



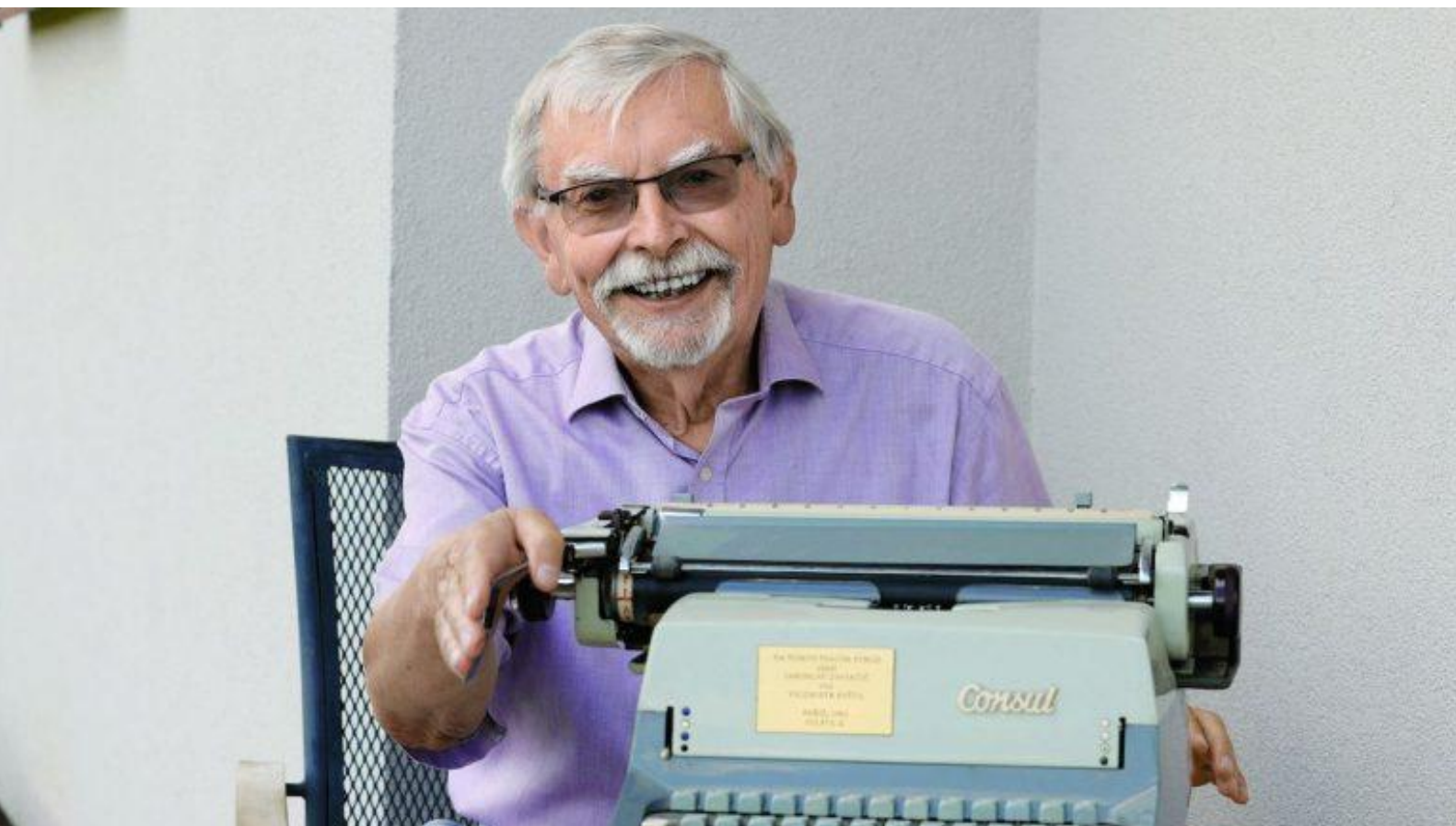
INTERSTENO ENEWS **EXTRA** | NOVEMBER 2025

Interview with Jaroslav Zaviačič

Honorary President of Intersteno

Intersteno President – 2005-2007

President of the Intersteno Congress in Prague – 2007



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President's message



My dear Intersteno Friends,

Earlier this year, an interview with our Secretary-Treasurer, Danny Devriendt, was featured in the e-news. It received many positive responses. This prompted our editor, Marlene Rijkse, to interview someone from the Intersteno family more often. The choice fell on Jaroslav Zaviačič, not only because he has been involved with Intersteno since the 1960s, but also because he has a lot to share. He sketches, among a lot of other things, a picture of the turbulent years in the Czech Republic in the last century and goes into detail about the developments in typing education and the role of Intersteno in his life.

I wish you happy reading!

Rian Schwarz-van Poppel
Intersteno president



Interview with Jaroslav Zaviačič, Honorary President of Intersteno

By Marlene Rijkse (translated by Johana Valová)

How do you interview someone whom you only saw from a distance years ago, but who is spoken of in such a way in the corridors that it's clear he is some sort of icon, someone who commands respect, doesn't let himself be walked over, and has earned his stripes? The request to interview him came from a member of the board. The suggestion was immediately embraced in the board app. It concerns a man with many stories, someone who has experienced so much that a book should be written about him, board members texted. I needed points of reference, and I found them on the internet and on the Intersteno site.

On the Internet page of Intersteno Italy, the overview below is provided. I have posed a question for each time period.

Early years

12.08. 1939: born in Čejč, Czech Republic. **1958:** as student of the Commercial Academy Hodonín champion keyboarding of Czechoslovak schools.

Why did you choose this course?

At elementary school in Čejč, I struggled a lot with writing in Latin script – back then, we dipped our pens into inkwells at our desks and learned to write letters that seemed unnecessarily complicated compared to the printed ones in textbooks and books. My father's friend, the director of the Hodonín Business Academy, praised my playful method of practice (I measured my time and recorded the number of letters copied from printed text per minute), but recommended that I measure not only the number of letters copied from the book, but also those that I made up myself while writing, as if it were a story. This led to the realization that it was enough to write the handwritten squiggles more or less clearly and that the recorded number of letters expressed a combination of the flow of thoughts and the dexterity of the hand. A friend from the neighbourhood was already attending business school and said that I would forget my worries about my "scrawl" as soon as I started typing. The number of letters per minute would increase to 100-200. But even more so when I started writing in shorthand.



Jaroslav, Toasting in Hodonín



Jaroslav and Jan den Holder

I fell in love with typing and shorthand, and thanks to my teacher Jaroslav Robek, in 1954, I began to see my goal not only as meeting the requirements for classification, but also as supplementing my training with data in percentages showing how many letters per minute I could write in comparison with the performance of Czechoslovak school champions and world champions. It was also from my teacher that I first heard the name of the Intersteno organization.

Career at Rudé Právo

1962-1969: head of the technical department (stenographers, typists and teleprinters) of the "Rude Pravo", at that moment the most important newspaper of Czechoslovakia. Due to the resistance of this newspaper to the Soviet occupation he lost this job. Consequently he was not allowed to attend the world championships in Brussels in 1971.



Who fired you and what impact did this dismissal have on your personal life?

I would first like to recall a few dramatic minutes when, on August 21, 1968, machine gunners in Russian uniforms stormed into the typing room. The last room contained teletypewriters separated by a transparent soundproof screen. The machine gunners could only see our heads and shoulders and concluded that we were not doing anything illegal from their point of view, just talking. They could not see my hands typing on the teletypewriter keyboard at a speed of almost 500 characters per minute. I didn't have to look at the keyboard, and my fingers danced a dance of gratitude, typing by touch with all ten fingers, blindly. One of the recipients of the texts was the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jiří Hájek. The texts reached him in Split, where he was spending his vacation.

Over the next few days, I sent hundreds of thousands of letters in Czech and German to the world from a secret teletype office provided by Středočeské dřevařské závody (Central Bohemian Timber Works). Most of the texts were received by the Swedish daily Dagens Nyheter. They asked how I could write so fast and how they should sign my contributions. I suggested the pseudonym Brok.

It was not until 1990 that I revealed the identity of the correspondent Brok to them. The editor-in-chief flew to Prague and, in the presence of the Swedish ambassador, handed me one of the issues of the newspaper with a column of my reports and a book on the history of this largest Scandinavian daily. I have kept page 116 with the headline "Our unknown friend from Prague."

In the same year, Jiří Hájek personally thanked me, saying that without the information sent by teletype, he would not have been able to properly inform the world a few days later (August 24, 1968) in the Security Council.

The 1969 World Championship was held in Warsaw. I will never forget the dozens of expressions of sympathy not only from Poles in restaurants, but also my meeting with German coach Roland Ötting, who collaborated with IBM and spent several hours with me comparing our different coaching methods for teaching typing. We said goodbye with a toast to my analytical training method of "four-phase training" and his training fast sentences.

It seemed that my Intersteno competition had already peaked – in 1965, I brought home the title of world vice-champion in mechanical typewriting from Paris, and in 1967, I travelled to Bern as the coach of the Austrian team.

However, the IBM typewriter with a spherical head increased my speed so much that I repeatedly won the preparatory cup competitions for the 1971 World Championship with a speed of around 10 strokes per second and was nominated for the national team by the State Institute of Shorthand. The director then discreetly informed me that he had received instructions from "higher authorities" to remove me from the nomination because I could not guarantee that I would represent the socialist homeland properly in Brussels. That was a blow, but an even bigger one was the official withdrawal of my exit visa, without which it was impossible to travel to Western countries at that time. The most dramatic thing, however, was being summoned by the State Security to give some kind of "explanation" directly at the Ruzyně prison in Prague.

Major Kohl was an experienced investigator, and I soon sensed that, unlike the editorial staff of Dagens Nyheter, he knew about the anonymous correspondent from August 1968. He also asked me to explain in detail why I had been fired from the editorial office when I was given the opportunity to engage in self-criticism, known at the time as "misconception," and how it actually happened. I admitted to my teletype activity, and Major Kohl typed up a lengthy interrogation report with two fingers, which, from today's perspective, is not without humor.

I described how, after about a week of teletype messages from the secret workplace, the editor-in-chief informed me that the occupation troops had already left the publishing house buildings, including our editorial office, and that at 2 p.m. I was to join a group of police experts, specialists in searching for booby traps and documenting the condition of the vacated workplaces, and to go through my technical department with them. And if everything worked, I was to send a message to all foreign editors to prepare their contributions, because the newspaper would start publishing again.

One of them was the correspondent from Bonn, Miroslav Moc, to whom I added a few extra words: "... the office looks like it's been bombed, there are hundreds of meters of tape and teletype punch cards lying around everywhere, I've just cleaned up my brotherly shit from my desk."

This reporter then became editor-in-chief and invited me to his office for an interview. The secretary brought us coffee, the new boss poured glasses of vodka, we clinked glasses as we had done many times before the occupation, and then, with a friendly smile, he placed a copy of that August teletype report on the table and asked if I recognized it. When I nodded, he responded in a friendly tone: "Jarda, like many others, you were mistaken, but the editorial office needs you. We'll start by you retracting that brotherly crap, and I'll throw that paper in the trash."

During the interrogation, Maj. Kohl offered me a cigarette and placed the incriminating copy of the telex on the table. "Still not going to retract it? Don't worry, there's been a lot of talk about Ruzyně, that we torture prisoners here, but you can see for yourself that it's slander, just like that brotherly shit. What should I write in the report?"

I blew out cigarette smoke and looked him in the eyes. His gaze seemed to suggest that he was offering me a friendly solution. I narrowed my eyes and imagined what my friend and the excellent Czech psychologist, Pavel Říčan, who gave us valuable advice during training camps, would advise me to do. One piece of advice was that when we make a mistake while writing, we shouldn't dwell on it too much, but rather focus even more so that we don't make another mistake in the next few seconds. This is called a subsequent error. But this wasn't a typo. The mistake was already made by admitting to the typewriting activity. I whispered the words "subsequent mistake," and he asked me to say it out loud, saying that he felt I had already made the right decision and that we would write it down.

Within seconds, however, the encouraging smile disappeared from his face and turned into the opposite expression after I said, "It would be best if you let me write the protocol, because your two-finger typing is torture for me, worse than cleaning up my brotherly shit in August."



Movie Populaire (2012)



Talking with 'teacher' Deborah Francois (Populaire) (Jacqueline Marlet), 2012 Prague



Movie Populaire (2012)

Beginnings at Intersteno

1965: world vice-champion keyboarding at the Paris Congress of Intersteno.

How did you come into contact with Intersteno?

Brno-based designer Karafiát had successful competitors test and improve the serial typewriter for both everyday use and competition purposes: for example, my 1965 Paris model had a line spacing lever fixed at an angle at which it engaged immediately when typing densely, saving my left hand several centimeters of movement toward it. The tabulator, a mechanism that slowed down typing, was removed from the competition machine, and the type levers were ground down so that they could be passed quickly in the type basket (for example, the letter "m" was wide and slowed down typing, but the type lever for "i" could be slimmed down, ground down, etc.).

At a competition in Yugoslavia, I met my lifelong friend, Austrian representative Franz Sager. He worked with IBM and, after my emigration in August, recommended me to the teletype department of the Austrian Press Agency (APA) and, after my return to Prague, to IBM.



Jaroslav and Franz Sager

Due to the "political misstep of 1968," the Prague IBM office was only allowed to employ me on the condition that before every business trip outside Prague, I would be sent for special training by the Office for Foreign Relations.

Working on exhibition stands in Brno, Košice, and Leipzig opened up a lot of opportunities both in terms of competition (and thus Intersteno) and the possibility of using the experience gained from fine-tuning the Consul typewriter in Brno.



Jaroslav with students

The stand in Brno was also visited by IBM designer Mr. Fisher from Livingston. He asked me to explain why I had modified the "F" and "J" keys with small pieces of adhesive tape to make them more tactile, but he especially liked the idea of a design change to the typewriter complex with a floppy disk drive and printer that was being demonstrated in Brno at the time, which I proposed to connect for the purpose of efficient text recording and processing, as it later actually came to be known as a "personal computer with a word processor." We said goodbye with the memorable words: "Jaroslav, your English is terrible, but your ideas are brilliant. Improve your English quickly, I have preliminarily agreed with the management of IBM Prague that they will release you for my workplace in Livingston..."

However, it was a time when the management of IBM's Prague office was only able to arrange exceptional trips to Vienna for me. IBM was also undergoing global restructuring, the "Office Systems"

division was spun off under the name Lexmark, Mr. Fisher retired, and all that remained was the memory of my suggestion to highlight the "F" and "J" keys, which was implemented but not patented. As a form of "compensation," IBM offered to support the Czechoslovakian team I was coaching in typing. It began with an "opulent and working dinner" for talented people... During this dinner, I personally met my love, Helena.

We attended many Intersteno events together, and for the third time, together with Jaroslav Poláček, we organized the 2007 World Championship in Prague. As there used to be three of us (with the subtitle "teaching with three world vice-champions"), the third was unfortunately the late Franz Sager. Now there are three of us again – for many years now, multiple world champion Jonáš Vala has been part of our trio.

Austrian Years

1971-1979: coach of the Austrian keyboarding team; developed collective and distance training methods for keyboarding.

How did you end up in Austria?

After the occupation in 1968, I emigrated to Vienna and got a job in the teletype department of Austria Presse Agentur. Due to my typing speed, they soon started calling me "the sewing machine."

I fondly remember the World Ice Hockey Championships, during which I played the role of editor, because the live broadcast of the key match between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union was only in Czech, and I published short agency reports on the course of the game directly in German.

One floor above was the editorial office of DPA (German Press Agency), where the manager, Mr. Polzer, accompanied me with the promise that DPA would not reveal the source, but APA guarantees its accuracy. During my visits to Prague, I met up with banned "former" journalists, and once they provided me with the original text of the goodbye message of Jan Palach, who set himself on fire in protest against political developments, and the country's normalization leadership tried to delay or downplay its publication.

In Vienna, I also met up with some journalists who were not only banned in Czechoslovakia but also physically expelled from the country. One of them was František Vaněček. During my visits to Prague, he always supplied me with a lot of banned publications; his wife worked for Radio Free Europe. The actor Landovský, whose son until recently represented the Czech Republic in NATO, also lived in the same house. We always had plenty to talk about.



Jaroslav and Leo Kulb (2011, Paris)



Jaroslav and Isa Corti Crippa (2011, Milano)

The ZAV Method

1989 and 1991: published textbooks for programmed learning keyboarding, called the ZAV-method, later on transferred to e-learning.

Were the sales of the books successful? How many did you sell?

Teaching aids were already being developed between 1963 and 1968: the first was a printed manual for teaching how to operate the then very laborious typesetting machines at the publishing house's printing plant in Prague, and later at the State Printing House. The Czech Technical University (ČVUT) purchased a computer for study purposes in classrooms on Horská Street in Prague, which took up almost half of the lecture hall for twenty students, who had to enter wearing face masks and dust-proof coats. The professors designed the keyboard according to my proposal (similar to the keyboard of Czech typewriters) so that it was possible to create Czech texts and add the characters needed for programming from the English keyboard (@, &, <,], etc.). All students received a 20-page instructional publication so that they could concentrate on the content on the computer and check it on the monitor, rather than searching for letters on the keyboard with their eyes.

Her later engagement in Austria led to the creation of the training publication "Fünfzehn Minuten täglich" (Fifteen Minutes a Day), which was later adapted for training in the use of the Czech keyboard. In addition to instructions and practice texts, it also contained a form for filling in individual results. Helena still keeps it as a relic of the first steps of individual training using the ZAV method.

For many years, political developments allowed me to earn a living simply by mechanically transcribing technical reports as an employee of the State Institute for the Reconstruction of Historic Towns and Buildings. The institute was so inconspicuous in terms of its work that even Bohumil Šimon was allowed to work there. He designed the first complex of cycle paths for Hradec Králové, even though his main education was as an agricultural engineer.

He often told me about August: "At the forced meeting in Moscow in August, he already knew Brezhnev, who thundered how it was possible that there were hundreds of thousands of soldiers in Prague and a national congress of the Communist Party with 1,200 delegates was held in Vysočany. Who organized this? Šimon raised his hand, and Brezhnev responded, 'Was it you, Bohouš?'. Šimon later told me that he feared for his life at that moment. But Brezhnev surprised him by saying, 'Well, actually, good revolutionary work!'.

Transcribing technical documentation required more copies than a typewriter could produce, even with carbon paper, which yielded a maximum of 7–8 legible copies. Along with the manuscripts, I took home whole boxes of strictly registered mimeograph sheets for transcribing technical reports. These later came in handy for reproducing texts by prominent opponents of the regime, former journalists, politicians, artists, and scientists.

The first officially published training publication was not until 1983, when the ZAV textbook was published by the State Institute of Shorthand under a pseudonym.

It was only after the intervention of a school inspector that a 350-page textbook entitled "Typing for Self-Study" was published in 1989 by the State Publishing House of Technical Literature under my name.

In 2007, Computer Press published a textbook used in Czech business academies entitled Typing for Self-Study with three authors: Helena, my daughter Petra, and myself. In 2008, Computer Press Brno published an expanded version for teaching typing on a Slovak keyboard (authors Jaroslav Zaviačič, Helena Matoušková, and Marieta Harmaniaková) entitled "Písanie na počítači pre samoukov" (Typing on a Computer for Self-Study). A CD with ZAV training games was also included.

For several years, in parallel with the printed textbooks, a training set of printed training texts with an accompanying diskette containing several hundred keyboard typing exercises was also used. Three of

us were listed as authors: under the title "Teaching Keyboard Typing with Three World Vice-Champions" (at that time, Helena did not yet have the title of world champion, but only vice-champion; Franz Sager and I had earned ours from previous participation in Intersteno championships).

ZAV Internet School

Since 1990: he and Helena Matouskova (world champion) direct the ZAV internet-school for learning keyboarding in the languages Czech, German, Polish and Slovak. Every year there are about 25.000 students. The best of them represent the Czech Republic in the world championships.

Numerous discussions within the "Intersteno family" have also led to interest in developing ZAV teaching methods in other languages. I am currently working on versions for English, Hungarian, Serbian, Croatian, and French keyboards, but the French version has encountered a request to respect the different layouts of French keyboards used in France, Belgium, and Switzerland.

When and where did you meet Helena? Were you a great team right away or did it take time to build that up? You got married in 2012. What was the best moment?

I saw Helena for the first time in the second half of the 1980s on television, where they were broadcasting a report from the Czechoslovak school championship in shorthand and typing. The detailed shots captivated me not only with the amazing concentration emanating from her facial expression, but also with the dance of her fingers on the keyboard and the coordination of her movements in the air above the keyboard, convincing me that I wanted to get to know this extraordinary personality. Then, in January 1988, IBM offered its support, and we met in person at a gala dinner at the Ambassador Zlatá Husa hotel, followed by our first training camp.

Brussels is a fateful city for us. In 1971, I was not allowed to leave to represent Czechoslovakia at the World Championships in Brussels because I was considered politically unreliable, and Helena was born that same year. Twenty years later, in 1991, our paths crossed at the World Championships in Brussels, from where we returned as a couple. In 2012, Danny Devriendt and Georgette Sante, with her partner Joseph, were guests of honor at our wedding – we received a "honeymoon trip to Brussels" as a gift from this Belgian trio so that we could return to "our" city. Our life together has lasted for decades as a coaching relationship, a collegial relationship, and above all as a fairytale partnership, and for the last 13 years, a marriage.

We spent the early 1990s in a state of euphoria, excited that we could establish our own ZAV school, start visiting schools, and train not only ourselves but also others. Gradually, the aforementioned printed textbook for programmed teaching was converted into an electronic version, first in the form of floppy disks, which we sent by mail to individual students, and later to schools. At the end of the millennium, the Windows operating system knocked on our door, and we worked with Austrian programmers to convert the floppy disk version into the first versions installed on school servers. Together with Franz Sager, we travelled to schools to install ZAV lessons. Later, thanks to the development of the internet, it became possible to send materials online, and from there it was only a small step to a real server-based online solution, the fourth generation of which is currently used by our students and brilliantly developed by Jonáš Vala, a multiple pupil and junior world champion. The priority is, of course, teaching, but an integral part of ZAV teaching has always been, and hopefully will remain, competition. High-quality competitors are recruited from the best pupils, and we have a very rich base – around 50,000 students train in ZAV every year.

Interinfo CZ

1998: founded Interinfo CZ, which is the Czech National Group of Intersteno and unites schools, teachers and competitors. **Since 2000:** the ZAV-school organizes international competitions on internet.

How many members does Interinfo CZ have? What is the secret behind ZAV's success?

When I was coaching the Austrian team and saw their excellently functioning Verband or similar active associations in Germany, it was my dream to establish something similar at home. But we had to go a long way before it was possible to establish an association in our country. Interinfo ČR was officially born in February 1999. Today, it has several dozen member schools and several dozen individuals who are motivated by participation in competitions, but above all by a shared hobby.

We started organizing the first Czech internet competitions with the creation of a school server solution, where encrypted files with results were sent over the internet and processed manually. In 2003, as the Czech contribution to the congress and world championship in Rome, we proposed to organize the first international internet competition under the auspices of Intersteno. On my 80th birthday, the ZAV-100 competition, consisting of 25 one-minute transcriptions with a rule that had been used for perhaps a quarter of a century in hundreds of competitions in individual schools, was also expanded to an international level under the auspices of Intersteno. A thousand competitors took part in last year's competition, which was won by our colleague Jonáš Vala with a performance suggesting that he is the only current candidate to achieve a text transcription speed of 1000 keystrokes per minute.

An integral part of ZAV's history in connection with Intersteno is also the ZAV-JURY evaluation program. It was first used in 1998 in Lausanne for the "text production" competition, and a few years later it was expanded to include the "text correction" and "audio transcription" competitions. Since 2019, an online solution has been available, which was expanded for the world championship in Maastricht to include pre-evaluation of the "speech capturing" and "real time competition" competitions, as well as file management, i.e., the distribution of materials from the jury to the competitors and the submission of competition entries. Unfortunately, the internet was not working in the competition room in Maastricht, so it was not fully deployed until last year in Katowice.

Academic Recognition

2003: honorary member of the "Accademia Giuseppe Aliprandi - Multimedialità della scrittura e dell'informazione" in Florence.

What were you involved in as a member of the Accademia? Are you still in touch with the Accademia Giuseppe Aliprandi?

I greatly appreciate this honor from 2003. Although I formulated suggestions for expanding various surveys, their content proved not to be fully compatible with Aliprandi's academic focus. Together with some of the other new honorary members, we discussed several times the possibilities for practical expressions of gratitude, but the direction of these considerations always returned to Intersteno and the individuals who were more active in the discussions. Gradually, it shifted to the proceedings of the scientific committee, of which, like Aliprandi, I still have the honor of being a member despite my personal absence from the meetings, and I last discussed many of the suggestions with the Polish representative Krystian Wawrzynek at the Intersteno congress in Berlin. In the context of changes in the methods of creating text files, on September 16, after consulting with artificial intelligence, I approached the head of the scientific committee, Carlo Eugeni, with several suggestions.

In 2006, I was honored with the title of visiting professor at the Chinese Academy in Shenyang. It was amazing to complete the prescribed teaching hour devoted to the ZAV method and Comenius'

motivational principles of "school through play" with the help of an excellent interpreter. But what stuck with me most from this event was the practice of two machine stenographers, connected in such a way that the first recorded everything, the text was transferred to the second stenography machine (Yawe-Sulu), checked and edited by the second stenographer, so that a few seconds after the lecture was finished, the edited text was already fully available. Helena and I then practiced this during our frequent engagements, for example, ensuring the live transmission of the texts of speeches by individual delegates at conferences, assemblies, etc.



Jaroslav and Tang Yawei



Jaroslav and Tang Kelian



Beijing 2009

Leadership of Intersteno

2005: was nominated as president of Intersteno. He organized the Congress held in Prague in 2007 and on that occasion was elected Vice-Presidente. The chair was again confirmed in Beijing 2009.

You were President of Intersteno from 2005 to 2007, and vice-president from 2007 to 2011 under Gian Paolo Trivulzio and from 2011 to 2013 under Fausto Ramondelli. What was it like to work with Gian Paolo Trivulzio and with Fausto Ramondelli? What memories come to mind from that time?

We are most grateful to Fausto for his positive response to the interest of the newly established Czech Interinfo in representing our country in Intersteno. Until then, the Czech Republic had been represented by a representative of the State Shorthand Institute, but Fausto advocated the principle that if a democratically structured organization existed in a country, its president should represent that country in Intersteno. He was also a guest at our international competition at the Business Academy in Hodonín (ZAV-Hodonín). As an experienced machine stenographer, he also expressed his qualified support for the development of an abbreviation system, which we at ZAV began to develop in parallel for the Yawe-Sulu stenotype machine and the standard Czech keyboard.



Jaroslav and Gian-Paolo Trivulzio

I am grateful to Gian Paolo for numerous discussions during which, for example, at the Swiss championship, he introduced us to the Italian development of "voice writing" technology. We disagreed on some aspects, such as his preference for marketing at the expense of competition results in the internet competition. However, I always admired his incredible dedication and enthusiasm with which he threw himself into all projects.



125 years of Intersteno (2012, Prague)



Jaroslav & Jean-Charles Le Masson (2012, Prague)

You organised the congress in Prague in 2007. What do you look back on with the greatest pride? Was there a problem with the organisation that still sometimes scares you awake?

The Intersteno Congress in Prague was organized by a trio of people – Helena, who is still an important member of the Interinfo ČR committee, Jaroslav Poláček, and me. Organizing the congress and world championship was a huge challenge, involving dozens, if not hundreds, of smaller tasks that we gradually tackled to put together the usual week-long program for 550 guests from around the world.

For example, I admired Jaroslav Poláček for how he brilliantly organized the covering of the glass auditorium of the Czech University of Agriculture at short notice, as the bright sunshine made it impossible to see the monitors, which would, of course, have affected the competitors' performance.



Jari Niittuinperä, Seçkin Köse, Boris Neubauer, Jaroslav Zaviačič, Ihsan Yener, Jaroslav Poláček

It is not always possible to persuade the Minister of the Interior to personally deliver his greeting at the opening, so as a social diversion we also organized a sing-along to the well-known Czech song “Škoda lásky” (Rosamunde), the translation of which into the languages of all those present was projected and sung to the accompaniment of three musicians (piano, bass, drums) from my former swing band. Curiously, after the performance, the bassist, who is also an artistic blacksmith, presented me with a beautiful dagger forged in his workshop as a souvenir. Everyone then went to the courtyard for a welcome drink at round tables. I accompanied the Minister of the Interior, we talked, I put the dagger on the table among the glasses of sparkling wine, and for perhaps half an hour of conversation with the minister, the great interest of the photographers was surpassed by the even greater interest of the minister's personal guards, who were watching the dagger closely.

As part of the congress program, we included demonstrations of various methods of text recording for journalists, including graphic and machine shorthand and voice writing technology.

Unfortunately, our friend David Rogala, long-time representative of the USA in Intersteno, was not among the speakers, as he had been a guest at ZAV-Hodonín a few months earlier and was unable to

travel to Europe again in such a short time. But he had fond memories of his visit to ZAV-Hodonín, as Jaroslav Poláček had arranged for him to appear live on Czech television.

Rogala helped me develop the Czech version of "voice typing" when I got stuck at around 80% accuracy in text conversion. He recommended that I consult with the university in Liberec, where a team of students led by Professor Nouza was working on the development. Together with Newton Herian, the head of the company, he then described in detail the state of voice typing development for the Czech language during a lecture (translated at the time into German, French, and English).

David Rogala spent a few months in Darmstadt as an American soldier and learned a little German there. We discussed dozens of hours, understood each other perfectly, even though an unwitting listener just shook his head, because I thought we were speaking English, and David thought we were speaking German.

Every Saturday, we had these discussions between Prague and Chicago via Skype. But one Saturday, he didn't connect, and sadly, he left our world at a very young age...

(<https://www.zav.cz/bulletin/zemrel-david-rogala/>)

Title of honor

What does the title 'honorary president' mean to you?

The awarding of the title of honorary president was a perfect surprise organized by President Rian and Secretary Danny, for which I was unable to express my gratitude in Cagliari amid the rush of emotions and applause from hundreds of people from dozens of countries—after three words, I was at a loss for words, The words in my awkward "easy English" came to mind, but I couldn't pronounce them, and the applause continued. I still dream about it today.

If my voice hadn't broken at that moment, I would have continued with my thanks. Intersteno is an important part of our life together with Helena. It has always been, is, and should continue to be the highest authority in the field of text processing. Thanks to Intersteno, we have made many friends. Intersteno is the organizer of world championships, which are the culmination of our work and "sports" activities. It is simply an indispensable part of my life, which is why I greatly appreciate the title of "honorary president" and will always strive to ensure that Czechs are valid members of the Intersteno family. And I would very much like Intersteno to remain a "coalition of decent people," which Dubček wanted to believe in during the turbulent 1960s.

I assume that Intersteno is a recurring topic between you and Helena, councilmember for the Czech Republic. What is it usually about?

Probably the largest part of our conversations in connection with Intersteno concerns preparations for the World Championships (Helena is also the leader of the jury for the most popular and second oldest competition, text production) and training camps for the Czech national team. Now, before leaving for Córdoba, we naturally talked about our positions on the agendas under discussion. We enjoy talking about friends (the Germans have a nice expression for this, "Stenofreunde"), reminiscing about shared experiences.



Cagliari 2019, with Georgette Sante

You look quite cheerful in the camera in the above photo. Is that only in photos or are you a cheerful man in everyday life too?

I don't like smiling for the camera in family photos. I like photos that show activity, action. I still like to be active myself. I can't really say if I'm a cheerful person, but I do like humor and laughter. I think I'm an optimist in life. I always see the glass as half full, not half empty. I try to find positive ways forward even in situations where there seems to be no way out.

Achievements and legacy

Wikipedia sums up your life as that of a world champion typist, coach, IBM expert, founder of Interinfo CZ, and creator of the ZAV method.

When you look back on a life devoted to typing, books, and educational programs, are you satisfied with what you have accomplished? What did you want to do but never got around to?

Only the deaths of Franz Sager and David Rogala, unfortunately, thwarted the implementation of some plans to such an extent that I was unable to continue with them. But just as I always looked exclusively forward at each stage of social and technical development, today I am similarly driven by an obsession to realize an idea that was born during a meeting with friends from Jülich, Monika Disser and Boris Neubauer: it summarizes a lifetime of experience and would also be a response to the negative elements of an otherwise fascinating development in the context of artificial intelligence and the shortening of ideas of a generation raised in the bubble of text messages. Organizationally, this full stop on my life with letters as carriers of ideas also motivates me to imagine, after many years, together with my closest German and Czech friends, registering for the lecture part of the Intersteno Liverpool congress.

Memories of the Prague Spring

One of the board members said about you: this guy has a life story good enough for a book, and for a Hollywood film. I definitely would like to see it written somewhere, the story when he was almost captured and imprisoned while typing to the very last seconds about what was happening in Prague. He is the last one from 'The great 3 of Intersteno'.

The period of the (run-up to the) Prague Spring (Pražské jaro) and in response to it the invasion of the troops of the other members of the Warsaw Pact are important moments in the history of your country. I was 12 years old in 1968 and I remember those events very well, let alone the impact it must have had on you and your countrymen.

More generally, what are your memories of the Prague Spring and the invasion of troops in 1968?

August 20, 1968

Thanks to my title of world vice-champion in typing (1965, Paris), I worked as the head of the editorial typing pool, stenography, and teletype during the Prague Spring of 1968.

A few weeks earlier, the first secret elections had been held for the publishing house, which included editorial offices, typesetting, and printing facilities in the block between Na Poříčí and Na Florenci streets in Prague. As members of the trade union leadership, together with language lecturer Květa Benešová, we took a resolution to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia on the morning of August 20, demanding the dismissal of editor-in-chief Oldřich Švestka.

I started my afternoon shift at the office from 2 to 10 p.m. As background material for the typesetting department, I transcribed several commentaries on the topic of economist Ota Šik's Third Way. And a big report on the inspection visit of one of the highest military officials of the Warsaw Pact, Marshal Ivan Jakubovsky. The text of his statement calmed the otherwise growing criticism of the political developments in our country. The marshal praised the combat readiness of our army, which was guarding the borders with Germany and Austria well.

In the telex department, one station was designated for receiving confidential information. These were marked "i i i" and we took them straight to the editor-in-chief's office. That day, warning information also came in from Hungary, Romania, and Yugoslavia that military units were concentrating around our borders in preparation for an invasion. The secretary took it, immediately took it to the boss, and I saw that Oldřich Švestka was with the then chief ideologist and editor Jan Fojtík and some gentlemen with whom he had left the editorial office that afternoon.

There wasn't much work in the office that afternoon, so I just took a long phone call from Moscow correspondent Zdeněk Hoření in shorthand because of poor reception. He described some summer festivities and an international pioneer camp by the sea, and at the end, he praised me for saving him a lot of time, as always, thanks to my shorthand, and surprised me a little with a question about how I personally experienced social changes.

My shift ended, and I waited a few minutes at the gatehouse so that the time of my departure would not be recorded as before 10 p.m. I lived on the top floor of the same building, took the lift up, and before I started to undress, I was interrupted by the phone – the work line for the entire publishing house, number 746. On the other end was the agitated voice of editor Pošvice, whom I had said goodbye to a few minutes earlier: "Jarda, come back quickly, the Russians are occupying us!"

Airplanes were flying over Prague, and I was trying to piece together what had happened that day. "They're already leaving Ruzyně, we have to quickly process the reports and send them out..." My first night shift of "August 1968" had begun. It was associated with the names Šetlík, Vaněček, Šíp, Šmolík,

Pošvic, Opavský... I sat with two of them in a noisy room with teletypewriters, writing and writing, sending reports to other editorial offices, but also abroad, in Czech and German.

Several tens of thousands of letters were sent with the date August 20, 1968. At 11 p.m., a telex arrived from Moscow. It was dated August 21, according to the time of the invasion, which began two hours before midnight on August 20. It was already August 21 in Moscow. Will historians and journalists stop associating the date of the 1968 invasion with the date of the aggressor (August 21), or will they begin to respect those two horrific hours of August 20, 1968, as the day that, in our opinion, deserves to be remembered by the dozens of people who fought against tanks with white stripes with letters typed on keyboards?

Identity and influence

Somebody said you are one of 'the great 3 of Intersteno'. Can you identify with that?

Thousands of people have been building the mosaic called Intersteno since 1878. Each stone is placed, regardless of its size, in a place where it complements the overall picture. If, for example, you asked the new Jupiter supercomputer in Jülich which three stones in the Intersteno mosaic it would consider to be the big three, it might not even be able to find them in the mosaic.

If a book were written about you, what would it be about?

One about my exciting life was written by a friend, himself the embodiment of a colorful life, former Luxembourg typewriting champion Michel Hubert. I gladly agreed to the title he chose: "Goldfinger aus Prag."

I would perhaps rather not call the publication "a life full of letters."

Today and tomorrow

What does your daily life look like now?

Five years ago, we left Prague and now live happily in the countryside. The clean air has freed me from asthma, and I alternate between writing many emails a day about distance learning and amateur gardening. I am grateful for my life and take it with humility. Every evening, I can give thanks that, thanks to Helena, my friends, and colleagues, the day I have lived can be counted among the days that are not useless or empty, and perhaps even slightly enriching, according to the wisdom I have carried in my mind since my last meeting with Professor Yawe Keliang in his apartment in Beijing in 2006:

"The value of a person can be measured by the number of people who have reason to be grateful to him for enriching their lives."

I handed over the management of the ZAV School to my wife, Helena, in 2014, but I cannot imagine a day when I would not work, come up with something new, or communicate with students and teachers. Even at 86, I like to be useful.

I would be happy if the younger generation (not only) of Intersteno were not afraid to pursue their dreams and did not allow themselves to be overwhelmed by the abundance of information that characterizes today's world. I hope they learn to use all the latest technology, including artificial intelligence, but don't forget to take care of letters, syllables, words, and sentences—the ideas that are the most valuable thing we have as humans.



Vienna 2005, with Joke Bakker and Georgette Sante



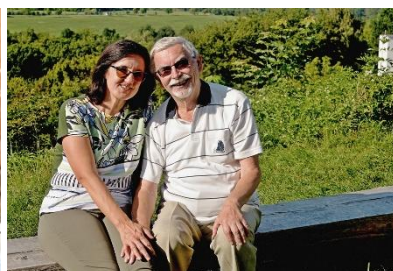
China 2006, with high school students



Prague 2007, with Gian Paolo Trivulzio and Radoslav Kučera



Jaroslav and Jonáš Vala



Jaroslav and Helena (x3)



In China with Tang Yawei



Jaroslav and the Austrian President



Jaroslav and Gian-Paolo Trivulzio



Ishan Yener, Jaroslav Zaviačič, Gian-Paolo Trivulzio, Danny Devriendt and Georgette Sante



Boris Neubauer, Danny Devriendt, Jaroslav Zaviačič, Georgette Sante, Gian-Paolo Trivulzio and Mark Golden



Helena Zaviačičová and Jaroslav Zaviačič