



It was toss-up who had the best time — the hosts or the guests — when the championship Czech basketball team visited in Livonia last weekend. In the forefront are hosts Walter and Marilyn Cortis. In the background are members of the team as they observe an O&E composing room function. (Staff photo by Bill Bresler)

Czech mates

Couple hosts visiting basketball team

By MARIE McGEE

Happily tired, Walt and Marilyn Cortis have just updated the classic tale of "The Man Who Came to Dinner."

In the case of the Livonia couple, the "man" invited for a meal became a team of basketball-playing Czechs, their coach/interpreters, a couple of referees and a team doctor to boot.

An expected breakfast ended up being a couple of hefty-sized breakfasts and lunches plus a couple of dinners.

Now you get a fair-sized picture of what the Cortises handled last weekend when they opened their home to a college champion basketball team from Czechoslovakia.

YOU COULD SAY they did things in

a big way but even they didn't realize how big it would become when they agreed several weeks ago to help provide room and board for some members of the visiting Czech team.

The Czechs were to be in the area as part of a Michigan tour arranged by the Windsor National Basketball Association.

When the plea for help came from the Czech Sokol Cultural Center in Dearborn Heights, the Cortises, who are active at Sokol, were the first to say yes even though Mrs. Cortis is the only one in the family who speaks Czech.

Last summer the couple visited relatives of Mrs. Cortis in Czechoslovakia "and they were so good to us, we felt we could repay some of that generosity with some American good will," said Cortis, who is Maltese.

On very short notice, Cortis lined up eight other families to help house the team. Volunteering were Bruce and Maurine Yanda and Ann Armstrong of Livonia and Jim and Jerry Kalivoda of Garden City plus other couples from Dearborn and Detroit.

Each family was to provide sleeping quarters for the various team members. It was agreed that the Cortises would handle the entertainment for those families who weren't able to do any entertaining.

CORTIS MET the group at Metro airport last Friday morning and had the whole bunch over for breakfast. Then Cortis learned it also would be his responsibility for have them all for lunch -- and also dinner that night.

"That was because some of the host families weren't quite ready for them," Cortis explained.

Breakfast was mounds of pancakes and sausage washed down by several gallons of orange juice, followed soon after by lunch of ham and potato salad and baked beans and various side dishes.

"We had an 11-pound ham and it was completely gone," chuckled Marilyn Cortis, who cooked most of the banquet-sized meals for the team member, all of whom were near to 7-foot tall.

"Thank heavens for paper plates and Farmer Jack's deli department," she added, referring to Saturday's night's meal.

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