

Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Summer Issue ~ Vol. 13 No. 1

July 2016

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



Inside this issue:

Officers	2
from the editor's laptop	2
Děkuji Vám	2
Upcoming Events at BNC	3
Stories of the Stones - The Exiles at Bohemian National Cemetery-Part II	4
Donations	6
New Members	6
BNC in Print	6
Friends' Summer Meeting	8

What's New with Friends of BNC

Did you find out about Friends of BNC on the internet or Facebook? When we started in 2004, neither of these online venues was anywhere near as prevalent as now! But if you read the "Děkuji Vám" column, you saw the **10 CIT Rail people** who placed flags and also brought their muscle power plus gardening tools to root out the weeds and then help plant the flowers that beautified the cemetery for Memorial Day and the rest of the summer.

They found us on the web about five years ago when they wanted to put flags at some cemetery. Just **Amy Michalec's** family had someone at rest at BNC, and the others came to help instead of heading to work.

Another service we provide is to answer questions about those buried at BNC, even for some people still residing in the Czech Republic (or is that Czechia

(continued on page 3)



A large turn-out enjoyed the Mother's Day celebration at Bohemian National Cemetery, including children from the T.G. Masaryk Czech School in Cicero.

photo courtesy of T.G. Masaryk Czech School

Live from BNC

May was a very busy month at Bohemian National Cemetery. On May **7th, District Council #12 of CSA Fraternal Life** held their annual Join Hands Day. Approximately 40 members from various District #12 lodges participated. **Ken Dvorsky**, president of District #12, arranged for refreshments. The projects were divided into three locations in the cemetery. Some members cleaned the outdoor grounds, while others

cleaned the inside of the north gatehouse and the inside of the crematorium/ columbarium building. The CSA members did an excellent job.

On May 8th, over 150 people attended the cemetery's Mother's Day program, which began at 11:00 a.m. at the Albín Polášek Mother Monument. BNCA president **David Pimm** gave the annual Mother's Day speech. This was followed

(Continued on page 7)

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.

Copyright 2016 by Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Officers of Friends of BNC

President: Marge Sladek
Stueckemann

Vice-President: Andy Bultas

Secretary: Helen Gaydusek

Treasurer: Glenn Spachman

Directors:

Martha & Charles Cervenka,
Evelyn Krenek Fergle

Fund-Raising: Vacant

Membership: Gerri Romanelli

Newsletter: carol jean smetana

Publicity: Judie Mason

Sales/Marketing/Gala Chair:
Juli Nelson

Special Projects: Jerry Gaydusek

Webmaster: carol jean smetana



from the editor's laptop

Our last issue arrived in mailboxes almost two weeks later than I thought it would when I sent it to the printer (and it arrived at the printer two weeks later than I'd planned). That was unfortunate, since it meant details about upcoming May events arrived too late for those of you who hadn't yet decided to attend.

The problems getting the last issue to you in a timely manner made me wonder about emailing newsletters to members. We always post the newsletter on our website as soon as it is sent to the printer, and one or two of our members during the past year have asked if they could receive the newsletter electronically. I've decided it's time to give it a try. So if you'd like to have your newsletter emailed to you instead of receiving a hard copy in the mail, please email me at editor@friendsofbnc.org and let me know. I'll need your membership name and an email address. Unlike our print version, the electronic version of *Heritage Happenings* is in full color! Don't worry: we will still be sending out paper copies to those who prefer!

Have you checked out our website lately? There's a gallery of photos, a virtual tour, and our newest addition, "serendipity pages." On the home page, in the left-hand column under "Activities," click on "Learn some fun history."

I hope to attend the annual Bohemian National Cemetery picnic on Sunday, July 24th. I'll be around the Friends of BNC table much of the time, so please stop by and say hello!

Na shledanou!
carol jean smetana

Děkuji Vám!

Mary Syrup and Arline Artist ~ treats for the May 22nd tour and Memorial Day, as well as organizing the flower planting at the Cermak mausoleum, the bed in front of the gatehouse and also the Klacel Circle

Chuck Betzold, Chuck Michalek, Jim Trnka, Patty Volkman, and CIT Rail volunteers Stacie Dennis, Andrew Felix, Jeff Haden, Sheila Kowalski, Mel Kusta, Amy Latreille, Amy Michalec, Ellen Richter, Ross Succaso, Ephraim Tomenbang for helping place flags and gardening for Memorial Day

Juli Nelson, Pat Nelson, and Glenn Spachman for organizing the May 22nd tour

Jeff Tucek for photography at various events



What's New with Friends of BNC

(continued from first page now?) Just email info@friendsofbnc.org if you have a question.

As usual, May was VERY busy with a successful tour (62) on May 22nd, a great turn-out for the flag placing, a moving Memorial Day commemoration, and an amazing Mother's Day celebration. We are so sorry that a number of glitches got the May newsletter to you after the earlier May events were past. We partnered with the **T.G. Masaryk Czech School** by helping with the costs of the refreshment and the honorarium for the wonderful photographer who brought amazing pictures of the Czech countryside for an exhibit that was part of the Mother's Day event. The music provided by teacher **Klara Moldová** plus a wonderful pianist and cellist

was marvelous.

New this fall will be an evening flashlight tour on October 22nd. Because we have a strict limit of no more than 35 people, our members are the first to hear about it. Seeing the cemetery at dusk and into the night will give you a very different experience of the Tour of the Tombstones. Join us! There is a registration form included in this issue.

We continue to welcome officials from the Czech government. **Adolf Beznoska, Jiří Krbec, Pavel Šrámek** and **Josef Táborský** came for a tour led by **Chuck Michalek**. We did the tour in cars because of the inclement weather. It's always fun to show off our beautiful cemetery, and we try to find the surnames of our Czech guests among the grave markers.

Save August 21st at 1:30 p.m. for our summer meeting in the air-conditioned office! Our program will be a DVD created from old 16 mm film discovered in a metal tin in the board room closet. It shows the late 1940's Memorial Day parade, wreath-placing, shots of the officers in a reviewing stand in the park area, plus the 1952 unveiling of the World War I and II monument. We will share memories of what it was like to be there from various BNC delegates who were there. We'll also unveil the plaque which proclaims the cemetery is on the National Register of Historic Places. This is our annual election of officers, and there will be refreshments, too, of course. See you then!

Marge Sladek Stueckemann
President

Upcoming Events at Bohemian National Cemetery



Sunday, July 24th ~ noon to 4:00 pm Bohemian National Cemetery Annual Picnic

Potato pancakes, sausages, and other delicious foods will be available for purchase, as well as soda and water. Bring your kids, your friends, your chairs, and enjoy a friendly afternoon on the beautiful cemetery grounds.

Sunday, August 21st at 1:30 pm Summer meeting of Friends

Meet in the air-conditioned office building at the cemetery. See "What's New with Friends" and back page of this issue for more information.

Saturday, September 24th at 10:00 am & 1:00 pm
Tours of the Tombstones guided by **Albert Walavich**
\$10 for members, \$15 for non-members. No reservations needed.
Meet at gatehouse.

Saturday, October 22nd at 5:00 pm ~
Flashlight Tour of the Tombstones guided by **Albert Walavich**
Registration limited ~ see reservation insert for more details.

The Exiles at Bohemian National Cemetery (part II)

by carol jean smetana

Josef Falta, born in Bohemia in 1905, was a journalist and editor who served as secretary to the president of the Czechoslovak Senate from 1935 until 1939, when he escaped to the United States.

Settling in Chicago, he worked for the Czechoslovak Information Service and the

Czechoslovak National Council. After the war Josef edited a monthly paper published by the Czech National Committee. From 1951 to 1970 he edited the Czech daily *Denní Hlasatel*. Josef died on June 9, 1973, and his ashes were inurned in the Masaryk Memorial Mausoleum.

Born in 1884 in Bohemia, **Petr Zenkl** was an educator and social worker who held significant political posts in Czechoslovakia both before and after World War II. In 1938 he resigned his position as the Minister of Social Welfare and Public Health in protest against the Munich Agreement. He remained in his post as Lord Mayor of Prague, however,



and when the Nazis occupied Czechoslovakia in 1939, Petr was arrested and imprisoned in the Buchenwald concentration camp. He survived and returned to Prague after the war and served as Deputy Prime Minister in the government. After the 1948 communist takeover, he was placed under house arrest, but with the aid of one of his guards, he and his wife Pavla escaped to the United States. They settled in Washington, D.C., and Petr became chairman of the



Council of Free Czechoslovakia. When Pavla died in 1971, her ashes were inurned in the Masaryk Memorial Mausoleum. Petr died in North Carolina four years later, and his remains too were sent to BNC and placed in the niche with his wife's.

Oskar Pejša was born in 1896 in Moravia. A career military officer, he led the Czechoslovak military mission in the French zone of occupation in Germany after World War II. He emigrated after the communist coup, settling in Chicago, where he headed the local branch of the Czechoslovak Officers in Exile. When Oskar died in 1979, his ashes were inurned in the Masaryk Memorial Mausoleum.



Antonín Hřebík, born in a village southwest of Prague in 1902, was a lawyer and leader of the Sokol movement in Czechoslovakia before World War II. When Sokol was banned by the Germans, he went into hiding and was active with the resistance until the Gestapo arrested him in September 1941. He was first sent to Terezin, then Auschwitz, and finally to a Gestapo prison in Benešov. After the war, he became the chairman of Czechoslovak Sokol and was elected to the parliament in 1946. Antonín resigned his parliamentary seat after the February communist coup and went into exile in the United States. He continued to be active in Sokol activities in the U.S. and also worked for the Council of Free Czechoslovakia. Antonín died in

the Bohemian Old People's Home in Chicago on November 20, 1984, and his ashes were commended to the Masaryk Memorial Mausoleum.



Born in Slovakia in 1904, **Mikuláš Ferjenčík** began his career as a veterinarian in the military. At the outbreak of World War II, he held the rank of lieutenant colonel. During the war, while still in the Slovak military, he was the delegate for national defense for the covert Slovak National Council and participated in the Slovak National Uprising. After the war he was the state secretary of the Defense Ministry, but he turned down a role in the Gottwald government following the communist coup. Soon thereafter Mikuláš immigrated to the United States, where played an active role in Czechoslovak immigrant politics. He died in Colorado in 1988, and his ashes were sent to the Masaryk Memorial Mausoleum. In 1992 the Slovak government posthumously promoted Mikuláš to the rank of General of the Army.

Ján Papánek, born in western Slovakia in 1896, helped General Štefánik organize the Czechoslovak Legion in Italy during World War I. In 1922 he joined the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry,



...serving at various diplomatic posts in Europe and the United States. At the time of the Munich Agreement he was the Czechoslovak Consul in Pittsburgh. During the war, he acted as Beneš's personal representative in the U.S. and headed up the Czechoslovak Information Office in New York. In 1945 he was a delegate to the founding conference of the United Nations in San Francisco and helped draft its charter. In 1948, in his capacity as the Czechoslovak delegate to the United Nations, Ján stood before the UN Security Council and accused the Soviets of engineering the communist takeover of his country. He started the American Fund for Czechoslovak Refugees and was one of the founders of the Council of Free Czechoslovakia. He continued speaking out against communism and for the liberation of his country until he died at the age of 91 in 1991. Although Ján and his wife Betka had lived in New York City for fifty years, when they died, their ashes, too, were entrusted to the Masaryk Memorial Mausoleum in Chicago in a crypt next to the plaque marking the Štefánik wing.

It is not hard to imagine that their families hoped the burials of these exiles would be temporary, that eventually their remains could be returned to their homeland. Vojta Beneš himself expressed this hope during World War II when he spoke at a Chicago funeral for three immigrants who had fled Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia: "I believe the time will come when the tyranny has ended, that the ashes of your earthly remains will be returned to the free land of Thomas G. Masaryk." Perhaps Vojta's family never had his ashes interred, because they were waiting for that time when tyranny would end. Vojta's remains are now buried in

the Strěšovice cemetery in Prague.

After the Velvet Revolution in 1989, many of the remains of the Czech and Slovak exiles at BNC were repatriated, some with great ceremony, and reburied with honor in their homelands.

The urn with Jozef Lettrich's ashes was taken to the National Cemetery in Martin, Slovakia, in September 1990. Alice Garrigue Masaryk's ashes were interred next to her parents and brother in the family plot in Lány in 1994. The urn containing Antonin Hřebík's ashes was formally returned to Slovakia on the occasion of the 1994 Czech Sokol rally and is now buried in his native Řevnice. The ashes of Franta Klátil, Otakar Machotka, Petr and Pavla Zenkl, and Růžena Pelantová were all repatriated to the Czech Republic in the mid-1990s and eventually entombed in the Czech Republic's national cemetery at Vyšehrad, Prague. Finally, in 2002,

the remains of Milan Hodža, were returned to Slovakia for reburial in the National Cemetery in Martin.

At a 2002 memorial service held in the U.S. for Hodža when his remains were disinterred, one commentator lamented, "It is a good thing he is going back to Slovakia. He would be lost here." But in fact, his monument stone still stands at Bohemian National Cemetery, and those of us who cherish our Czech and Slovak heritages can ensure that he is not lost, that his memory and the memories of all these patriots live on in the stories we tell. Their names still remain at BNC, a fitting reminder of the haven our cemetery and indeed our country provided to those forced into exile from their native lands. Bohemian National Cemetery truly is, as described in a book published by the Ministry of Defense of the Czech Republic, "a symbol for the fight for national liberation and democracy."



In 2000, a cenotaph was erected at Vyšehrad Cemetery to honor Milada Horáková, a Czech patriot executed by the communists on June 27, 1950. Inscribed beneath her bronze bust on the cenotaph are her name, the date of her death, and the words "Executed and unburied." Near the bottom of the upright tombstone is the dedication: "To victims and opponents of totalitarian regimes, 1939-1945, 1948-1989."

A commemorative plaque, located near the foot of the grave, identifies the exiles whose remains were reinterred here: "They returned from exile: Petr Zenkl with his wife Pavla, Vladmír Krajina with his wife Marie, Otakar Machotka with his wife Jarmila, Růžena Pelantová, Franta Klátil." (Krajina was a botanist and WWII Czech resistance leader who died in exile in Canada.) Since 2004, June 27th, the date of Milada Horáková's death, has been observed as Commemoration Day for the Victims of the Communist Regime. (photos from Wikimedia Commons)

Donations May 1, 2016 through June 27, 2016

Patrons (\$500—\$999)

James A. Trnka

Donors (\$25—\$99)

Evanston Funeral and
Cremation
Juli Nelson

Thank You (\$1—\$24)

Lisa Filip

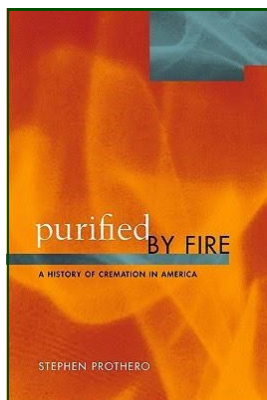
*Thank you all for your
generosity.
Your donations help
preserve and restore
Bohemian National
Cemetery.*



BNC in Print

Here are two more books that talk about Chicago's Bohemian National Cemetery.

In *Purified by Fire - History of Cremation in America*, the author Stephen Prothero points out that the “columbarium came into its own in the Midwest at Chicago’s Bohemian National Cemetery.”



The cemetery is featured in *Compatriots in the USA and the Establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic in documents and photographs*, by Václav Vondrášek and František Hanzlík, published by the Ministry of Defense of the Czech Republic in 2009. This fascinating book uses illustrations to chronicle the expatriate support in America for the

creation of Czechoslovakia. Four pages of photographs of Bohemian National Cemetery are presented under the title “Czech [sic]-national cemetery in Chicago, a symbol for the fight for national liberation and democracy.” There are photos of soldier statues marking the graves of compatriots who died in WWI, as well as photos of the war memorials and of several cemetery buildings. You can download the Czech version of the book here: <http://www.mocr.army.cz/assets/multimedia-a-knihovna/publikace/vojenska-historie/krajane-v-usa-a-vznik-csr---ce.pdf>



Live from BNC

(continued from first page)

by the **T.G. Masaryk Czech School** children reading poems relating to mothers. The Deputy Head of Mission at the Consulate General of the Czech Republic in Chicago, Consul **Milana Ličková** then spoke, telling us that in the Czech Republic Mother's Day is not celebrated the way it is in the United States, but that she was really impressed by the cemetery's program. At 11:30, the children of T. G. Masaryk Czech School cut the ribbon to open a photography exhibition inside the columbarium/crematorium building. The exhibit featured photographs of the Křivklátsko region taken by globetrotting photographer **Vilém Žák**. At noon, there was a musical performance by **Jessica Cho** on violoncello, **Yumy Lee Kim** on piano, and **Klara Moldová** on violin, which ended in a standing ovation. After the concert, everyone partook of refreshments provided by **Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery**, the **Czechoslovak Garden Club**, and the T.G. Masaryk Czech School. **Irena Čajková**, **Klara Moldová** and **Erika Hoffman**, the T.G. Masaryk Czech School teachers, are to be complimented on how well they prepared the children for their participation in the Mother's Day program. The teachers have really responded to engaging with Bohemian National Cemetery. The children and parents are amazed by the history, culture and art work the cemetery offers; the parents are most amazed by the fact that when you buy a cemetery lot, your family owns it forever.

On May 14th **Chuck Michalek** conducted a tour of the cemetery for **Jiří Krbec** (Director of the Foreign Relations Department of the Czech Senate), **Adolf Beznoska** (ODS member of Chamber of Deputies representing Central Bohemia),

Pavel Šrámek (ANO member of Chamber of Deputies representing Plzeň), and **Josef Táborský** (ČSSD member of the Czech Senate representing Jičín). Chuck took them into the office building to show them the photographs of all the past BNCA boards and delegates. They then visited the Cermak family mausoleum, the crematorium/columbarium building, and the famous statues on the cemetery grounds. The Czech dignitaries were well pleased with the tour.

During the week of May 21st, volunteers **Chuck Michalek** and **Dan Thiel** worked on restoring the stair railings to the crematorium/columbarium building. Using railings that volunteers had salvaged from a scrap pile, Chuck and Dan pieced them together, welding them and adding needed parts that they paid for out of their own pockets. They then



Dan Thiel helped restore the railing.

installed the railings and sanded and painted them, so they were ready for use on Memorial Day.

On May 28th, in preparation for the annual Memorial Day services, various organizations, along with **Chuck Michalek**, **Chuck Betzold**, **Mary Syrup** and **Arline Artist** placed the American Flags throughout the cemetery. Mary and Arline also did the plantings on the Klacel Circle and around the Cermak mausoleum for the Czechoslovak Garden Club.

On May 30th, the Memorial Day activities started at the north gatehouse, where everyone met at 9 a.m. for refreshments provided by Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery and the cemetery. At 9:30 a.m., the color guard from **Sokol Spirit** led the parade from the gatehouse to the crematorium/columbarium building where they posted the Colors. **Angie Bultas** of the Board of Directors of Bohemian National Cemetery began the ceremonies. The pledge of allegiance was said, and the Czech, Slovak and American National Anthems were sung. Also sung were all the Armed Forces songs. **Ed Slavic** played the accordion. **Jolana and Lea Bajak** of the T.G. Masaryk Czech School recited poems. **Joseph Vosicky** was the guest speaker. After Taps were played and the Colors were retired by **Sokol Spirit**, the services continued outside at the Odd Fellows Monument. Approximately 100 to 150 people were in attendance. It was a great remembrance of our fallen service men and women.

June has been a very busy month for everyone at the cemetery. Heavy winds and storms knocked down many trees and branches. The volunteers assisted in cutting down the broken trees and cutting them and the branches up and taking them away.

As you can see, many functions are being held at the cemetery, and many people from everywhere including the Czech Republic have been visiting Bohemian National Cemetery and enjoying these functions and the historic sites our cemetery has to offer. Why not join them and come and visit historic Bohemian National Cemetery? Hope to see everyone at our annual picnic on July 24th.

Andy Bultas
Vice-President

Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

P.O. Box 72746
Roselle, IL 60172-0746

Phone: 847-362-9036
Email: info@friendsofbnc.org



Heritage Happenings

we're on the web
www.friendsofbnc.org



Friends' Annual Summer Meeting

Sunday, August 21st at 1:30 pm
in the cemetery's air-conditioned office building

Our summer meeting will feature a DVD made from some 16mm color film of the cemetery from the late 1940s and 1952.

Come and see the spectacle of a Memorial Day that featured two bands, multiple marching groups, and the Lyre men's chorus. Watch men digging a grave by hand, a horse pulling a hay wagon, and grass cutting with push mowers. Hear some memories of those who actually participated in these events.

We will also be unveiling the plaque Friends of BNC purchased to honor the cemetery's listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Election of officers and refreshments round out the afternoon.

