

The Magicians' Handiwork

By Jasmina Ninkov

Conversations about embassy staff tend to focus on those who work in senior jobs delivering the many programs that are our *raison d'être*—seldom on the support staff who magically make the mission function with the efficiency of a Swiss watch.

Belgrade is lucky to have two such handymen among our LES maintenance staff—one at the beginning of his career and the other nearing the twilight of a long but fulfilling working life. Aleksandar Marin, nicknamed Saša, first came to the Embassy in 1995 as a student on a summer job. Gojko Kosanovic joined in 2002, after a career as a welder and mechanic.

Whether they are helping in the office or in staff quarters, the men function as a team, never showing signs of fatigue or impatience. No job is too small or too demanding. They change light bulbs and air filters, move furniture, make deliveries, shovel snow, supervise contractors—and respond to calls at ungodly hours whenever help is required.

Saša and Gojko complete their tasks with initiative, always providing helpful suggestions, and always with positive attitudes and smiling faces. They know the chancery, the official residence and the staff quarters well, and frequently come up with ideas for preventive maintenance, cost reduction and environmental protection. Talk about transformation!

These are men of many talents, acting as electricians, plumbers, carpenters and mechanics when required. Their workshop in the Embassy basement is their domain, furnished with all they need to perform their magic. They can

produce anything from a doghouse to a new bed frame with the skilful clang of hammers, the hiss of welding equipment and the turning of nails, screws and bolts.

On many occasions they skip lunch to help with an urgent request, or stay late for an official function. Yet they are the first to arrive at work the following morning.

Yvonne Frank, a colleague who recently returned to Canada, wrote to tell us how much she misses the expertise of these two unsung heroes—such as their “great eye” in hanging picture frames in the perfect spot. “Workmen I have encountered here just don’t take the same pride in their work,” she said.

Saša and Gojko are indispensable members of our mission team. We simply could not function efficiently without their hard work and total dedication to excellence.

Jasmina Ninkov is the LES property and material assistant at the Embassy of Canada in Belgrade. She is a court translator and enjoys writing in her free time.

Did you know?

Among the 5,472 LES at missions in 2008-2009, 1,502 were in officer positions and 3,970 were in support positions.

Source: Annual Report on Canada's Network Abroad 2008-2009



(left to right) Aleksandar Marin (Saša) and Gojko Kosanovic perform their magic in their workshop in the Embassy basement.