

Czech This Out



Despite the many historical documents available to us, sometimes one has to rely on family stories to glean some details of an ancestor's life. It just might not always be accurate.

I remember sitting with my grandfather, Josef Ondrasik, near the end of his life, listening to him tell the story of how he came to this country. Born in what was then called Czechoslovakia, he found a job as a young man working for a stable near his home. He worked hard and eventually was appointed the job of head stableboy.

This would have been in the early 1900s. Due to some global tensions, the emperor of Austria decided to "hide" his prized Lipizzaner stallions lest they be taken as spoils of war. Some of them ended up at my grandfather's stable in the Czech countryside where he was given the responsibility of their care.

Eventually, he asked for some time off to visit his family and while he was away, the stablehand who filled in for him was exercising a team of the stallions and accidentally drove them into a tree. One of them was so badly injured it had to be

euthanized. When my grandfather returned to the stables, he was told in no uncertain terms that he would never be allowed to take another vacation. Not long after that, he left Czechoslovakia, boarded a ship and arrived in America to start a new life.

It's a great story and one I vividly remember hearing from him. The only problem with this memory is that my grandfather never learned to speak English and I never learned to speak Czech. So I'm not sure how he was able to communicate his story to me. I remember it but I have yet to find any documented evidence that any of it actually took place. He's gone now, along with anyone else who might have been able to corroborate the claims. But that story, true or not, will always live in my heart.

Michael Ondrasik and Home Video Studio specialize in the preservation of family memories through the digitalization of film, videotape, audio recordings, photos, negatives, and slides. For more information, call 352-735-8550 or visit our [website](#).