

Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Fall Issue ~ Vol. 10 No. 2

October 2013

carol jean smetana, editor

Mission Statement:

Promote the historical significance, enhance the beauty, and preserve the artistic heritage of Bohemian National Cemetery

Vision:

Create an appreciation of BNC in local, national, and international audiences



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What's New with Friends of BNC

Friends took to the outdoors in July, at both the annual **Bohemian National Cemetery** picnic and the **Czechoslovak American Congress** picnic in Brookfield. No rain made for good crowds at both, and it is fun to greet people and explain what we do as well as sell our books and gift items at these venues.

One-hundred-year-old wind-up Victrolas, music recorded before 1915,

and two wonderful speakers about **Bohumir Kryl** made our summer meeting one to remember! Read more about our program and see photos on page three. I couldn't resist buying one of Bohumir's recordings, newly formatted as a CD, and had it in my car when I took my 10-year-old grandson **Blake** and his brother **Pierce** on an outing recently.

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Gathering to place a wreath at Bohumir Kryl's crypt in the Masaryk Memorial Mausoleum are (left to right): Tim McCormick, Marge Sladek Stueckemann, William Serp, Marilou Minarik, Larry Paarlberg, Diane Minarik. William is a descendant of Louise Minarik and John Kryl, Bohumir's brother. Louise Minarik Kryl was Marilou and Diane's great-aunt.. See page 3 for a recap of Friends Summer meeting. (Photo courtesy of Connie Wolf)

Live from BNC

In the beginning of July, **Radu (John Illse)** reported that there was condensation on the floors and walls of the crematorium/columbarium building. **Chuck Cervenka** checked it out and noticed plaster and paint chips on the benches and floor near the west wall. He did not find any evidence of water leakage from the ceiling (the dome) and suspected the damage might be caused by

condensation. More information has to be gathered. If condensation is causing the problem, a very large dehumidifier will be needed to cope with the problem.

The cemetery's picnic was held on July 7th and it was a beautiful day. The food concession was provided by **Klas Restaurant**. There also were bakery, pop

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Heritage Happenings

Heritage Happenings is published quarterly by Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery, a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

Manuscripts, articles, photographs, and advertisements for *Heritage Happenings* may be submitted to carol jean smetana, 167 County Road A4A, Sapello, NM 87745-5026 or emailed to her at editor@friendsofbnc.org.

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Publicity: *Open; would you like to volunteer?*

Special Projects: *Jerry Gaydusek*

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from the editor's laptop

You may wonder why teacher Leticia Aldama would bring sixth-graders to Bohemian National Cemetery when none of the children have relatives buried there. (See "Stories of the Stones" on page four.) The description of the Palmer School field trip reminds us of the variety of experiences the cemetery offers to everyone who enters its gates. BNC has 136 years of history to share with us. Public monuments and grave markers commemorate the wars our soldiers have fought. They introduce us to men and women who have played significant roles not only in the history of our country but in the histories of other countries too - and not just the Czech Republic! The funeral art on the gravestones is complemented by the decorative art in the Ceremony Hall, and the mausoleums and buildings reflect popular trends in architecture. The beauty of the grounds inspires the artist in us all - to draw, to paint, to photograph, to write, to play music, or perhaps to simply contemplate. Strolling through the grounds, we notice that the people buried at BNC held different religious beliefs, spoke different languages, and were of varying financial means. In welcoming one and all, the cemetery embodies the harmony that is the hope for our world. It is one of my favorite aspects of Bohemian National Cemetery. What is yours?

*Na shledanou!
carol jean smetana*

Welcome to Our New Members!

Mike and Karen Gallagher ... Glenview, IL

Mari Minarik ... Oak Park, IL

Wynnell E. Noelke ... Austin, TX

Ellen Pomes ... Libertyville, IL

Terry Stirling ... Glenview, IL

Děkuji vám!

Rob Charlemagne, BNC staff member, for set-up and great help with summer meeting

Diane Minarik for wreath for Bohumir Kryl

Mary Syrup for baked goods, plus weeding of our floral display

Arline Artist for weeding of our floral display

Art Lorenz for staffing our book table at the BNC and CAC picnics

Frank Magallon for staffing our book table at the BNC and CAC picnics

Lili Nemeč for bakery donations and flyer distribution

Janet Neal, a new Wednesday volunteer

Wayne Wolf for sharing with us his Victrolas and Kryl recordings at our summer meeting

Tim McCormick, speaker at our summer meeting

Larry Paarlberg, speaker at our summer meeting

What's New with Friends of BNC

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Blake plays the cornet. So as the virtuoso Kryl is doing wonderful things with his instrument, Blake's 5-year-old brother started talking. Blake said, "Be quiet, Pierce. I want to listen to this!" So maybe Bohumir will inspire a 21st-century musician with partial Czech heritage to really stick with it! Hope so!

Our restorer **Tony Kartsonas** is due to begin work on the entryway artwork and the refinishing of the doors in September. Concerns about the dome (which appeared to be leaking in 2012, although the latest inspections are not totally conclusive as to what needs to be done) prompted us to move ahead with restoring the entryway artwork. We are using the proceeds from

SpringFest, which include a \$500 grant we received from the **Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs**. Look for Tony and his workers to be there bringing that wonderful Mallin décor back to its original beauty!

We are proud that our very own **Carol Jean Smetana** will be one of the featured speakers at the upcoming **Czechoslovak Genealogy Society International** conference in Lombard from October 23rd to October 26th. Carol Jean will speak on the cemetery itself and also on the Freethinkers. Friends will host one of the three tours on Wednesday, October 23rd. The bus will leave Lombard around 8:00 a.m., arriving somewhere around 9:00 a.m. If you are available that day, please come to

the cemetery and greet the visitors who will be coming from across the U.S. and possibly also from the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Three of the speakers live in our homeland areas! For more information, call **Evelyn Krenek Fergle**, 248-922-1385 or email her, czechekf@aol.com. You also can find the registration booklet on the CGSI website, www.cgisi.org. Evelyn is one of our Friends directors and the chair of the Illinois committee working on this conference. I hope to see you there!

Enjoy the beauty of fall, and try to get to the cemetery to see all the colored leaves in October!

Marge Sladek Stueckemann
President

Friends Summer Meeting



Larry Paarlberg (Left) and Tim McCormick (right)

On Sunday, August 18th, approximately fifty people gathered in the Front Hall of the crematorium/columbarium building for the 2013 Friends Summer Meeting on Bohumir Kryl, one of the most engaging and flamboyant characters to be inurned at Bohemian National Cemetery.

Evelyn Krenek Fergle opened the meeting with a brief history of our Friends organization. She then conducted the election of officers for the coming year. The current officers were unanimously reelected – Marge Sladek Stueckemann, president; Andy Bultas, vice-president; Helen Gaydusek, secretary; and Juli Nelson, treasurer.

Marge Sladek Stueckemann

introduced our speakers, Larry Paarlberg, director, General Lew Wallace Study and Museum, and Tim McCormick, president, International Antique Phonograph Society. They presented a fascinating program on the life and music of Bohumir Kryl (1875-1961), Bohemian-American sculptor and musician. Friends member Wayne Wolf delighted the audience with antique phonographs from his personal collection, and we enjoyed recordings of Kryl's musical performances. Hearing Kryl play, we could understand why Kryl earned world renown for his cornet technique.



Wayne Wolf with his
Edison Cylinder Phonograph

Stories of the Stones

by Leticia Aldama

In mid-May of 2013, I announced our impending trip to the Bohemian National Cemetery to a group of sixth-grade art students. Reactions from students were mixed, and ran the gamut from saucer-eyed astonishment to “How cool!”

On May 24th, sixth-grade students from Palmer Elementary School visited the Bohemian National Cemetery. The trip had a multitude of purposes, that is, the introduction of the hidden gem, otherwise known as the Bohemian National Cemetery, and its unique historic significance from the past to present day.

Palmer students helped to place flags to honor both living and fallen United States military service members for Memorial Day. Students learned about the Bohemian National Cemetery and the lives of people from the past and how it directly relates to their present day community. I informed the students that it is vitally important to respect the Bohemian National Cemetery as a sacred place. It is my hope that students understand the



photo by Juli Nelson

importance of the Bohemian National Cemetery and its radical progressive mindset of embracing people of all faiths, set forth from 1877 to present day.

Students engaged in a writing activity followed by an art project that documented their experience at the Bohemian National Cemetery. I can safely say that all students enjoyed

themselves and will carry this memory well into their adult lives.

I'd like to thank the parents who volunteered to act as chaperones for our trip. Current 6th-grade students will visit the Bohemian National Cemetery later this school year!



Palmer students enjoyed their day at the cemetery, helping plant flags for Memorial Day and learning about the cemetery's history.





How the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs Helps Bohemian National Cemetery

by Marge Sladek Stueckemann

Do you think of yourself as a Czech living abroad? Even though your family may have been in the U.S. for a number of generations, if you are connected to Czech culture by being a member of an organization like Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery, the Czech government classifies you just that way – as a Czech living abroad!

In order to promote Czech culture here, the Ministry has given the Bohemian National Cemetery Association a grant each year since 2004. Before 2008, the grant committee of Andy Bultas and Juli Nelson wrote grant requests on behalf of the cemetery only. Since 2008, however, the committee has made two grant requests each year: one for funding for a project for the cemetery infrastructure and a second one for a Friends project. Usually the fundraising activities of Friends provide the necessary matching funds for both grant requests, although sometimes cemetery funds are added or individual supporters, in response to special requests, directly provide the monies.

Andy and Juli do a great job writing the grant proposals: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic has presented grants each year to the Bohemian National Cemetery Association (since 2004) and to Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery (since 2008), in order to promote Czech

culture here. The first grant helped fund the publication of Friends' crematorium/columbarium booklet in 2004. The largest grant awarded – \$14,000 in 2007 – was for the restoration of the art glass windows in the crematorium/columbarium building. In that case, matching funds were provided by eight families who donated generous amounts and have their names on the plaque in the building. Most of our grants since then have been for much smaller amounts. Another grant made possible the publication in 2012 of our book *A Dear and Precious Heritage*. For next year, the BNCA grant request is for funding to fix the exterior stairs of the crematorium/columbarium building. Friends is requesting funding to help provide supplies to enable us to host children wanting to learn about the cemetery (see *Stories of the Stones* article on page 4).

In fact, many of the improvements at the cemetery, such as the roof to the gatehouse, the new windows in the waiting room, wiring and heating upgrades, and tuck-pointing, benefited from Czech Republic government grants and Friends matching funds.

Having our homeland so interested in what we do is a great inspiration to all of us!



Ministry of Foreign Affairs
of the Czech Republic



Donations

Benefactors

(\$1000—\$9999)

Frank Ruzicka

Sponsors

(\$100—\$499)

Leticia Aldama

Joseph Calek

Marilyn Drury-Katillo

Elizabeth Raleigh

James Trnka

Donors

(\$25—\$99)

Wynnell Noelke

Thank You

(\$1—\$24)

Stanley Walton III

*Thank you all for your generosity.
Your donations help preserve and restore Bohemian National Cemetery.*

Upcoming Events for Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Friends will be participating in the **Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International's 14th Annual Genealogical and Cultural Conference to be held in Lombard, Illinois, October 23-26, 2013.**

On Wednesday the 23rd, there will be a tour of Bohemian National Cemetery and downtown Chicago. We will have a sales table at the cemetery that day, as well as at the conference on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. If you'd like to help staff the table for an hour or two on any day, please call Marge Stueckemann at 847-362-9036. The conference will feature a cultural craft workshop, presentations on bobbin lace and German-Bohemian culture, history sessions, including one on the *Eastland* and another on emigration from Czechoslovakia during the Communist era, as well as genealogy sessions on topics such as Chicago-area resources and beginning genealogy. The editor of our quarterly newsletter *Heritage Happenings*, Carol Jean Smetana, will give a presentation on Bohemian National Cemetery on Friday and one on Bohemian Freethinkers on Saturday. There is still time to register; in fact day-of-conference registration for walk-ins will be available. You can come for a day or two or for the entire conference. For more information, go to www.cgsi.org or call Evelyn at 248-922-1385 or email her, czechekf@aol.com.

Mark your calendars for **Friends winter meeting: Sunday, January 26, 2014.**

We'll be gathering at Klas Restaurant in Cicero, with cash bar at 12:30 pm, lunch at 1:30 pm, and our program at 3:00 pm.



Dr. Susan Mikula, Professor of Slovak Studies at Benedictine University, Lisle, Illinois, will speak on Dr. Milan Hodža (1878-1944), Slovak statesman, journalist, and professor. At the time of his death, he was living in exile in the United States and was buried at Bohemian National Cemetery. Our next issue will have information about making reservations for lunch, which will cost \$25. The program, as always, will be free.



Live from BNC

(continued from first page)

and slurpee stands. Music was also provided. The voting for the floral design contest, in which all the cemetery's delegate organizations participated, was held. The winner was **CSA Lodge Sokol Plzen # 434**, who sponsored the children from **T G Masaryk Czech School** in Cicero. The children planted flowers in the design of the Czech flag. (You can see their photo in our previous issue of Heritage Happenings.) The picnic was well attended and enjoyed by everyone there.

Another phase of restoration of the crematorium/columbarium building is going to begin. **Tony Kartsonas of Historic Surfaces** is going to do restoration work in the front vestibule area. The original painted decoration on the front vestibule's walls and ceiling will be restored to retain the historic decoration, which was done by **John Mallin**. Also both sides of the exterior doors will be refinished, as will the two inner doors with glass panels. The floor tiles are to be replaced also. Tony will have the **Preservative Group from the**

Art Institute assist him in this restoration, which is tentatively scheduled to start the week of September 23rd.

Chuck Cervenka, **Jerry Gaydusek**, **Chuck Michalek**, **Andy Bultas** and John Illse have been cutting trees along the Chicago River. The trees' roots in this area have been growing through the concrete wall, constructed in the 1980s. These roots have been causing the concrete to crumble. Removing these trees will hopefully prevent any further deterioration of the wall. To date approximately 14 trees have been removed.

On August 30th the Chicago area again sustained a terrible rain and wind storm, causing considerable damage to the cemetery. Many huge trees and branches were blown down, falling on quite a few headstones. The area hardest hit was the south end of the cemetery closest to Foster Avenue. **Chuck Betzold**, assisted by John Illse and **Steve Ziolkowski** and one of Steve's friends, worked the Labor Day weekend cutting and removing large trees and branches. John and Steve, who are cemetery employees,

volunteered their time, so it didn't cost the cemetery any wages. I believe that this is true dedication on the part of our cemetery employees. The work on removing the debris continued throughout the week. On Wednesday September 4th, Chuck Michalek and Andy assisted cemetery employees **Ed, Sam** and John in cutting and removing more trees and branches. Most of the larger branches and trees have now been removed, while clean-up of the many smaller branches still scattered throughout the cemetery continues. Even throughout all this turmoil the landscaping service has continued to work cutting the grass and trimming around the headstones.

The cemetery looks beautiful. This is because all the people involved in its upkeep have worked very hard this year, despite all the damage caused by area storms. I strongly recommend everyone come and see the result of this work, and enjoy the cemetery's beauty.

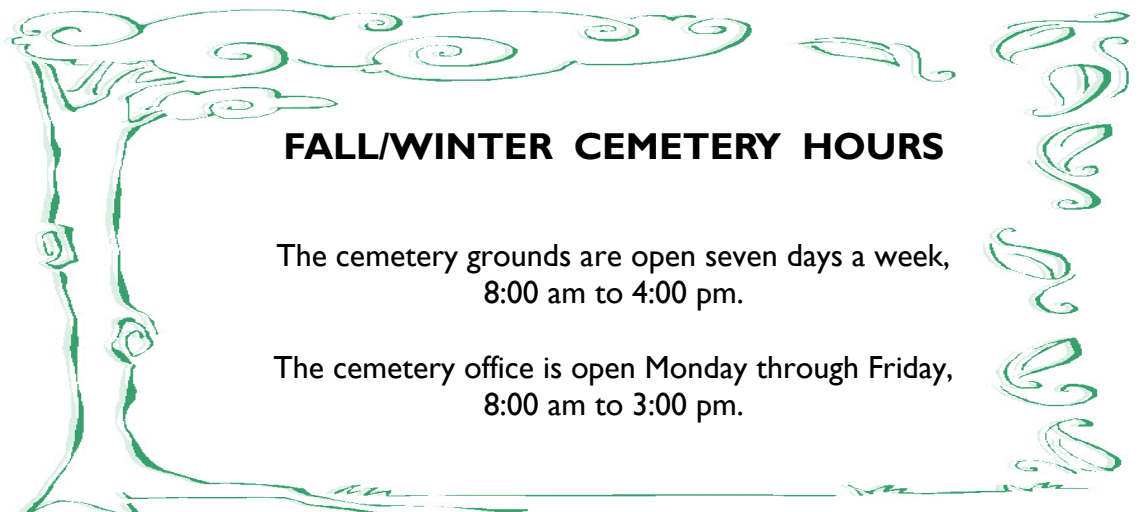
Andy Bultas
Vice-President

Upcoming Events at Bohemian National Cemetery

FALL/WINTER CEMETERY HOURS

The cemetery grounds are open seven days a week, 8:00 am to 4:00 pm.

The cemetery office is open Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 3:00 pm.



Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

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Heritage Happenings

we're on the web
www.friendsofbnc.org



MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL REMINDER

Your membership in Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery is vital to the preservation of our cemetery. As a member, you will receive our quarterly newsletter and be entitled to discounts on merchandise and our "Tours of the Tombstones." Above all, you will enjoy the satisfaction of knowing you are helping to maintain, improve and beautify Bohemian National Cemetery.

Our membership year is January - December. This means that **all memberships, except those renewed for two years last year, will expire December 31, 2013.** New members joining in the last quarter of a year (Sept.-Dec.) receive those 3 months as a bonus, and their membership year begins the following January.

Please send in your renewal now!

Memberships:

One year: \$25 individual; \$35 family;
\$20 student or senior; \$30 senior family.
Two years: \$45 individual; \$60 family;
\$35 student or senior; \$50 senior family.

Send renewal form with check payable to
Friends of BNC or credit card information
to:

**FOBNC c/o Miss Juli Nelson
300 Claymoor #2F
Hinsdale, IL 60521-5076**

Friends of BNC is a 501(c) (3) not-for-profit
public charity. To make a tax-deductible
donation to fund improvements at BNC,
please write a separate check with a notation on the memo line. Thank you.

Membership Renewal

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip Code (+ 4) _____

E-mail _____

Phone Number _____

Type of Membership _____

For credit card payment (Visa, Master Card, Discover, American Express), include:

Card number _____ Expiration date _____

Security code _____ Signature _____