

# **Pratkas' Grand Marshall's for 2006 Festival Parade**

*by Sharon Maggard*

Henry and Shirlene Pratkaná have been selected by the Kolache Festival Association as the 2006 Parade Grand Marshals. The couple was chosen for their community service and past work with the festival.

They have supported the Kolache Festival all their married life. Henry, a longtime resident of Prague and full-blood Czech, had lived here for 78 years. Growing up in a Czech family, everyone spoke the native language until the children started to school, at which time they were forced to learn English.

Henry served as Chairman of the Beseda Dance Committee for nine years, from 1967-75. Since the couple are inseparable, Shirlene was always by his side, serving on the committee.

They enjoyed teaching the Beseda to many children and took the dance groups to Ada, Tulsa, and Oklahoma City to perform on television to promote the festival. During that time Norma Foreman played the piano for the Beseda practices and the performances, as the music was not taped. The Pratkas learned the Beseda from Carmen Dostalík and helped carry on the dance tradition with her.

Shirlene stated there were so many Beseda groups in the early years of the festival it was performed twice on festival day. The adults danced at night and the youth in the afternoon. She said there were at least twenty adult groups and when they paraded down the street and circled during the grand entry, the effect of all the beautiful costumes was breathtaking. Henry and Shirlene always led the groups in for the grand march.

Henry also served on the Executive Committee of the festival association and the Queen Committee. He has marched in the festival parade many years with the Color Guard wearing his Marine uniform. He also assists the Prague American Legion during the Veterans Day program, Memorial Day Service and 4<sup>th</sup> of July Celebration.

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After years of their active service, the couple now enjoy the Kolache Festival through the eyes of a child, with their 4-year-old great-granddaughter, Marleigh Kay Smith, who will ride in the parade with them.

Henry and Shirlene are honored and excited to be the parade grand marshals for the 2006 Kolache Festival.