sabovich, President, Mojave Airport, Established Largest Flight Test Facility

Universities:

Dr. Jasmina Vujic, Prof. of Nuclear Physics, Univ. of Calif
Dr. Michael Pravica, Prof. of Physics Univ of Nevada
Dr. Vojin Jaksomovich, Prof of Nuclear Physics (retired)
There are an estimated 5000 leading professors, assistants, scientists and researchers of Serbian origin in the US vowing to become the next Nikola Tesla.

Military:

Lt. General Edward Radkovich USAF
Maj. General Rudy Ostovich Army Aviation Commander
Maj. General George Karamarkovich, US Marine Aviation Commander
Maj. General Mele Vojvodich, USAF, SR 71 Blackbird Test Pilot
Maj. General Mike Pavich, USAF Wing Commander
Maj. General Gary Batinich, USAF Wing Commander
Brig. General Karen Djurich, Information Technology

Medal of Honors:

Capt. Lance Sijan, USAF Viet Nam
Col. Mitchel (Vujnovich) Page US Marine Corp WWII
Sgt/ Alex Mandich US Army WWII
Col. Louis Cukela , Two Medals of Honor, WWII

The spirit of Nikola Tesla can be found in the future generations of Serbian immigrants and American Serbs who consider him their personal scientific and humanitarian visionary.

We thank Nikola Tesla for his never ending legacy.

