

# Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Winter Issue ~ Vol. 11 No. 3

January 2015

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

Kickoff! The beginning of a football game is always a time of anticipation, and we all feel that same excitement as we have had the kickoff of the Master Plan! Roof tile repairs and

resetting certain cornice stones—our first two items have been completed! Watch for the replacement of the stairway to the crematorium/columbarium building coming in the

spring!

It is the generosity of our donors that provided the funding to allow these repairs! Thank you!

*(continued on page 3)*



**Work has begun on Friends' Master Plan for the restoration of the historic crematorium/columbarium building. See page 4 for details about our next steps.**

*photo courtesy of Marion Restoration, Inc.*

## Live from BNC

**Gethsemane Gardens** has donated one of their older trucks to Bohemian National Cemetery to use. The cemetery personnel use this vehicle constantly for cemetery work such as burials, cleaning up the cemetery grounds, picking

up garbage etc. The vehicle can only be used on the cemetery premises, as the truck is not licensed to go on the city streets. The cemetery had to buy a new truck a few months ago after the previous truck broke down and would have been very expensive

to have an outside garage repair it. Having the donated truck available to us to use around the cemetery will mean less wear and tear on the new vehicle. A plow was purchased for the new truck.

*(continued on page 7)*

## Heritage Happenings

Heritage Happenings is published quarterly by Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery.

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](mailto:editor@friendsofbnc.org).

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### Officers of Friends of BNC

- President: Marge Sladek Stueckemann
- Vice-President: Andy Bultas
- Secretary: Helen Gaydusek
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- Newsletter: carol jean smetana
- Publicity: April Hasson
- Special Projects: Jerry Gaydusek
- Webmaster: carol jean smetana



### from the editor's laptop

The crematorium/columbarium building is the architectural showpiece of Bohemian National Cemetery. Friends is pleased to be undertaking what is likely the first major holistic assessment and restoration of the building since it was constructed almost 100 years ago. The building is vital to the operation of the cemetery: it not only contains the crematory and columbaria but also accommodates funerals and memorial services in its Ceremony Hall. The building is also vital to the legacy of Czechs and Slovaks in the United States, with the impressive rotunda of the Ceremony Hall, magnificently decorated by Moravian artist John Mallin. Friends is fortunate to have found Charles Pipal and Dan Ruzic to develop and manage a Master Plan for the repair and preservation of the crematorium/columbarium building. (The lead article in the Summer 2014 issue of Heritage Happenings described the steps Friends of BNC was taking to develop a preservation plan for the building and introduced Charles and Dan; you can read the article online at [www.friendsofbnc.org](http://www.friendsofbnc.org).)

The Survey and Master Plan document submitted to Friends has piqued my interest in learning more about the architectural aspects of the crematorium/columbarium building. For instance, in the document the building is described as having "a piano nobile scheme, with a grand stair and entry to the north." "Piano nobile" ("noble floor" in Italian) is an architectural term rooted in the Italian Renaissance, when the main reception rooms in a typical palace were located in an upper story above the ground floor. These rooms were characterized by splendid decorations and higher ceilings than the rooms on the lower floor. The piano nobile was accessed from the ground level by a grand exterior staircase or pair of staircases. Doesn't that perfectly describe the design of our crematorium/columbarium building?

There are other useful terms. The steps of the c/c building lead up to a "terrace." Entry is gained through a "Tuscan portico"—a portico is an entrance porch with columns and a roof; the columns here are of the Tuscan order, that is, their bases are simple, they have no decorations, and the columns are smooth rather than grooved. Walking across the Tuscan portico and through the main door, you enter the "narthex," the area where Tony Kartsonas did some restoration work last year, which we variously called the entryway or vestibule.

Isn't language wonderful?

Na shledanou!  
carol jean smetana

## Welcome to Our New Treasurer!

Welcome to Glenn Spachman, who has joined the board as our new treasurer. Thank you, Glenn, for volunteering.

## Join Our Team!

Volunteer to help with our projects and programs! Email Marge at [mdstueck@aol.com](mailto:mdstueck@aol.com)

## Welcome to Our New Members!

- Gary A. Durante** ... Des Plaines, IL
- Jill Kempson & Gene Rehmers** ... Chicago, IL
- Katharine Konopasek** ... Chicago, IL
- Sonia Skubal** ... Westmont, IL
- Patricia Sticha** ... Chicago, IL
- Jean Uhlir** ... Addison, IL
- Patricia Young** ... Davidsonville, MD

## What's New with Friends of BNC

(continued from first page)

See page four for a more complete explanation of the plan. The article was co-written by **Kathryn Lorenz** who, with help from her husband **Art**, is serving as Friends' liaison with the architect and project manager implementing the Master Plan.

The usually excellent attendance at our October tours took a nosedive this fall—only a total of 32 people for two tours—but considering the TERRIBLE weather, this was actually really good. We welcomed the Chicago Czech Consul, **Milana Ličková**, who braved the wind and rain and agreed that BNC was a true treasure!

Other visitors included five senators from the Czech Republic and their translator, with their host,

our new Czech Chicago Consul General, **Bořek Lizec**. One of the visitors, the chair of the Senate Committee on Education, Science, Culture, Human Rights and Petitions, **Dr. Jaromir Jermář**, has family buried in the cemetery. Thanks to assistance from **Dolores Benes Duy**, we were able to find the gravestone so he could take pictures to take back to Prague. It was so special to have a chance to connect the old and new that way!

All of Illinois and especially the Czech community were devastated by the death of **Judy Baar Topinka**, who had just been re-elected as Illinois State Comptroller and was only 70 years old. Judy had just spoken to us at our 10th anniversary celebration (see the October newsletter). We treasure her memory and all the times she came to our programs, to the BNC picnic,

and to the galas. She was honored by everyone who knew her, Democrats and Republicans alike.

For those of you who enjoy doing things on your computer, check (CZECH) out the new interactive features available on our webpage. Some of you might remember the restaurant that once graced the area. See a picture of it on the webpage along with a really neat map.

I look forward to seeing everyone at our January 25th winter meeting at Klas Restaurant! See page six and the back of the newsletter for particulars.

All the best for a most happy and healthy 2015.

**Marge Sladek Stueckemann**  
**President**

## Upcoming Events at Bohemian National Cemetery



**Monday, May 25th ~ Memorial Day**

Look for details in our next issue. Friends will again place flags on the cemetery grounds the Friday before

**Sunday, May 31st ~ Tour of the Tombstones at 1:00 pm led by Albert Walavich**

**Sunday, August 16th - Friends Summer Meeting at BNC**  
Look for details in our next issue

**Sunday, October 10th ~ Tours of the Tombstones at 10:00 a.m. and at 1:00 pm led by Albert Walavich**

## Moving Forward with the Master Plan

by Kathryn Lorenz and carol jean smetana

In August, preservation architect Charles Pipal and project manager Dan Ruzic presented Friends of BNC with a recommended prioritized plan for corrective work to the crematorium/columbarium building, based on the survey of the building they conducted last spring and summer. (See “Friends of BNC Embarks on a Major Project: A Preservation Plan for the Crematorium/ Columbarium Building” in the Summer 2014 issue of *Heritage Happenings*.) They concluded that the most essential task is to “secure the building envelope” in order to stop the water infiltration that has been damaging the interior of the building. To that end, they identified several areas that need work, including the tile roofing; the various flat roofs; the cupola/ finial that sits atop the dome; the dome flashing, gutters and downspouts; exterior masonry walls; glazing; and (a safety issue) the front terrace and steps.

The Preservation Assessment Implementation Plan, or Master Plan, identified and prioritized the items that need to be done, and included

cost estimates from Knickerbocker Roofing and Marion Restoration. The Friends of BNC board approved immediate funding for all the priority-one items in the plan: repair or replace damaged or missing roof tiles on the dome and tower; reset four dangerously loose cornice stones; and replace the front terrace and steps.



*Steps leading to the terrace of the crematorium/columbarium building (photo screen capture from Google Maps)*

Work began in October 2014. Knickerbocker Roofing replaced broken and missing tiles. Marion Restoration, a company specializing in historic restoration, reset the loose cornice stones. In the course of that work, Marion also removed samples of the original mortar used in the construction of the building almost a century ago. These samples will be analyzed by US Heritage Group, Inc. to determine the original composition so that an appropriate

matching mortar that will bind with the original mortar can be used in subsequent repairs of the exterior walls. This will prevent further deterioration and ultimate failure of the metal clips holding the limestone pieces on the building.

Friends of BNC realized the serious safety issue of the front entry steps to the crematorium/

columbarium building and wanted the front terrace and steps to be replaced before winter, but there wasn't time. However, Zera Construction Company was able to investigate the structural condition and provided valuable information to project manager Dan Ruzic so that he could get bids for the job based on detailed specifications.

This will be the next work on the building: construction will begin

as soon as weather permits in 2015.

Looking ahead, additional items in the Master Plan on which we hope to begin work this year will involve repairs to the flat roof around the dome and the dome itself. Friends is excited to be working with top-rated restoration specialists to preserve and renovate the crematorium/ columbarium building, which is such an important part of our priceless heritage.



## Eastland Disaster Centennial Approaches

by Chuck Michalek

As reported in previous issues of *Heritage Happenings*, July 2015 marks the 100-year anniversary of the tragic *Eastland* steamship disaster in the Chicago River that claimed 844 lives. Chicago area newspapers, radio and television stations, historical organizations, and museums have been increasing their coverage of this disaster, which has been referred to as "America's Forgotten Tragedy." Several months ago a new book *Ashes Under Water...the SS Eastland and the Shipwreck that Shook America*, written by *Wall Street Journal* editor Michael McCarthy, was released.

Bohemian National Cemetery is doing its part to help "Remember the *Eastland*." With so many *Eastland* victims interred at the cemetery, BNCA's board in July 2014 approved the placement of an *Eastland* memorial in section 16 where many *Eastland* victims are buried. Funds for the construction of the memorial are being raised by the Eastland Centennial Commemorative Committee (ECCP).



Remembering the Eastland

In partnership with the Bevel Granite Company and their association with a Czech sculpture/artist, the above rendering has been formulated. The proposed memorial utilizes a large, dramatic piece of blue/green granite (representing the river) and an authentic, large Great Lakes steamship steering wheel angled into the granite (seen as either sinking or rising). A large black granite column will be engraved with pictures of the *Eastland* and written descriptions of the event. An old-fashioned bench will be placed on an area paved with colored donor bricks at the memorial site. Sitting on the bench, one directly views the memorial with a contemplative backdrop of section 16 grave sites and tombstones.

Funds are now needed to complete this important memorial so it can be finished in time for the July 24, 2015, anniversary. If you would like to make a financial contribution, please make your check out to Eastland Project and mail to: Eastland Project c/o Bohemian National Cemetery, 5255 Pulaski Rd, Chicago, IL 60630. Engraved bricks will be available for purchase (\$100, \$250, or \$500), offering a way for you, your family, or organization to receive long-lasting recognition for helping "remember the *Eastland*."

If you are interested in purchasing an engraved memorial brick or have questions about the project, please contact BNCA delegate and ECCP chairperson Chuck Michalek at [michalekchas@aol.com](mailto:michalekchas@aol.com).

## Donations

### Benefactors (\$1000—\$9999)

Carol Krauser  
Marge Sladek  
Stueckemann

### Patrons (\$500—\$999)

Bill and Ruth Rosol

### Sponsors (\$100—\$499)

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Frantiska Jankovsky  
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Anna Maxa Kubat  
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Kubat (1859-1900),  
Blanche Kubat (1909-  
1909), Frank A. Kubat  
(1909-1910), Blanche  
Kubat (1918-1918),  
Josef Lavicka (1860-  
1910), Terezie Cermak  
Lavicka Sheber (1866-  
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(1859-1938), Marie

Prochaska Linhart  
(1961-1944),  
Catherine Rejlek  
Linhart (1890-1951),  
John Linhan (1890-  
1973), Alois Benes  
(1854-1961), Marie  
Linhart Benes (1893-  
1991), James Rejlek  
(1886-1937),  
Margaret Vojik Rejlek  
(1889-1979) and my  
favorite uncle and aunt  
- James T. Linhart  
(1914-1998) and  
Dorothy Kahovec  
Linhart(1922-2011),  
all resting at Bohemian  
National Cemetery.  
Please keep it  
beautiful!

Carol May  
Wynnell Noelke

### Donors (\$25—\$99)

Judith Lovaas  
Shirley Stegner

### Thank You (\$1—\$24)

Dr. & Mrs. R. C. Musil

**Thank you all for your generosity.**

**Your donations help preserve and restore Bohemian National Cemetery ... and keep it beautiful!**

## “BNC Memorials: Old and New—The *Eastland* Memorial”

**Sunday, January 25th**

### Friends Winter Meeting at Klas Restaurant

Featured speaker Chuck Michalek will discuss the *Eastland* Memorial being planned for the 100-year anniversary of the *Eastland* disaster that occurred in the Chicago River in 1915. In discussing the proposed *Eastland* Memorial (“100 years in the Making”), Chuck will examine the concept of memorials at cemeteries like BNC and ask the question, “Why do we build memorials?” The presentation will feature numerous pictures of BNC’s historic memorials and monuments and present BNC’s newest memorial honoring the victims and heroes of the *Eastland*.

Chuck Michalek is a BNC delegate and a member of Friends of BNC who volunteers weekly at the cemetery. He is the chair of the *Eastland* Centennial Commemorative Project planning the *Eastland* Memorial at BNC.

## Live from BNC

(continued from first page)

Because of the continuous storms and high winds that have been occurring in the Chicago area, the cemetery has suffered heavy damage on the grounds. Trees have been blown down and headstones overturned. Because of this situation, the volunteers, **Chuck Betzold, Jim Miller, Chuck Michalek, Todd Michalek, Jerry Gaydusek** and **Andy Bultas** are still cutting trees and picking up branches. They have been averaging three to five truckloads, which are taken to the dump area across from Gethsemane. While cleaning up the debris, the volunteers are also trimming back trees and bushes that are covering the headstones. Also, fallen headstones that are small and can be picked up are put back into place.

**Duro** has been removing the trees and branches from the dump area and taking them up to Wisconsin where they are turned into wood chips. He also has been hauling away some of the dirt, reducing the height of the piles. **Duro** also has been working on the

wall along the river. He has repaired another 40 to 50 feet of the wall, which had crumbled into the river. **Duro** also has been loaning the cemetery some of his equipment, such as a skid steer loader, pick-up truck, etc., to use for various projects. **Dave Pimm, Jr.** also brings his skid steer loader and helps out with clearing the cemetery grounds.

**Steve** has been trying to do the normal maintenance on the equipment, but because he has to assist on the burials, which have increased, he sometimes cannot complete the maintenance on time. **Sammy** has been helping him with the equipment, which has helped to keep everything moving.

A lot of credit has to be given to the cemetery employees for being able to keep the cemetery running, especially with the increase of burials. The office personnel also have been doing double duty. The cemetery has to also recognize the help it has been receiving from **Dave Pimm, Jr.** and some of his friends that he brings with him. **Phil Roux's** death left a void in carrying out the duties of running the cemetery.

However, with the help of **Dave Pimm, Sr.**, the volunteers, the cemetery employees, **Duro**, and **Dave Pimm, Jr.**, the cemetery continues to operate.

The cemetery has received violation notices from the City of Chicago, stating that the structural soundness of the fencing and water tower are not up to the city's standards. A structural engineer will evaluate both the fencing and water tower and prepare a report for a February court date. Apparently all cemeteries and owners of water towers in Chicago have received similar notices.

Throughout history Czechs and Slovaks have had to deal with great obstacles and have always persisted. I am sure that Bohemian National Cemetery will prevail in this situation.

On a brighter note, the cemetery is still a wonderful place to visit, I encourage everyone who can to come and visit the cemetery.

**Andy Bultas**  
Vice-President

## Děkuji Vám!

Thanks to **Juli Nelson** for serving as our treasurer for many years.

Thanks to **Arlene Artist, Martha and Chuck Cervenka, April Hasson, Art and Kathryn Lorenz, and Mary Syrup** who did check-ins, refreshments, and manned the book table for our October tours.

Thanks to **Kathryn and Art Lorenz** for serving as liaisons on the Master Plan.

Thanks to **Martha and Chuck Cervenka and Helen and Jerry Gaydusek** for hosting the refreshments for the five Czech senators who visited BNC this fall.

Thanks to **April Hasson** for designing the flyer for our January meeting, and to **Lilli Nemec** for distributing the flyers in the Cicero/Berwyn area.

Thanks to **Jerry Gaydusek**, who was recognized by CSA Fraternal Life as "Fraternalist of the Year" and requested that the donation in his honor be made to Friends of BNC.

# Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

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## Heritage Happenings

we're on the web  
[www.friendsofbnc.org](http://www.friendsofbnc.org)



## Friends Presents Czech Dinner and Program on Sunday, January 25th, featuring Chuck Michalek and Tony Kartsonas

Join us for a delicious Czech meal and hear a presentation by Chuck Michalek on "BNC Memorials Old and New—The *Eastland* Memorial" (see page 6 for a full description), followed by a report by Tony Kartsonas on the restoration work he did in the crematorium/columbarium narthex.

**Where:** Klas Restaurant, 5734 W. Cermak Rd, Cicero      **When:** Sunday, January 25, 2015  
12:30 pm ~ Cash Bar; 1:30 pm ~ Czech Dinner, \$25 includes tax & tip  
3:00 pm ~ Free Program

**Reservations for the Czech dinner are required and must be postmarked by January 18, 2015.**

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

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

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Expiration Month \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_ Security code \_\_\_\_\_

Number Attending @ \$25 each: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Total Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

Send with check or credit card information to: Juli Nelson, 300 Claymoor #2F, Hinsdale, IL 60521