

Serb federation brings Tesla into limelight

'Father of Radio' receiving respect, federation says

By Jason Togyer
STAFF WRITER

Nikola Tesla's formative work with electricity was overshadowed by that of others better at capturing the limelight.

But more than 200 people attending a Down- town reception Tuesday hope he's about to get some of the recognition they believe he richly deserves.

The Serb National Federation held the recep- tion to celebrate Tesla's life and unveil a 27-inch tall bronze statue of the inven- tor on the eighth floor of its headquarters building.

Among the guests were the Right Rev. Dr. Mitrofan, bishop of the Serbian Orthodox Church's Dio- cese of Eastern America, who offered the invocation, and Tesla's grand-nephew, William H. Terbo of Scotch Planes, N.J.

Terbo, himself an in- ventor, founded the Tesla Memorial Society and said regard for Tesla in Eastern

nearly every appliance -- to all four corners of the world.

"We've become so used to these

Raich, another Tesla fan, was looking for a way to honor his legacy when he learned of Rebrovic's work.

like he made a mistake -- like he just said oops!" Rebrovic said. laughing. It took 20 hours to remold Tesla's right



William Terbo, grandnephew of Nikola Tesla, examines the bronze statue of Tesla, which was dedicated Tuesday at the Serb National Federation Heritage Museum. The statue was sculpted by Matt Rebrovic of Beaver. Tesla, a Serb, was declared the 'Father of Radio' by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Europe and among Americans of Slavic descent borders on "religious reverence."

"He represented to poor immigrants coming to America how high you can rise," Terbo said. "He came to this country and gained the respect not only of the technical community but of the wider community, not only for his great scientific accomplishments but for his altruistic, artistic and poetic works."

The son of a Serbian Orthodox priest, Tesla came to the United States in 1884 and began his pioneering study of magnetism, radio and high-intensity light.

Perhaps his most important achievements came with industrialist George Westinghouse, as they brought alternating current -- the power that lights homes and drives

things that make our life so special, we don't take time to think about how they came about," said Gordon "Renny" Clark, executive director of corporate services and community affairs for Westinghouse Electric.

The statue of Tesla was sculpted by Matt Rebrovic of Brighton Township, Beaver County, a retired engineer and draftsman who is an admirer of the inventor.

It took more than 260 hours for Rebrovic to craft the statue in clay, but he didn't know where or if it would be displayed until he ran into Michael Raich in a Beaver County hardware store.

With the statue as their rallying point, Raich, Rebrovic and others of Serbian descent in Beaver County formed the Nikola Tesla Society in 1997. By selling T-shirts and other souvenirs, they raised \$1,500 to have the statue cast in bronze in Ohio, then donated it to the Serb National Federation.

Rebrovic worked from photos of the inventor to recreate Tesla's likeness. Though many of the pictures show Tesla deep in thought with his head resting on his hand, Rebrovic's effort to capture that post met with unwanted results.

"Some people said, '(Tesla) looks

arm so that both of his hands were resting in his lap.

Though Tesla's name is well-known in Europe, Terbo said, in America he's taken a backseat to Thomas Edison and Guglielmo Marconi.

Yet Edison's direct current systems were pushed aside by consumers in favor of Tesla's alternating current, and the U.S. Supreme Court in 1943 ruled that Tesla, not Marconi, was the true "father of radio."

"I feel a responsibility to give support to people who are enthusiastic " about preserving Tesla's memory," Terbo said.

Serb federation brings Tesla into limelight

'Father of Radio' receiving respect, federation says

By James Taylor

While Tesla's inventive work with electricity was appreciated by most of his countrymen as inspiring the country.

But more than 200 people attended a Wednesday morning Tuesday and a Wednesday morning Tuesday hope he's about to get some of the respect they believe he richly deserves.

The Serb National Federation held the reception to celebrate Tesla's life and award a 27-inch tall bronze statue of the inventor on the eighth floor of its headquarters building.

Among the guests were the Right Rev. Dr. Nicholas, Bishop of the Serbian Orthodox Church's Diocese of Eastern America, who blessed the occasion, and Tesla's grand nephew, William H. Tesla of South Plain, N.J.

Tesla, known as an inventor, founded the Tesla Memorial Society and had argued that Tesla is Eastern Europe and among Americans of Slavic descent borders on "ethnic terrorism."

"He progressed to give mankind gifts coming to America long before our time," Tesla said. "The light in this country and gained its progress not only of the technical capability but of the wider community, not only for his great scientific accomplishments but for his eloquent, artistic and poetic work."

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Rev. C. Bogdanovich

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Raich, another Tesla fan, was looking for a way to honor his legacy when he learned of Babovic's work.

With the statue as their rallying point, Raich, Babovic and others of Serbian descent in Beaver County formed the Nikola Tesla Society in 1987. By selling T-shirts and other souvenirs, they raised \$1,500 to have the statue cast in bronze in Ohio, then donated it to the Serb National Federation.

Babovic worked from photos of the inventor to recreate Tesla's likeness. Though many of the pictures show Tesla deep in thought with his head resting on his hand, Babovic's effort is to capture that pose and with unexpected results.

"Some people said, 'Tesla looks

like he made a mistake — like he just said 'oops,'" Babovic said, laughing. It took 20 hours to model Tesla's right arm so that both of his hands were resting on his hip.

Though Tesla's name is well known in Europe, Tesla said, in America he's taken a backseat to Thomas Edison and Guglielmo Marconi.

Yet Edison's direct current systems were pushed aside by alternating current in favor of Tesla's alternating current, and the U.S. Supreme Court in 1902 ruled that Tesla, not Marconi, was the true "father of radio."

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