



# Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

## What's new with Friends of BNC

"We saw you on Channel 7 news!" What excitement as Harry Porterfield came to BNC this fall to film the volunteers—Friends members and also the talented men that do various repair jobs each week. Thanks to our wonderful Publicity Chair, Anna Schnedorf, who suggested our volunteers for the "People You Should Know" segment. Behind the filming location stood our beautiful Crematorium/Columbarium, adding a special touch as the camera scanned gravestones and various volunteers were interviewed. The segment also focused on tree-trimming and explained the importance of Anton Cermak as Harry spoke of Cermak's role in Chicago history while standing in front of the Cermak Mausoleum.

On a second beautiful fall day, over sixty-five people enjoyed our October 7th tour with guide extraordinaire, Albert Walavich. Three visitors from afar were present thanks to Ken Dvorsky, who invited them to take a break from a national meeting of CSA, the Czech insurance company. From a group of women from the Red Hat Society to a large group from the neighborhood, thanks to more local press publicity, we enjoyed a wonderful response. The usual tasty Czech refreshments in the Gatehouse were well received (thanks to Cervenkas for organizing and member Roland Weis for his donation for the cost). A special treat was the donation of both regular and decaf coffee from the local Starbucks. One

disappointment, however, was that this tour was unable to go inside the Crematorium/Columbarium due to having two funerals that day.

Don't miss our next event, a very special program on January 28th. Find out if BNC is really a cemetery or a park when Barbara Geiger speaks at the next membership meeting. Details available in another section of the newsletter!

Our thanks to John Persic who volunteered to be our second delegate to the Czech American Congress. John has attended his first meeting and reported our

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Winter Issue, Vol.3, #3  
January 2007  
Sherida Hudak, 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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## Live from BNC

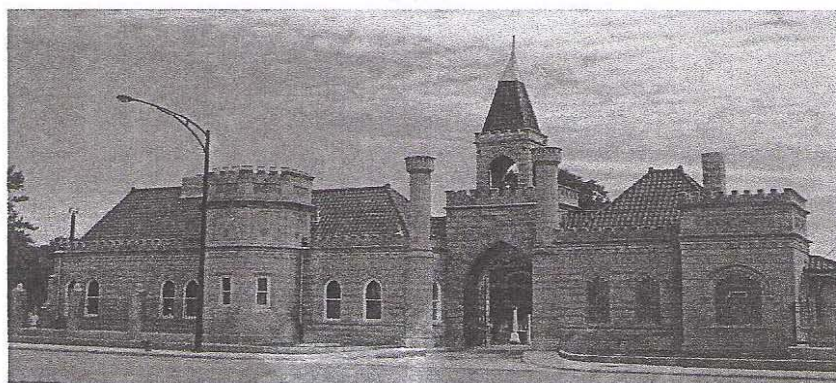
On October 7, 2006, a delegates meeting was held at the cemetery. Prior to the meeting, the delegates were each assigned a section of the cemetery to inspect. Their inspection reports were submitted and will be evaluated and acted upon.

On November 12, 2006, the vocal ensemble, Con Spirito, directed by Rebecca Patterson, presented their program, "Anthems of A Life's Journey," in the Columbarium. Part of their

presentation included a solo by cellist Mara Leonard. Members of the group love choral music and have sung works ranging from large symphonic pieces to chamber music. The event was well received by all who attended. Many were visiting the Columbarium for the first time and remarked how beautiful it was. Refreshments were provided afterwards by

Dave Pimm of Veteran's Funeral Service.

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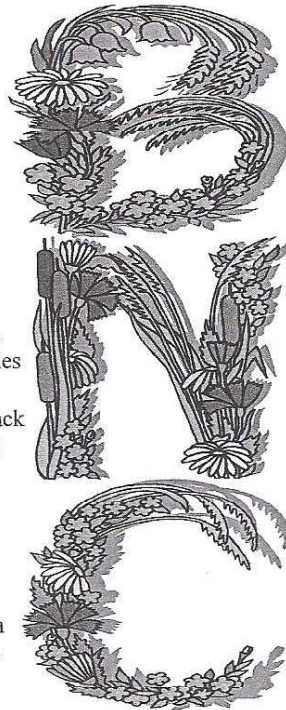
## Natural nuances

One of the greatest natural contributions to the sense of peace I feel at BNC are the trees. Except for the open park area, which was intended for large group gatherings, all of the inner plotted sections of the cemetery are filled with mature trees. In most seasons, they block any views of nearby traffic and its noise, providing a canopy and inviting contemplation. They protect one from the rest of the city so that it may be forgotten. Even in winter, their dark outlines, white with snow, branches heavy with their bright burden, draw my eye to their magnificence.

Although I may be unashamedly biased, BNC has a greater abundance, per acre, of trees than many other cemeteries in the Chicago area. Even though it was founded earlier, St. Adalbert's has a scattering of saplings in

comparison to Bohemian National. Directly across Pulaski Road, St. Luke's and Montrose Cemeteries are not nearly as fortunate in tree population.

Not only are trees at BNC plentiful, but they are also a diverse lot. Maples are distinctive with four different species living on cemetery land: black maple, sugar maple, red maple, and silver maple. BNC also hosts northern catalpa with their heart shaped leaves, white flowers and long brown seed capsules. Other residents include the ash, poison-sumac, red mulberry, and American beech. A second flowering tree, the horsechestnut, announces each



spring with its creamy white flowers. The American sycamore is one of the largest, up to 100 feet tall. Two evergreens, the fir and spruce, brighten up winter with their foliage. My favorite, for its majesty, is the bur oak, with its stout trunk and thick limbs.

But why do we have the great fortune to house this diverse, mature, and abundant group of trees? Although Illinois was predominantly prairie, forest groves were located along

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### Winter Meeting & Program

**1:00 P.M. — Sunday, January 28, 2007**

**Bohemian National Cemetery  
5225 N. Pulaski Rd.  
Columbarium Chapel**

#### "Is it a park or a cemetery?"

**Jens Jensen's and O.C. Simmonds' naturalistic designs in Chicago**

**Presentation by Barbara Geiger—Landscape historian and design consultant; instructor at I.I.T., Northwestern University and the Chicago Botanic Gardens; lecturer and landscape tour guide at Graceland Cemetery.**

**Join us! All are welcome! Free admission.**

**Refreshments in the historic Victorian Gatehouse after the program**

### Mark Your Calendar

**Saturday, May 5, 2007**

**Two hour guided tours at  
Bohemian National Cemetery**

**10:00 A.M.—Walking tour led by Albert Walavich, historian and tour guide extraordinaire**

**1:00 P.M.— Columbarium Tour**

**Look for details in our next issue**

**Tour cost—\$15 non-members; \$10 members**

**Registrar—Sher Hudak (773) 763-8324**

## What's new with Friends of BNC

*Continued from page 1*

"doings" to this group of various Czech-American organizations. He joins Laddie Vitek, who is our other delegate.

Mark your calendar now for the BNC gala celebration dinner from noon to 5:00 P.M. on Sunday, April 29th. A full Czech-style meal, entertainment by the Vesilica Slovak Dancers, raffles, a special silent auction of treasures, some from the Czech Republic, and the chance to support the restoration of the

Columbarium—all for only \$35. Plan to gather a group of friends and fill a table. Look for your special invitation to arrive in 2007.

Although we all enjoy the special events, our board works hard to make most of them happen. Other work that we've recently done was on a mailing of the annual appeal letter for BNC. Friends pays all costs of this solicitation and 100% of any monies this year will go to the Columbarium repairs. Note that

a new law just passed makes it possible to take IRA distributions if over age 70½, and have the total monies go to a charity with no taxes paid by either the donor or the organization. Such a donation would be well used by BNCA to preserve our historic building!!

Have a most happy and prosperous new year.

**Marge Sladek Stueckemann, President**

## Shop & share

Friends are always looking for new ways to raise money to help preserve and restore cemetery buildings, especially the Crematorium/Columbarium, and we need the help of all our members. Without too much trouble, this time you can assist by doing what you already do each week—shop for groceries!

Jewel-Osco will donate 5% of the total purchases made by group members and

friends. First, find your Shop & Share identification slips enclosed within this newsletter. Then, just shop on the designated days and present your identification slip, with your signature, to the checkout person. They will enter the amount of purchase and keep the slip in their register to return to the Melrose Park office.

**Designated days are January 29-31 and February 5-7, 2007, so plan ahead.**



## Live from BNC

*Continued from page 1*

The cemetery's new tenant, Gethsemane Gardens, has built three hot houses on the land just east of the lagoon. They have trimmed all the trees around the lagoon and planted additional trees and shrubs near the greenhouses. Their work really improved the appearance around the lagoon, which now looks great.

Work on various cemetery buildings has progressed. The work on the roof, marble, and caulking of the Masaryk Memorial Mausoleum is complete. Two additional turrets on the Columbarium roof were repaired, which also involved rebuilding the brick walls. A new roof was also installed. The old roof was torn off down to the concrete, which was resealed, and new drains

were installed. However, there are two more turrets that still need to be rebuilt, the chimney must be repaired, the lintels above the windows need to be done, and new garage doors should be installed. In the Gatehouse, we have installed two additional electric heaters to ensure that when events are conducted there it will be warm. The women's washroom in this building now has hot water. Unfortunately, water is still a problem in the basement and we are continuing to seek a solution. In other areas, the old frame structure behind the potting shed has been torn down. On the potting shed itself, we have begun to tear off the roof and shingle it. With all this work, we welcome our new volunteer, Chuck Michalek.

We now have a "husův stráž" (goose patrol) provided to the cemetery by Nora Wilson's dog, Bear. He has reduced the amount of time that the geese spend in the cemetery and lagoon.

Our volunteer day has been changed from Tuesday to Wednesday. We still welcome anyone who wishes to assist; and not all work is physically demanding. Many cemetery records need to be inspected, categorized, and filed. Your time will be well spent and appreciated.

**Andrew Bultas**

## Natural nuances

Continued from page 3

rivers which acted as firebreaks and provided moisture to the trees. Oak and hickory were suited to the climate conditions and dominated these areas, but by 1860 when much of the prairie was converted to farmland, prairie fires ceased and other tree species sprouted.

A few references in BNCA publications pertain to trees. *The Semi-Centennial Jubilee* notes that the 50 acres purchased in 1877 were a wooded piece of land along the Chicago River. It is also noted that the "location was excellent" and "the grounds were high and covered with trees." In *The Centennial* it is remarked that "50 acres east of Crawford were

well forested." It was also noted that in 1878 as the land was developed, many trees were felled for the construction and improvement of roads.

In 1902, an additional 60 acres, north of the previous acquisition, were purchased, from W. Peterson. There is no mention regarding the amount of tree coverage on this acreage, but it is known that the Peterson family operated a tree nursery and was known for an innovative technique in successfully transplanting larger trees.

Only one other section of these publications

mentions trees. In the 1960's Dutch elm disease hit Chicago and was prevalent by the 1970's. It struck at BNC and greatly reduced the population of elms. Cemetery workers along with contractors removed the diseased trees, so it appears that in prior years, we had an even greater number of trees.

Now, I thank nature, those who had the foresight to choose the space where BNC remains, and those who continue to care for what is home to the beautiful trees.

Sherida Hudak

## Members notes

*Do you have a short family history story you would like to share with our readers? Please send your story to Sher Hudak, Editor  
sheridahudak@msn.com*

*A member from La Grange Park writes:*

My first memory of the Bohemian National Cemetery took place about 70 years ago when I was about nine years old. My grandmother and I took the Crawford Ave./Pulaski streetcar to the cemetery. We walked down the gravel paths to a grave site of a little girl who

died. I remember vividly how the little girl's mother had to be physically restrained from jumping in the grave after her daughter. I held my grandmother's hand tightly.

Sincerely,  
Mildred B. Schalk

### Celebrate 130 Years of BNC

*What? Gala dinner with entertainment*

*When? Sunday, April 29, 2007, from noon until 5:00 P.M.*

*Where? Ashton Place, 341 75th Street, Willowbrook, IL 60527*

*How much? Tickets \$35*

*R.S.V.P. 708-788-5183 or 847-362-9036 or 630-887-0411*

*All proceeds benefit restoration of historic 1919 Crematorium/Columbarium*

*Sponsored by the BNCA's Board of Delegates.*

### Friends of BNC Now is a 501c3 Public Charity!

*Thanks to the excellent pro bono work of attorney Rhonda Jensen and much hard work of our board as well, the IRS has granted FoBNC 501c3 status. More details on what this means to us will be in our next issue.*

## Monumental musings

At this time of the year, with the winter blanket of snow covering the ground, my musings must gravitate to the vertical wonders that dot the landscape of Bohemian National Cemetery.

It would be possible to discuss any one fine mausoleum, or take them as a suite of architectural treasures, but I am often drawn to some of the monuments that we might stride by, but which are surely worth a second, third, or even fourth look.

One such example is to be found very close to the wonderful monument honoring those who served in the Spanish American War. Just south and west of this fine statue is the monument of the Kaplanek family.

The Kaplanek monument is large even by the generous standards to be found throughout the cemetery. A female figure, dressed in flowing garb from the ancient era, stands guard over the family plot. In her hands she holds flowers, but, unlike her sisters "The Littering Ladies" I spoke of some time ago, she is holding her three flowers cradled in her arms as if to lay down her small bouquet at any moment.

Like so many of the monuments to be found in Bohemian National, this is not signed by a

sculptor, but it is a piece that he or she was probably rightly proud of. The proportions are stately, yet not overpowering, and the details are beautifully refined.

One thing that makes this monument stand out in my mind is the beautiful juxtaposition of the pale gray granite statue in front of a darker highly polished granite rectangle that has two lower side wings coming off of it. Were we to remove the statue and just look at the structure behind it, we could almost imagine ourselves looking at the silhouette of an art deco skyscraper that just happens to have a cornice line of beautifully carved incised floral designs.

The statue of this monument has another striking feature in that the three flowers (that magical number that appears so often on monuments throughout the cemetery) are not perfect. As if to show that a loss has occurred, one of the flowers has its stem broken just below the blossom—a touching reminder that a death has occurred and should be marked by the breaking or rending of things.

Some may look at this monument and wonder why I would single it out from so many beautiful and stunning examples at the cemetery. It is hard to explain why I have always been drawn to this piece, but there is a

gentleness that calls to me.

Now that I have mused, I would like to invite those of you who read these pieces to contact me c/o Friends of Bohemian National and let me know what monuments speak to you. You can share your reasons with me, or, if you wish, you can just send me on a pilgrimage to see what other pieces in Bohemian National have proven themselves to be capable of moving people.

**Albert Walavich**

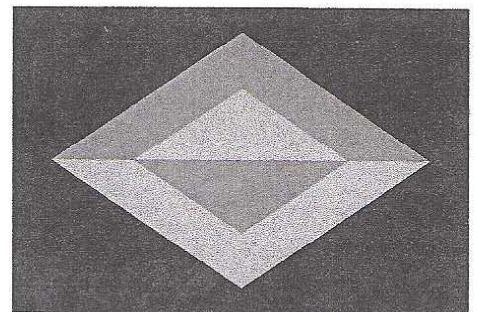
### Welcome New Members

Noelle Baker  
Edith Brocek  
Alice Darda  
Maureen A. Grady  
Charissa J. Grimes  
Rhonda Jensen  
Diane Keseric  
Kenneth and Linnea Kralik  
Michael Lisec  
Janet Neal  
Ruth Denmark Prusha  
Mrs. Dale Reese  
Mildred Brydl Schalk  
Geraldine Stoklasa  
Vlasta Vicenik  
Mrs. Joan Zuffano

## Officers

Marjorie Sladek Stueckemann, President  
Bill Hosna, Vice-President  
Juli Nelson, Treasurer  
Meribeth K. Tooke, Secretary  
Charles Cervenka, Director  
Martha Cervenka, Director

Evelyn Krenek Fergle, Director  
Henrietta Bartizal-Pons, Membership Chair  
Andrew Bultas, Grants  
Sherida Hudak, Newsletter Editor  
Anna Schnedorf, Publicity Chair  
Sue Zielinski, Webmaster



# Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

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## *Heritage Happenings*

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

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## Membership renewal reminder

Your membership as a Friend of Bohemian National Cemetery is important.

Please check the label of this newsletter. If your membership is overdue, you will note that the date it expired is highlighted. If no date appears, your membership was a very early one and has most likely expired.

In these cases, we are unable to continue to provide you with our newsletter, and this will be the last copy you will receive. We hope that you will not let this happen and that you will renew your membership.

We trust you have seen the benefits of being a member over these past few years. Our volunteers have worked hard with the Bohemian National Cemetery Association to undertake

projects to enhance and maintain the beauty of this historic cemetery. Having the cemetery's importance acknowledged by being listed on the National Register of Historic Places is just one thing that has been accomplished. We need your help to continue.

Please take the time to renew now.

Membership dues for 1 year are:

\$25 individual

\$20 senior

\$35 family

Make checks payable to Friends of BNC.

Mail with the coupon to

FOBNC c/o Miss Juli Nelson

300 Claymoor #2F

Hinsdale, IL 60521-5076

### Membership Renewal

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Amount enclosed \_\_\_\_\_