

# Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Summer Issue ~ Vol. XX No. 1

July 2023

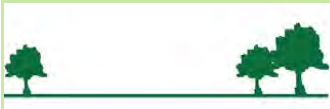
carol jean smetana, editor

## 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

Anton Cermak, former Chicago mayor, is surely our most famous "resident" at Bohemian National Cemetery. On May 6, we celebrated his 150th birthday, led by the teachers and students of T.G. Masaryk Czech School. Friends was a co-host, and we provided the chlebičky and kolacky, plus apples and clementines. With a crowd of students, teachers, Friends members, and others from the Czech Chicago community—about 75 in all—the seemingly huge amount of food was quickly devoured! Thanks to Chuck Michalek and Chuck Betzold for helping make the gatehouse ready to welcome everyone. Linda Burton and I sold our books in the gatehouse.

There were some charming touches to the program: Klára Moldová and a young student Illinka Hauner accompanied a singing  
*(continued on page 3)*

## Live from BNC



### TIMBER!

One day a week our cemetery volunteers bring out their chainsaws and play the role of urban lumberjacks. Some days that may mean cutting apart a tree which has fallen across a cemetery road. Other days that

may mean felling three or four dead trees, which would otherwise detract from the overall beauty of the cemetery grounds. Additional outdoor volunteer time is spent trimming overgrown bushes and  
*(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, 511B 9th St, Las Vegas, NM 87701-3911 or emailed to her at editor@friendsofbnc.org.

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### Officers of Friends of BNC

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### from the editor's laptop

Are you a taphophile?

*I imagine most members joined Friends because they have family members at rest at Bohemian National Cemetery. I myself first came to the cemetery in search of the graves of my maternal ancestors and relatives—immigrants from the latter half of the nineteenth century and their descendants—who are buried here.*

*The beautiful parklike setting with its unique memorials and public sculptures invited further exploration. I discovered so much as I wandered the cemetery grounds over the years—the war memorials; the Eastland memorial; the “Beyond the Vines” columbarium; the historic cultural legacy preserved in beautiful Ceremony Hall; evocative sculptures; monuments and grave markers, including intricately carved treestones, that amplify the lives of the deceased beyond the years of their births and deaths, sometimes featuring their photos.*

*Out of my experience with BNC and Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery I became a taphophile—someone interested in cemeteries and gravestones. I started to learn the language of funerary art and tombstone symbols. And I am now a tombstone tourist. On my travels I seek out new cemeteries to explore. In Havana, Cuba, I watched young Cuban women solemnly walk backwards around a grave, believing it will bring fertility. In a desert cemetery in Morocco, graves were marked with ordinary rocks having no names or engravings of any kind: rocks at the head and foot mark the burial place of a man, but if there is only a stone at the head, that is the grave of a woman. In Montreal, Quebec, Canada, I discovered the grave of the mother-in-law of Confederate president Jefferson Davis—she apparently fled to Canada when the South lost the Civil War.*

*This fall I will be taking a food tour of Greece—but before it starts, I will have a few days to explore Athens and two of my stops will be cemeteries: the First Cemetery of Athens, dating from 1837, was the first cemetery built in modern Athens and is the official cemetery of the city; the earliest extant cemetery in Athens is Keramikos, an 11-acre ancient necropolis with tombstones dating back to the Early Bronze Age (2700-2000 BCE) that was in use until the 6th century CE.*

Are you a taphophile?

Na shledanou!  
carol

## Děkuji vám!

**Dale Burton** for the great pictures of the Cermak celebration on May 6.

**Joe Topinka** and the **Judy Baar Topinka Foundation** for hosting our board meetings on Zoom.

**Pat Nelson** for her many years of volunteering, assisting her daughter Juli in folding, stamping and mailing our newsletters. We are so sad to report Pat passed away recently. She will be sorely missed.



## What's New with Friends of BNC

*(continued from first page)*

of "Happy Birthday" on the violin. Three students held 150 balloons in Cermak's honor. A floral wreath was placed in front of



the mausoleum, and the outgoing Czech Consul General Jaroslav Kantůrek spoke about Cermak's life. We even had Ing. Zdeněk Slepíčka, secretary of the Kladno municipality, representing Cermak's birthplace of Kladno! I got to welcome everyone to BNC and speak briefly about our work in restoration. The performance of songs of Czech, Moravian and Slovak by Lenka Lichtenberg in Ceremony Hall added a special festive touch!

Before the pandemic, meetings at the cemetery—sometimes in the office, sometimes in the gatehouse or Ceremony Hall—were frequent. To me, it felt like old times to be there again, and we were delighted to have so many in attendance. We surely hope we can get back to more such gatherings in the future.

On another note, unfortunately, Friends of BNC will not be hosting a summer meeting in August due to logistical problems.

Have a wonderful summer!

**Marge Sladek Stueckemann  
President**



## Upcoming Events at Bohemian National Cemetery

**Summer office hours:  
8:30 am to 4:00 pm  
Monday through Friday;  
9:00 am to 1:00 pm Saturday;  
Closed Sunday.**

**Cemetery Grounds are open from  
7:30 am to 4 pm daily.**



## T. G. Masaryk Czech School and Friends of BNC Host 150th Birthday Celebration of Anton Cermak by Chuck Michalek



Former Chicago Mayor's Anton Cermak's family mausoleum continues to be one of Bohemian National Cemetery's frequently visited sites. A large crowd joined the celebration of Cermak's 150th Birthday on May 6, organized by T. G. Masaryk Czech School in Cicero in collaboration with Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery. The event was moderated by Masaryk School teacher Irena Čajková. Czech Republic Consul General



Jaroslav Kantůrek began the event by placing a wreath at the Cermak mausoleum. Welcome comments were made by Friends of BNC President Marge Stueckemann; Cermak family members Anton Cermak Kerner and Robert Kerner; Ing. Zdeněk Slepíčka from Kladno, Czech Republic, representing Cermak's birthplace; and Bill Strej from CSA Lodge Anton Cermak. Highlights included an artful birthday cake made by children from T. G. Masaryk School and teacher Kristýna Horáčková.



The celebration continued at Ceremony Hall in the crematorium-columbarium building and included presentations from Masaryk School students, a talk by Cermak's family on the legacy of Anton Cermak, and a musical presentation by Lenka Lichtenberg, who sang several traditional Czech folk songs. The festivities continued as the crowd strolled over to the historic gatehouse for refreshments.



*Photos courtesy of Dale Burton and Chuck Michalek*



## Foreign Visitors at Bohemian National Cemetery

Bohemian National Cemetery continues to be an important attraction for foreign visitors from the Czech and Slovak republics. Among them are interested tourists as well as official representatives of governmental and cultural organizations seeking to explore BNC's rich history and cultural heritage.

Recent visitors included historian Gabriela Havlůjová; five officials with the Czech National Agency for International Education Research; Czech pastor Miroslav Pfann; and award-winning singer Lenka Litchenberg.

In some cases, foreign visitors are searching for ancestors who immigrated to Chicago a century ago and

are curious to see if long-lost relatives are buried at BNC. With thousands of gravestones engraved with Czech names, it is not unusual for visitors to casually discover their surname on a modest or even grand tombstone.



Members of the Agency for International Education and Research delegation Olga Vlachová and her daughter Petra Vlachová joyfully posing next to a large gravestone at BNC bearing their surname.

Lidice at T.G. Masaryk School in Cicero and at the Lidice Memorial Service in Crest Hill. Gabriela is from Kladno, Czechia, the birthplace of Anton Cermak, and while visiting the Cermak family mausoleum, she planted the city Kladno flag she brought with her from the Czech Republic.



Friends volunteer Chuck Michalek and Czech visitor Gabriela Havlůjová stand in front of the Cermak family mausoleum holding their respective city flags.



Members of the Czech National Agency for International Education and Research—the agency's main objective is to facilitate international cooperation in education.



TGM school teacher Kristýna Horáčková, Miroslav Pfann, and Gabriela Havlůjová checked out the historical displays in the BNC office.

Historian Gabriela Havlůjová has conducted extensive research on the tragic Lidice event that occurred during WWII. During her Chicago visit, she gave presentations on



The Kladno city flag features a white eagle on a blue field and a golden lynx on a white field. Above them are white mining tools bound together with a yellow ribbon.



## Donations

### Benefactors

(\$1000—\$9999)

Anonymous  
Ken Dvorsky  
Robert A. Kubicka

### Sponsors

(\$100—\$499)

Elisa Kletka Allan  
Donna Desai *in memory of Helen and Frank Hanzalik*  
Randal and Colleen Kadlec  
Katherine Mallin  
Marjorie Stueckemann *in memory of Pat Nelson*

### Donors

(\$25—\$99)

CSA Fraternal Life  
Jackie Dortch  
Donna Zapp Reusing

**Thank you all for your generosity.**

**Your donations help preserve and restore Bohemian National Cemetery.**

## Live from BNC

*(continued from first page)*

shrubs, usually near family mausoleums and around other cemetery buildings.

The cemetery has close to 1000 trees of various varieties and an equal amount of bushes and shrubs, both large and small. Keeping up with the removal of diseased or dead vegetation is an ongoing task at BNC. The volunteers take down between 30-40 trees per year. Our outside tree contractor takes down 5-10 nuisance trees per year. The contractor deals with the trees that are too big or too dangerous for the volunteers to handle. The outside contractor also works on trees that threaten to damage monuments, should they fall in the wrong direction. At that point it is best to have the professionals dismantle the tree, with precision, so that no monuments are harmed.

Lot owners are asked to not plant trees themselves. The trees they may plant today can become a nuisance to the neighboring lot owner within a couple of years. We

love our trees at BNC, but tree trunks and tree roots play havoc when they grow too close to adjacent monuments. The cemetery plants a number of new saplings each year, usually along the perimeter of the cemetery, in non-burial areas, and in easement zones between sections. The city of Chicago recently planted dozens and dozens of saplings on the narrow parkways that surround BNC. So even though we eliminate 50 or so trees a year, you are still immersed in a sea of green wherever you look at the cemetery.

Certain sections of the cemetery favor a particular type of tree. Sections R, S, and T feature a forest of old growth oak trees. The sections in the center and east portions of the cemetery are graced with catalpa trees, which feature large clusters of white blossoms that bloom around Father's Day.

The northern and eastern sections of the cemetery have a tradition of pines and cedars. Typically they were

planted in pairs, one on each side of a large family monument. Unfortunately, many of these trees have reached the end of their lives, and the volunteers have had to eliminate quite a few this spring. However, there is an upside to their loss. Before the logs and branches are hauled away, the air is pleasantly scented with fresh-cut pine and cedar smells.

Majestic sycamore trees are dispersed rather evenly throughout the cemetery, as are a variety of different maples. But if you're wandering in the northern half of the cemetery, watch out for the few thorny locust trees we have at BNC!

Now that all the trees are green, the cemetery couldn't look any better. Please enjoy all the great outdoor foliage on your next visit to Bohemian National Cemetery.

**Chuck Betzold**  
**Friends of BNC Director**  
**Wednesday Volunteer**

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## *Heritage Happenings July 2023*

### **World Wars I and II Memorial Restoration Project**

Marion Restoration has begun work on our latest project. They have completed the removal and safe storage of the eight sandstone panels from the flagpole base and are now able to assess the interior structure. Before the base was wrapped in protective tarp, damage to the bricks and stone caused by water infiltration was clearly visible. Your generous donations will help us restore this memorial honoring the service of our military in the First and Second World Wars.



You can donate at our online store ([friendsofbnc.org](http://friendsofbnc.org)) or mail a check to Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery at the address at the top left of this page. Please indicate "WW Memorial" on your check. Thank you!

