

dren who were not looked after by an old granny in a bush could have become more easily prey to predators, or simply, get injured.

Looking at the Lada's pictures, we, middle-aged men and women, working busily, should admit: "The conditions we are able to create for our old parents pave the way we are going to live and die when we get old." The following words haven't lost their value: "What you are now we also used to be, and what we are now, you'll be in the future." The survivor curve makes it clear that nearly all of us are going to live till the age of the old lady on the picture. Let's try hard to be still able to walk up the hill with a little boy the way she does, and let's hope we will not be sitting locked up in an old people's home. There are parking places in front of such houses that are usually full of cars only once a month – when the pension money arrives...

Nevertheless, there is a solution to all these questions, and the era of Josef Lada had an answer. The solution is called the system of secondary suits. It is something very different from a cohabitation of several generations merging in one apartment, a blueprint that had devastated many marriages in the past. The granny suits system meant two financially and functionally independent neighbouring households. Small children could pass from one household to the other without any barriers or obstacles, and adults had their territories clearly defined, often by means of a contract. (See an example of the Cession Contract from 1928).



## Other differences between the old and new worlds.

If we went back to the times of Josef Lada, we would be really struck by one difference. The world of that time was quite stinky and smelly for our taste. Our modern society strives to avoid aromatic substances. Not only manure and some aromatic food like onions or garlic are disappearing, but also all strongly smelling perfumes are departing slowly from the market. Deodorants and antiperspirants come in their place. Olfactory perceptions are not reflected in songs any more – or do you know some modern song written in recent years that would talk about such aromatic notions like the folk song: "Ach, my clove-pink, my sweet-smelling rose...?"

The world of Josef Lada was dominated by scents and smells, and it knew no bulbs, cars or televisions. Such a bulb is a much trickier invention than one would think at the first sight. When I ask my twenty-five students who went to bed before midnight, nobody raises his or her arm. I, their professor, am the only one. Not only people, but also rats, for example, tend to change their daily biorhythm. That applies especially for neurotics, for whom the only pleasant part of the day is the night, and they wish to enjoy it. Unfortunately, in the world of electric bulbs there is no means to stop this tendency. Bulbs are closely related to sleep deprivation and consequent chronic depression.

The world of Josef Lada didn't suffer from problems of confused biorhythm. People lived the same way they had lived in the Ancient and Middle Ages, waking up at sunrise and going to bed after sunset – plus some chatting in the evening, sitting around the fire or in a pub. That's why we prefer to watch TV in the evening and not in the morning. But television isolates us from those with whom we would otherwise spend our time. At Hrusice there the whole village – the most important villagers with the humblest



ones – gathered in the pub, and the children used to listen to stories about water sprites and other spooks. We have lost the habit to meet in pubs and to come to gatherings of any kind. Clubs, parties and religions are fading out. Maybe this is one of possible sources of alienation that is so difficult to cure nowadays. Not even Josef Lada can offer any solution.



## Conclusion

This introduction doesn't have an ambition to list all the differences between our world and that of Josef Lada one hundred years ago. Its main purpose was to raise curiosity in the visitors of the Lada's Museum and, possibly, show them a new perspective from which they could observe their lives for the first time.

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# JOSEF LADA



## LAUNCHING A PERFECT PROBE INTO THE LIFE OF A COMMON MAN



Středočeský kraj

EU2009.CZ

Josef Lada left the village of Hrusice just to return there. This simple sentence describes well the whole complex life of the painter. Hrusice of his late pictures are an old man's reminiscence of his idealised childhood. Well, what's wrong with that? This idealisation doesn't really distort the way real life is described. If Lada writes that he as a two years toddler was allowed to go out alone and play at the bank of a pond, there is no reason for us not to believe him and think that in fact, real life was different. It leads us to the most precious aspect that Lada's work can have from a psychologist's point of view, and eventually also from the point of view of a man of the modern era, and that means you, readers. The author launches a perfect probe into the world where neither television nor radio existed, and where the first photographs had just appeared. Such a historical probe into the life of humble peasants is quite rare. History usually records lives of noblemen, army leaders, popes - but which of us have got blue blood in our veins? Authors of chronicles usually pay attention to extraordinary events, but our lives consist mainly of common days, and not only the Prague Spring, the Velvet Revolution, the Nagano Olympic Games or the Kyrill hurricane. Josef Lada is one of the few artists who are able to capture in a straightforward way what we could have been and how we could have lived some 150 years ago at Hrusice or some other Czech village.

### What is normal?

In the past, the way of life was changing very slowly and it used be closer to what today is called the evolutionary past. By that we understand a period of about two million years that had formed our genotype. Evolutionist scientists who wish to know what was imprinted by nature into our DNA double-helix, into our genes, research behaviour of people from all over the world. The behaviour we share with others might not be conditioned by a local or historical culture, but it results from our genes.

The modern era we are living in is so hectic that we lose our orientation in what is normal and what is not; what circulates in our blood and what does not. The work of Josef Lada represents one of many retrospective looks into the era when a man's behaviour used to be guided by inborn patterns on a much broader scale than it is today.



Let us have a look at this example:

Josef Lada writes in his memoirs: "One single room served as a kitchen, a dormitory and a shoemaker's workshop at the same time. The six members of our family slept there." On the other hand, in the USA, one can adopt a child only if one can offer this child a separate bedroom. That means that should you want to have 4 children, you should live in a kind of castle consisting of some six bedrooms and three kitchens. You also might remember your friend saying: "I had been dreaming about having a bedroom of my own all my childhood." But if one starts to define exactly the period described as "all my childhood", it turns out that it means basically since the teenage years up. Six-year-old children do not dream about bedrooms of their own, and they definitely do not wish to go to sleep alone. This idea is just as absurd as if a primeval woman had sent her offspring to sleep in one cave, let's say Chýnov, while her own bed would be in the Koněprusy Cave, some 20 km away. In our evolutionary history, those children who were not within an easy reach of their parents at a critical moment, felt victim to predators or dangerous events. This probably accounts for the little ones wishing to fall asleep with their heads cuddled into their parents' bodies. That is the safest place in the whole Cosmos (naturally, until the teenage period), and the regular breathing of the sleeping parent is the best lullaby a child can dream of. Those parents or officials, who try to change that natural behaviour forcing children to sleep alone in a separate bedroom with a night-light switched on, violate the genetic predestination of a traditional child. That's why the work of Josef Lada is so successful. It takes us back to the environment corresponding with the origin of our genes, which is normal from the evolutionary point of view.

### Evolutionary toys

Josef Lada writes: "The house, despite of being so low that an adult person could easily touch the ceiling, had solid stone walls up to one metre thick. That accounted for a pleasant fresh air in the summertime, but in winter, the walls were sweating so much that there were streams of water running down. It caused a lot of damage to our humble furniture, pictures on the walls and cloths inside wardrobes, but it pleased me enormously. I used to walk on the bed guiding the brooklets by my finger to merge and form one big river flowing down toward the ground. The wetness could not destroy the floor, which was made of a foot-pounded earth similar to that of a threshing-barn floor,



with minor pebbles sticking out now and then, instead of wooden knags. There I could dig narrow corridors quite easily using an old spoon, and direct the water into a small pond. I was proud of that little pond in the middle of our living room and talked about it with other boys. And when I invited some sons of richer village farmers to persuade them that I was not lying, their faces betrayed envy. They would never have such great ponds in their exclusive and dry homes."

The most important toys that have accompanied mankind on its long evolution include hands and fingers of parents; stones; sticks; water, mud or sand. These ancient toys are truly powerful. Still today, modern children would insist on their playgrounds with sandboxes in big cities, though these have no real charm or practical use in the world of their adult parents. On the contrary, they can cause damage to every household equipped with luxuries.

### Memory of an evolutionary toy

This picture circulates on the Internet with a laconic title: "The Fifth Commandment: Thou Shalt not Kill!" But let us



ask "Whom?" Children, because they act the way their genes dictate them, or parents who lock their children into sterile flats where children feel so estranged? Notice that this photo shows happy children. The unhappy ones here are the parents. Yes, this is exactly what Josef Lada had depicted. Sons of well-to-do farmers would have loved to have a pond in the middle of the living room, but they were not allowed to have one.



### Grandparents and grandchildren

**There is a grandmother walking up the bush, I'll follow her anywhere she'll push, there is she and here is me, we both hide behind a tree.**



Though Lada doesn't mention his grandparents in his memoirs, there are many similar hints in his pictures. The world of Josef Lada was naturally populated by different generations. We can often hear that the average age used to be lower in the past, and that people did not live so long as they do now. Nevertheless, the old lady on the picture must be well over sixty. There were elderly people, and though their number in population was proportionally lower, it was compensated by a higher mortality rate of the pre-school children. They might have been fewer but they were more visible in the society than today, when they are often hidden in old people's homes or stationaries for the elderly and ill.

The picture shows clearly the age of the boy. He is a pre-school child or a primary school student. The most important role of the grandparents in the process of evolution was to help their grandchildren under six to survive since the mortality rate of young children in the hunters and collectors' society used to be nearly 33%. At the same time, the care for grandchildren explains the longevity of people compared to their relatives among primates. In others words, those chil-

