

Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Summer Issue ~ Vol. XXII No. 1

July 2025

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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Reflections from Friends of BNC President



Do you remember your first visit to Bohemian National Cemetery? I suspect many of you, like myself, were quite young when you were deposited and squeezed between siblings in the back seat of the family car, while lamenting, "Oh no, not the cemetery again..."

After enduring the long ride to the north side of Chicago, some relief was found by passing through the arched castle-like gatehouse entrance and proceeding into the jungle-like greenhouse with its rows of flowers and tall palm trees. As long as we didn't commit the unforgiveable injustice of stepping on someone's grave, we could run along the grassy rows dividing grave markers while searching out the grandest old monument. It seemed visitors were everywhere, carrying sprinkling cans to quench thirsty flowers at manicured gravesites.

Each childhood visit led to repeated

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Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

is grateful to the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
of the Czech Republic



*for their generous 2025 grant to assist in our ongoing efforts to make improvements at Bohemian National Cemetery.
We greatly appreciate their continued support.*

Live from BNC

If you visited BNC in the last few months, you may have noticed trees being removed from the picnic area. This traditional parklike area had been used for decades to host picnics and other large gatherings. Unfortunately, since before Covid, lack of interest and attendance at the annual picnic and

other events left this valuable space largely unused. The BNCA board decided to use this space for grave sales to help generate badly needed revenue. The Independent Order of Odd Fellows Monument located on the western edge of the picnic area will

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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, 511B 9th St, Las Vegas, NM 87701-3911 or emailed to her at editor@friendsofbnc.org.

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from the editor's laptop



In his "Reflections" column, Chuck Michalek reminisces about his childhood visits to Bohemian National Cemetery with his family and how, during those visits, his grandmother shared stories about relatives buried there, especially her brother Stanley, Chuck's great-uncle. When I was growing up, our family never missed spending part of every Memorial Day at the cemetery, planting flowers on the grave of my uncle who was killed in the Second World War.

Visiting loved one's graves invites us to contemplate their lives, to revive our memories of them. But one of the hallmarks of American society is our mobility: people "go away" for college, pursue job opportunities in different cities or states, or retire to their dream location—and no longer live near the cemeteries where relatives are buried. Unable to make regular visits to family gravesites, we might create other rituals, other totems to honor those who have died. I have a potted geranium at my house in New Mexico. Its deep red blooms recall for me the potted geraniums my mother kept on the front stoop of our house in Illinois, a focal point for my memories of her.

Did you, like Chuck and me, regularly visit family graves when you were a child? Do you and the younger generations in your family still visit the cemetery? Are there other ways you create time and space uniquely devoted to remembering loved ones who have passed?

We are still in need of volunteers to help us fulfill our mission, including a newsletter editor and a webmaster. Please keep us in mind when you are looking for a way to volunteer some time and energy to a cause well worth your effort! Contact me or any of the folks listed at left, or email info@friendsofbnc.org.

Na shledanou,
carol

Officers of Friends of BNC

President: *Chuck Michalek*

Vice-President: *Juli Nelson*

Secretary: *Monica Pechous*

Treasurer: *Linda Burton*

Directors:

Chuck Betzold

Marge Sladek Stueckemann

Jim Trnka

Fund-Raising Co-Chair:

Joseph Topinka

Membership: *Ellen Pomes*

Newsletter: *carol jean smetana*

Publicity: *Jenny Llakmani*

Sales/Marketing: *Juli Nelson*

Projects Co-Chair:

Chuck Michalek

Webmaster: *open*

Děkuji Vám!

Joe Topinka for coordinating
Friends of BNC zoom
meetings;

Volunteers at our spring
tours: **Linda Burton, Jenny
Llakami, Ellen Pomes, Juli
Nelson, Mary
Lachiewicz, Chuck Betzold
and Chuck Michalek;**

Participants and volunteers
at our Memorial Day
commemoration, including
BNCA board members
**David Pimm, William
Hudecek, Angeline
Bultas;** students and
teacher **Irena Čajková** from
T. G. Masaryk Czech

School; members of the U.S.
Navy, Army, and Air Force
who served as Color Guard;
**Brigadier General Martin
Sikora, Czech Military
Attaché;** and **Chuck Betzold**
for leading tour of BNC
military monuments.



What's New with Friends of BNC

(continued from first page)

conversations and recollections at the gravesites of relatives, neighbors, or a prominent businessman, banker, or politician from the local Bohemian community. As a little boy, I recall my grandmother pointing to a picture on a tombstone in a far-off corner of the cemetery. It was her brother Stanley, who wrote poetry and directed old Bohemian-language plays. Stanley died of tuberculosis decades before I was born. I was told I was given my middle name in honor of him. Grandma pointed across the street to the old rambling complex of buildings that formed the Chicago Municipal Tuberculosis Sanitarium where



While working at BNC's gatehouse, Chuck Betzold and Chuck Michalek encountered a student from UIC visiting BNC for a class anthropology project involving research on changing cultural values and attitudes towards death and cemeteries. After the interview, we requested the student provide us with her summary.

Stanley died. As visits to cemeteries often do, it conjured up early thoughts of living and dying and “What’s it all about?”

Now the greenhouses are long gone. Beautiful live flowers that once adorned the gravesites are increasingly replaced by plastic replicas. BNC’s buildings, roads, fences, and massive trees continue to age. With your interest and support, Friends of BNC endeavors to help restore aging buildings and monuments so Bohemian National Cemetery lives on and allows the creation of new memories at this historic and treasured place. Watch for news about our next restoration project.

Chuck Michalek
President

Mortal Remains Enter the Cemetery — Other Remains Must Leave Over Time

The volunteer lumberjacks have had a busy spring and summer this year. Windstorms in May brought down a larger than usual number of trees and branches. Some trees were snapped in half. Other trees lost large limbs, some up to 24 inches in diameter. It has taken over two months to finally cut up all those fallen pieces.

The process of removing all that tree debris from the various sections of the cemetery is still ongoing. The larger logs are removed by the cemetery grounds crew with heavy equipment. Smaller branches are being picked up by hand and tossed

into the back of a pickup truck that was donated to the cemetery this year. Those pickup truck loads are taken to a tree debris staging area near the employee bungalows, where the volunteers run the small stuff through a woodchipper.

Larger debris, such as tree stumps, tree trunks and large logs, is eventually hauled offsite to a private dump. This is just one of the many hidden expenses that all cemeteries must include in their budgets. Much of the disposable debris that a cemetery generates is taken for granted. Examples include tree, shrubbery and flower debris; renovation and

construction debris; outdoor trash receptacle garbage; supply packaging from the office, crematorium and maintenance garage; old tires; lumber scraps; and last, but not least, extra soil after excavating a grave, and old faulty grave foundations that must be replaced

All the above-mentioned items accumulate each day at the cemetery. Staying ahead of this buildup is an ongoing part of our cemetery business.

Chuck Betzold
Friends of BNC Director
Wednesday Volunteer

Stories of the Stones: “Son John” by carol jean smetana



The inscription on the granite monument is simple. The family surname at the top **PAVLÍK**.

Below that three memorials:

Son John 1904—1914

Father John 1869—1935

Mother Marie 1872—1942



Normal lifespans for the parents—but their son John was a boy of 10 when he died. What happened?

The patriarch of the family, John Pavlík, was born in Stankov, kraj Plzeň, Bohemia, in 1869, and emigrated in 1885 when he was 16 years old. On March 28, 1891, he married 18-year-old Marie Mášín, the daughter of Bohemian immigrants, in Chicago. John and Marie had three daughters—Mary (known as Mamie or Mae), Anna, and Jeannette (Jennie)—followed by their only son John, Jr., born in 1904. At the time of John’s death in 1914, the Pavlík family lived in the Czech California neighborhood of Chicago at 2255 S. Trumbull Avenue.

It can be difficult to find details about the lives of members of earlier generations in our family trees, especially for those from working-class and immigrant families. Fortunately,

for family historians researching their Bohemian ancestors, the Czech-language newspaper *Denní Hlasatel*, which began publishing in Chicago in 1893, focused on Bohemian immigrant communities. I was able to find

the story of young John Pavlík’s tragic death in the newspaper’s pages.

The *Denní Hlasatel* regularly published articles presenting a round-up of news from various Czech

neighborhoods in the Chicago area. On October 20, 1914, the Czech California overview included a paragraph noting that a young schoolboy, John Pavlík, had been struck by a streetcar when he was crossing 22nd Street. It was reported that he was able to walk home with the help of witnesses to the accident and that the doctor who treated him there concluded that “the injury was only superficial and would not be serious.”

But two days later, on October 23, the newspaper printed a page-long column headed: “A fatal walk in the opposite direction. John Pavlík walked in the opposite direction to his father on Monday evening and in the meantime met—death, which ended his life prematurely yesterday morning.”

According to the article, John Pavlík worked as a machinist, and his son sometimes walked up the street to meet him coming home

from work. That fateful Monday evening, on his way to meet his father, young John was hit by a westbound streetcar and thrown to the ground, where he briefly lay unconscious.

This second article reported this time that, although there were no signs of serious injury, the doctor immediately feared that the boy might have internal injuries. Two days after the accident, it became clear that young John had indeed suffered a serious head injury. Efforts to treat his injury were in vain, and his condition worsened. Thursday morning, his father was urgently summoned from his workplace to say goodbye, but he arrived at his son’s bedside too late. John Pavlík, Jr., had died around 11 a.m. on October 22, 1914. He was buried three days later at Bohemian National Cemetery.



“Killed—JOHN PAVLÍK, Jr.”

Denní Hlasatel, 23 October 1914, page 7

Image courtesy of Czechoslovak
Genealogical Society
International (CGSI) (cgisi.org)
Denní Hlasatel Archive

Project Updates

During your next visit to BNC, be sure to check out the 1892 Civil War Veterans Monument. New bollards are installed and large surrounding connecting chains have been cleaned and powder-coated, resulting in an impressive colored chain that surrounds the monument. Landscaping will be completed shortly.

Our thanks to Friends of BNC donors and a grant from Czech Republic's Ministry of Foreign Affairs who made possible the restoration of this monument.

Plans for our next project involve repairs and replacement of limestone fence posts and iron fence panels at the gatehouse. Watch for future updates.

Deputy Consul General Ondřej Pometlo (left) and a student intern from Prague's Charles University assigned to the Chicago Consulate General viewed the Civil War Veterans Monument project. Restoration of the monument was funded by Friends of BNC and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic.



Live from BNC

(continued from page 1)
remain in place.

The outdoor volunteer "lumberjacks," led by Chuck Betzold, continue the ongoing tasks of cutting old trees and fallen branches. The tree work crew includes Carl Brader, Bill Serviss, Bob Weniger, and Larry Andersen.

Volunteer mechanic Nef Morales continues to make important repairs to large machinery. Along with Chuck Michalek, he repaired and began operating the



wood chipper to reduce large piles of built up tree branches.

Special thanks to Air Force veteran Chuck Betzold and BNC staff for placing flags along the roadway for Memorial Day celebration. Gardening volunteer Mary Lachiewicz continues weekly visits to water flowers.

We can always use more volunteers. If interested, contact Chuck Michalek at michalekchas@aol.com.

Chuck Michalek
President
and Wednesday Volunteer

Donations

Sponsors

(\$100—\$499)

Lawrence Anderson

Anonymous

CSA Lodge #377—Woodrow
Wilson

Czech Catholic Union/CCU
Life

Otto Dolansky

Mary Ellen Flaks

Hester Hilden

The late Rekha Bhupen Mody
and Family *in honor of*
Rekha B. Mody

Marge Sladek Stueckemann

in memory of Lillian

Nemec, former delegate

*and member of Friends of
BNC*

Susan Styx

David Varnerin

Carol Vovis

Donors

(\$25—\$99)

Anonymous

CSA Lodge Brookfield #475

Edie Folta

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

Welcome to Our New Members!

Janet Loucky Alley ... Marengo IL

Sheila O'Neill Family ... Chicago IL

Laura Bridges ... Chicago IL

George Rozhon ... Fox River Grove IL

Anna Cooková ... Stevens Point WI

Andrew Spinelli ... Woodstock IL

Dolores Niewinski ... Prospect Heights IL

Linda Sullivan ... Chicago IL

Upcoming Events at Bohemian National Cemetery

AUTUMN TOURS OF THE TOMBSTONES

Sunday, September 28, 2025, at 11 am & 2 pm

Reservations are recommended and can be made on our
website, friendsofbnc.org.

Cost is \$10 for members and \$20 for nonmembers.

Please meet at the gatehouse 15 minutes prior to tour
time. See back page of newsletter for more details.





Vítáme vás na našem hřbitově

BNC Tour April 27, 2025. The popular spring walking tour was held in April, and both morning and afternoon tours were sold out. One person on the tour, wearing a Cubs jacket, was particularly pleased to see the unique outdoor columbarium devoted to Chicago Cubs baseball fans, Beyond the Vines. Information about our autumn tours can be found on the back page of this issue.



More than 200 travelers from Czech Republic came to Chicago in June to participate in and view Sokol Slet activities. A number of them came to view historic BNC and in particular the Cermak Family mausoleum.

Danuše Miklášová and Jaroslav Rohlena pose in front of the Sokol emblem in Ceremony Hall.



A group of senators from the Czech Republic were visiting Chicago for the 2025 Sokol Slet. They requested a visit to historic BNC and were provided a tour by Chuck Michalek and Chuck Betzold.



The Bauer-Petrlik family traveled from České Budějovice to visit the United States. At BNC, they were very pleased to find the gravesite of a relative who immigrated to America many years ago.



Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

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Heritage Happenings Summer 2025

Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery Autumn Tours of the Tombstones



- ♦ Walking tours are led by an experienced guide and cemetery historian
- ♦ Tours leave from the 1893 gatehouse at the main entrance to the cemetery
- ♦ Refreshments are provided there before and after the tours

When: Sunday, September 28, 2025
11:00 am and 2:00 pm

Where: Bohemian National Cemetery
5255 N. Pulaski Road, Chicago

Cost: \$10 for Friends members
\$20 for non-members

Each tour is limited to 30 participants.

Reservations are recommended.

*You may pay by credit card in advance
at friendsofbnc.org
or by cash or check
at the gatehouse on tour day.*

*Please arrive 15 minutes before
tour starting time.*