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Glasilo Hrvatske katoličke misije London

Broj 4. Godina III. Božić, 2010.

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PROFILE OF MARIJAN DUNDEK

BY BRIAN GALLAGHER

Marijan Dundek is one of the leading authorities on diamonds. His book, *Diamonds*, has recently been published in a new third edition. It is an introduction to the world of diamonds. Its success has been international, with even a Chinese edition being produced. In February of this year he was invited by the Croatian Ambassador to the UK, HE Dr Ivica Tomic, to give a talk at the embassy about his book. Most met with Dundek to discuss his life, his book – and diamonds.

Born in 1950, in Kovacevac, Croatia, his family moved to Opatija when he was ten. He studied the hotel trade, but wanted to come to England and learn English. This he did in 1971, ending up working at the Hilton in London's Park Lane. There was also an urge to travel, and so seven years later he signed up as a wine steward on a top Norwegian cruise ship, working with them for ten years.

Dundek remembers visiting China in 1982, as that country became more open to the world – a large amount of curious Chinese came to see the visitors. "They looked at us and surrounded us. Everybody felt like stars, they just wanted to see us," he recalls. He visited again in 1985 – and was given a Chinese guide who



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Marijan Dundek

spoke perfect Croatian. He also went to the then Soviet Union - “Everyone was trying to sell us caviar!”

It was whilst working on cruise ships that he met and became friends with Jules Roger Sauer, owner of one of the biggest diamond companies in the world, who showed Dundek his shops in Brazil. This led to Dundek studying at the International Gemological Institute in Antwerp, feeling it was time for a career change.

Dundek then went to work for Mappin and Webb, working in their shop in Heathrow Airport. He met many politicians, actors and singers in this way – he was there when the famous singer Diana Ross was arrested.

Later he worked in a top Bond Street watch shop when he met Laurence Graff – a major name in the diamonds world. Graff was familiar with Dundek’s first edition of his book and asked why he was working with watches rather than diamonds. Since then he has been working with Graff Diamonds.

“Working with Graff Diamonds I had the opportunity to see some of the most incredible and unique gemstones in the world – truly unique. It was natural to do a third edition of my book and use this position in which I could have any images that I want for a book, so I use the most remarkable images – some historical diamonds, some huge pieces that not many people would come across.”

For the third edition of the book, last year was the right time to publish. “Many changes have happened in the diamond industry. An incredible interest in colour





Marijan Dundek

diamonds has started. In addition to Graff, I have close relations with Langerman Diamonds in Antwerp who are experts on colour diamonds – they have over 30,000 in stock. They provided me with all the colour diamond images.”

And the motivation for the book? “Passion – as simple as that. I want to share my knowledge with people,” he says.

What is the enduring fascination of diamonds? “Diamonds have remarkable properties. They were created under deep beneath the earth’s surface millions of years ago by the forces of heat and pressure. They are rare and highly prized, yet are born from carbon, the most basic chemical element that is common to all life. They have optical properties – this is most important - which are able to disperse the light in the colours of the rainbow and sparkle more than any other gem. “

They have a history in every tradition and religion, he points out. Although a Catholic, Dundek quotes a Buddhist saying, “The truth is eternal – just like a diamond.”

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