

Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Summer Issue ~ Vol. XV No. 1

July 2018

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? A Czech Government Grant! ~ And More ...



Friends president Marge Sladek Stueckemann with Evelyn Krenek Fergle's sons Don (left) and Ron (right) after laying flowers at new brick at the Eastland Disaster Memorial, purchased by Friends to honor Evelyn .

A check for \$3,470 appeared in the Friends mailbox—the grant we received from the Czech government to enable us to remove more dead trees at the cemetery that threaten to fall and harm the monuments. Friends will add \$1,000 to the amount, and the Wednesday volunteers, headed by Chuck Betzold, will coordinate additional tree removal by Save-a-Tree, most likely in the fall. It is so gratifying that

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Columbarium Restoration Project Is In Full Swing

Friends of BNC president Marge Sladek Stueckemann recently sent a letter to all members inviting individuals and organizations to support the ongoing Columbarium Restoration Project. The communication included a color trifold providing an overview of the project.

Preliminary estimates suggest repairs will cost over seven hundred thousand dollars. The columbarium's historical, architectural, and cultural significance certainly requires each

of us to give thoughtful consideration for how we might support the building's restoration. Donating to the project can also be a meaningful way for relatives and friends to remember a loved one inurned in one of the niches within the building's hallowed halls.

All donors will be acknowledged in this newsletter. A crafted donor wall will recognize different levels of supporters who give \$1,000 or more. Donors of larger gifts can have inscribed

(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.

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from the editor's laptop

Have you looked at our website www.friendsofbnc.org recently? We have a new online store (click on "Store" at the top of the page, right below our name), where you can renew your membership, purchase a membership for a friend, make donations to our Columbarium Restoration Project, and purchase the two books published by Friends,

Introduction to Bohemian National Cemetery Crematorium/Columbarium and A Dear and Precious Heritage: Bohemian National Cemetery, Chicago, Illinois.

When you're finished shopping, browse the other links on our home page. Our "News" section links to detailed information about the Columbarium Restoration Project, including photographs illustrating the damage done by water infiltration, work completed, and the next planned repairs. In the column on the left-hand side of the page, check out items listed under "Activities" and "Information" to "Take a Virtual Tour" or "Learn some fun history" with "Serendipity." And remember to "like" us on Facebook.

I'm excited my travels will find me in Chicago in mid-August (en route to a genealogy conference), so I can attend our summer meeting. Our speaker, Walter S. Arnold, will share with us his art of sculpting and carving stone. Read about him below, and check out his webpage for more information on his background and his work: www.stonecarver.com. We'll be meeting in the office building at the cemetery on Sunday, August 19th, at 1:30 p.m. More details are in "Upcoming Events" on page 3 and on the back page. I hope to see you there!

Na shledanou!

carol jean smetana

Walter S. Arnold is a sculptor and a stone carver who trained in Italy and worked on the National Cathedral in Washington, DC. Among his projects, he has carved a number of treestump tombstones, and is currently working on a double tree memorial, which will be the first tree monument installed at BNC in over 70 years. He was co-founder of the Stonecarvers Guild of North America and served as its president from 2000 to 2013. He is the author of "Staglieno: The Art of the Marble Carver" about the treasures of Italian marble sculpture housed in Staglieno Cemetery, Genoa, Italy, the largest open-air museum in Europe. In 2010 he and his wife founded AFIMS (American Friends of Italian Monumental Sculpture) a non-profit helping preserve these masterpieces. He will speak about the history, technique and application of architectural and sculptural stone carving, and his slide presentation will include step-by-step photos of several projects, explaining the process of turning a block of stone into a work of art.

Welcome to Our New Members!

Glenn A. Davis ... San Diego, CA

Marchelle Fuller... Chicago, IL

John Martine ... Maywood, IL

Karol Samaan ... Chicago, IL

Děkuji vám!

Spring Tour: **Pat Nelson** for working at book table; **Juli Nelson** and **Carol Smetana** for check-in table; **Glenn Spachman** for providing kolacky.

May 25 volunteers who helped with placing flags and spring planting: **Chuck Betzold, Chuck Michalek, Mary Syrup, Jim Trnka**; CIT volunteers: **Laura Felix, Jeff Haden,**

Julie Hutmacher, Amy Latreille, Terry McCreery, Amy Michalec, Shaul Sondak, Ross Succoso, Ephraim Tomenbang, Jorge Valdez.

Memorial Day events: **Chuck Michalek** for providing kolacky; **Mary Syrup** for helping with the refreshments

Live from BNC



The annual BNC Memorial Day service took place on a bright sunny day. Participants assembled at the historic gatehouse and enjoyed cool drinks, coffee and homemade kolacky prior to the traditional march to the crematorium/ columbarium's Ceremony Hall. The procession was led by the Sokol Spirit Youth Color Guard bearing American, Czech and Slovak flags. BNCA vice president William Hudecek was master of ceremony, and BNCA treasurer Angeline Bultas provided a welcome in Czech and English. Valerie, Andrea and Sara Trnkova recited Czech poems. Ed Slavik, playing the accordion, led the audience in singing various songs of the U.S. Armed Forces. Jan Kubista, Deputy Consul General at the Consulate General of the Czech Republic in Chicago,

addressed the audience and described events planned to commemorate the 100-year anniversary of the 1918 founding of Czechoslovakia.

Following the ceremony, a group from Friends of BNC walked to the *Eastland* Disaster Memorial in Section 16 to dedicate a large engraved paver brick placed at the site by the Friends Board of Directors in honor of Evelyn Fergle. Friends president Marge Stueckemann recalled Evelyn's crucial role in the formation of the Friends organization, as well as of Evelyn's tireless work and support on its behalf. Evelyn's two sons, Ron and Don, traveled from out of state to attend the ceremony for their mother.

In April, we were pleased to welcome a visit to the cemetery from Martin Smolek, Deputy Foreign Minister from



L to R: Bill Hudecek, vice president of BNCA; Martin Smolek, Czech Deputy Minister; Chuck Michalek, Friends of BNC volunteer; Borek Lizec, Czech Consul General

the Czech Republic, who placed flowers at the Cermak mausoleum.

Chuck Michalek
Friends of BNC Volunteer

Upcoming Events at Bohemian National Cemetery



Sunday, August 19th, 1:30 pm ~
Friends Summer meeting
Walter S. Arnold, stone sculptor
Event is free and open to the public
Meet in cemetery office building ~ See back page for details

Saturday, September 22nd at 10:00 am and 1:00 pm ~
Tours of the Tombstones
Guided by Albert Walavich
\$10 members, \$15 non-members

Saturday, September 29th, 2:00 pm - 4 pm
Special Guided Tour of the cemetery
Sponsored by the Czech Consulate in Chicago as part of the
Czech Centennial Celebrations
Tour is free but advanced reservations are required and can be
made by email to czechcentennialchicago@gmail.com
or call (312) 861-1037, ext. 100

Jaroslav J. Zmrhal, Educator and Patriot

by carol jean smetana

The Czech and Slovak communities in the United States were essential to Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk's successful struggle to create an independent Czechoslovak state, supporting the liberation of their homeland with money, soldiers, and an effective information campaign. Chicago, with its large ethnic Czech population, was arguably the hub of the effort, and the names of several Chicagoans can be found in the story of Czechoslovakia's birth. One of them is Jaroslav Josef Zmrhal, now interred at Bohemian National Cemetery.

An educator, author and orator, and a leader for the liberation of Czechoslovakia in both World War I and World War II, Jaroslav Zmrhal used his writing and speaking skills to educate immigrants to be active participants in American democracy, to inform Americans about Bohemia's history and people, and to promote the Czechoslovak cause.

As early as 1905, Zmrhal was writing newspaper articles and giving public lectures— in English and Czech—on the history, land and people of Bohemia. In the years leading up to the First World War, his articles and lectures promoted Czechoslovak independence. When Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk arrived in Chicago on May 5, 1918, a quarter million people turned out to greet him, and it was Jaroslav

Zmrhal who officially welcomed the future president on behalf of the Chicago Czechoslovak community. Several weeks later, on May 31, 1918, Masaryk and 28 representatives of Bohemian, Moravian, Slovak, and Czech Silesian organizations in the United States signed the Pittsburgh Agreement, in which they committed to forming a democratic, free Czechoslovakia. One of the signatories was Professor Zmrhal. The dream was realized on October 28, 1918, with the establishment of the independent state of Czechoslovakia.

During World War II Zmrhal resumed his role as a public advocate for Czechoslovak independence, making speeches across the United States in support of the war. As president of the Czechoslovak National Council of America, he was a leader in the successful campaign for the United States government to recognize the Czechoslovak government-in-exile in London and to repudiate the Munich Agreement.

Jaroslav Josef Zmrhal was born on August 29, 1878, in Čáslav, Bohemia. When his parents immigrated to the United States in April 1892 with his siblings Alois, age 19, Edward, 17, Bozena, 11, and Heinrich, 4, teen-aged Jaroslav stayed behind with his uncle. Jaroslav thought it was unpatriotic to leave his



home country. But as he explained years later in a newspaper interview, when his uncle made him leave school to work on the farm, Jaroslav decided to join his parents and siblings in the United States.

"I would not be a peasant. I would not marry a peasant girl. I wanted to be a poet. I wanted to act. I wanted to marry a princess. So I came to Chicago. I haven't written any poetry since I came, nor have I become an actor, but I did marry the princess."

The fourteen-year-old, traveling alone, arrived in May 1893. Although at first he had to painstakingly translate his lessons from English to Czech, he must have learned the new language quickly: he graduated from Lake High School three years later. He continued his studies at University of Illinois and then at Chicago Normal School, from which he received a

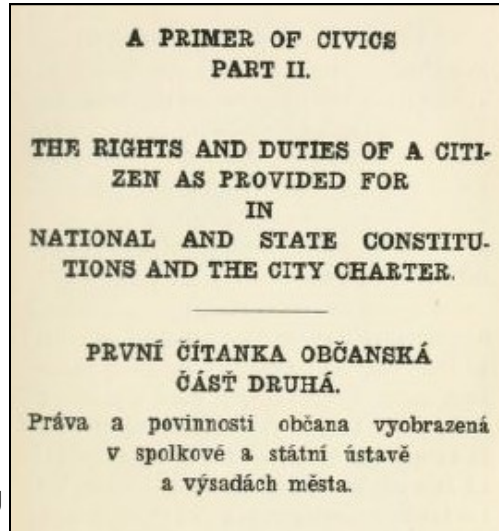
teacher's diploma in 1899. He began teaching at Farrugut School, a primary school at 24th Street and Spaulding Avenue in Chicago.

On November 29, 1902, Jaroslav married Agnes Palma, his "princess." Born in 1879 in Korytka, Bohemia, Agnes had emigrated with her family in 1892. Their first child, Jarsoslav, was born in 1904, followed by Vera in 1908, Dagmar in 1913, and Myra in 1918.

While teaching in the grade school, Zmrhal initiated evening classes in English and civics for his fellow Bohemians. The Colonial Dames of America, interested in promoting education among immigrants, rewarded Zmrhal with a scholarship to the University of Chicago, and in March 1905, he received a B.A. degree. He then became the principal of Edgar Allan Poe School in the Pullman district, reportedly the first Czech school principal in Chicago. After a stint as principal of Nathan S. Davis Elementary School on West 39th Place, Zmrhal was invited in 1914 to head up the new Theodor Herzl Elementary School, on Chicago's west side in a predominantly Russian Jewish community, and to shape its progressive educational precepts.

Zmrhal wrote textbooks to help Bohemians learn English, and also authored articles and gave speeches to a variety of groups about training and educating people to become better citizens. In 1912, the Colonial Dames of America

published *A Primer in Civics: Designed for the Guidance of the Immigrant*, written by Zmrhal. The first half of the book provided a history of the United States, and the second half was devoted to civics.



Translated into several languages, including Czech, Polish and Italian (English text on the left-hand page, immigrant language on the right), the primer was used nationwide. Zmrhal was also instrumental in the successful campaign to introduce the teaching of Czech in Farragut, Harrison and Morton high schools.

After receiving a doctorate from University of Chicago in 1920, Zmrhal spent six months in Czechoslovakia at the invitation of the Czechoslovak Minister of Education, reorganizing its school system. The next year, Zmrhal became the first Czech and native European to be promoted to district superintendent of Chicago public schools, a position he held until he retired in 1943.

In a 1932 radio talk, Zmrhal described his

educational philosophy as "training the child to make an honest living; increasing his intelligence and his power to think and discriminate; helping to form habits of cleanliness, honesty and industry." He believed students needed to know the "mechanics of democracy;" they needed to learn how to register to vote and how to vote, and to understand the duties of elective government offices.

Zmrhal was an active member of the First Bohemian Baptist Church, serving as moderator, a member of the board of deacons and trustees, choir director, and a member of the Board of Directors of the Chicago Baptist Association. He was active in Sokol and for several years chaired the American Sokol Organization. Jaroslav Zmrhal died in 1951 and was buried in the family plot at Bohemian National Cemetery.



Inscribed on the Zmrhal tombstone: "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live [in Czech]" followed by the names of Jaroslav's two brothers, his parents ["Mother" and "Father" noted in English], Jaroslav and Agnes.

Donations



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Sokol Chicagoland
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Marjorie & David Stueckemann *in memory of Rudy Betzold*
Rowlene Wendoll
Rosemary Macko Wisnosky
Donna Zimmerman

Thank You
(\$1—\$24)
Edward Cechura

Thank you all for your generosity. Your donations help support the Columbarium Restoration Project and preserve and restore Bohemian National Cemetery.

What's New with Friends of BNC

(Continued from page 1)

our motherland takes an interest in the cemetery and helps us in this way!

After the Memorial Day service, we dedicated the brick in honor of our founding mother, Evelyn Krenek Fergle, at the *Eastland* Disaster Memorial in Section 16. We were honored to have Evelyn's sons, Don Jr. from Michigan and Ron from Minneapolis, in attendance.

Our spring tour was attended by 70 people, who enjoyed a beautiful day. Our next tours will be Saturday, September 22nd, at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m.

We recently sent to all members a letter and trifold about the Columbarium Restoration Project. We have

received a number of donations already, and I hope you are able to contribute so we can continue waterproofing the building. A new feature in the eastern area of the crematorium/columbarium building is the Donor Appreciation Wall to honor donations of \$1,000 or more.

This year is the 100th anniversary of the founding of Czechoslovakia, and the Czech Consulate in Chicago is planning a number of events. On Saturday, September 29th from 2-4 p.m., they will host a tour of Bohemian National Cemetery for visiting dignitaries from the Czech Republic. This tour is free and also open to the public, but you must RSVP. Do join us and meet some of these

important people! See "Upcoming Events at BNC" on page three for details. Our website has a link to the full listing of anniversary events in the Chicago area.

Do you love the treestones at the cemetery as much as I do? Then you won't want to miss our summer meeting on August 19th at 1:30 p.m. Walter S. Arnold, a sculptor and stone carver, will give a slide presentation on how he creates stone monuments and artwork. We'll meet in the accessible, air-conditioned office building at the cemetery. For more information, see the back page. I hope you join us!

Marge Sladek Stueckemann
President

Columbarium Restoration Project

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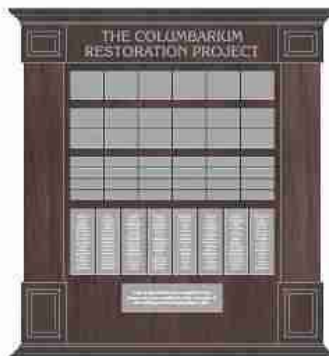
personal nameplates that could be used to recognize a loved one or an organization.

More information is available on our website, or you can contact me at restoration@friendsofbnc.org.

Look for updates on the progress of our campaign in future issues of *Heritage Happenings*.

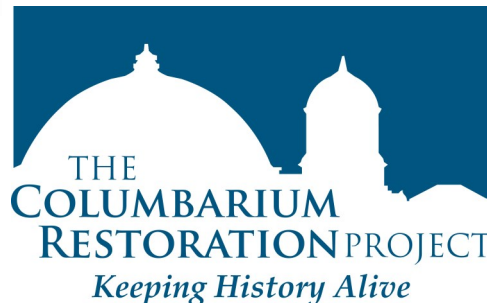
Thank you for your support of this important project.

Chuck Michalek
Chair
Columbarium Restoration Committee



Above: Artist rendering of the Donor Appreciation Wall with nameplates

Left: Donor wall carpenter Jeff Hamerman (left) and Chuck Michalek flank the Donor Appreciation Wall newly installed in the crematorium/columbarium building



New Life at BNC

A wonderful, unexpected event took place at the cemetery last fall—the birth of a baby girl to BNC employee Steve Ziolkowski and his fiancée Davina. Steve and Davina reside in one of the three bungalows on the grounds of BNC. As a young boy, Steve recalls visiting his aunt, Elizabeth Raleigh, who worked in BNC's office building and is now the general manager.

For the past six years, Steve has been a full-time BNC employee. In addition to his daily BNC work responsibilities, Steve attends college at nearby Northeastern University and is studying to be a funeral



Davina, holding Ava, Steve, and Deva
Memorial Day at BNC

director. Last fall, while on his way to his college class, he was suddenly contacted by

Davina who said she needed to go to the hospital. Steve rushed back to the bungalow, but as they were walking down the front steps, Davina suddenly announced, "She's coming." With the help of his Aunt Elizabeth, who rushed over with other office staff, the grounds crew and BNCA president David Pimm, a healthy baby girl was delivered on the front steps of BNC's center bungalow. Born at 9:27 am, Ava is possibly the first baby born at the historic 1877 cemetery.

Our congratulations to Steve and Davina!

Chuck Michalek

Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

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Heritage Happenings

we're on the web
www.friendsofbnc.org



Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery presents Walter S. Arnold, Sculptor and Stone Carver

Have you wondered how those magnificent treestones and statues at BNC were created? Join us at our summer meeting to meet sculptor and stonecarver Walter S. Arnold and learn about the history, technique, and application of architectural and sculptural stone carving. Walter's unique slide show will use step-by-step photos to explain how he transforms a block of stone into a work of art. We'll see the creation of a tree stump tombstone (treestone), from the rough block through the carving stages to the finished installed piece. Walter's work includes gargoyles, fireplace friezes, fountains, and statues. He is currently working on a double tree memorial, which will be the first tree monument installed at BNC in over 70 years.

Sunday, August 19, 2018, at 1:30 pm
Bohemian National Cemetery Office Building
5255 N Pulaski Rd, Chicago

There will be light refreshments, election of officers, and an update on Friends activities.

