

Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Summer Issue, Vol.4, #1

July 2007
Sherida Hudak, Editor

What's New with Friends of BNC

Combining delicious food, a beautiful room at Ashton Place in Willowbrook, wonderful Slovak dancers in colorful kroje, inspiring words from Professor Sieger and Angelina Bultas about the work done to bring

about the listing of Bohemian National Cemetery on the National Register of Historic Places –this made for a marvelous afternoon at our historic banquet on April 29th. There were 330 participants who enjoyed the centerpieces of clay pots filled with pansies (thanks to

“...you may have seen the scaffolding...and workers on the roof, continuing the restoration thanks to the donations!”

Gethsemane Gardens who donated the total cost) and the colored photo of the beautiful stained glass windows

of the Columbarium/ Crematorium as our place cards. Pansies were chosen because there is one painted on the Chapel wall, since the Freethinkers had adopted it as their symbol.

The ad book had 84 pages (!) thanks to the many businesses,

lodges, Sokols plus individuals who contributed ads. Friends sponsored the silent auction with over 100 items. Over \$5,000 was realized from the auction for the ongoing Columbarium restoration. The final accounting of proceeds from the meal tickets and ad book are still being determined, but it seems likely that about \$10,000 will be realized from these two sources. What a joyful time!

Deepest thanks to the Co Chairs of the banquet, Martha Cervenka and Marie Jensen. Thanks, too, to the rest of the committee members, Charles Cervenka, Evelyn Krenek Fergle, Marilyn Michyeta and Juli Nelson. I was privileged to be in charge of the

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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

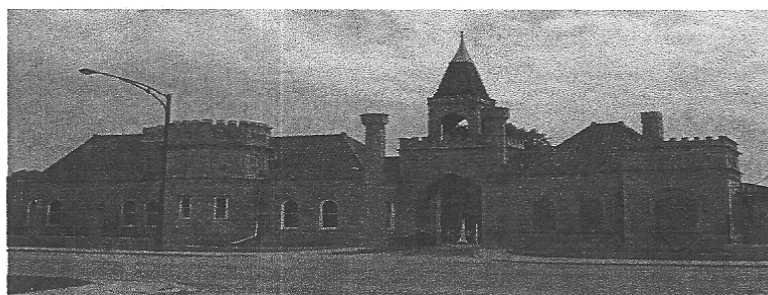
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Live from BNC

On April 18, 2007 Bohemian National Cemetery was honored by another visit of parliamentarians from the Czech Republic. They, like all the visitors from the Czech Republic, wanted to see Cermak's mausoleum. The cemetery had

been notified by the Czech Consul, that they were coming, a couple of days in advance and was able to prepare for the visit. The mausoleum was open so they were able to go inside.

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What's new with Friends of BNC

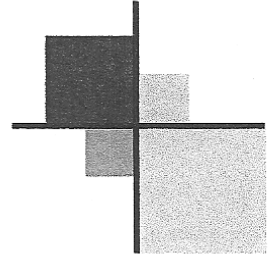
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Memorial Day, you may have seen the scaffolding around the Columbarium/Crematorium chimney and workers on the roof, continuing the restoration thanks to the donations!

The next time you are at the cemetery office, be sure to look at the newly-restored photo of

FDR presenting a wreath at Anton Cermak's mausoleum taken in 1933. Renovation was provided by our Friends treasury, thanks to Martha and Charles Cervenka who located the right person for this job.

Marge Sladek Stueckemann, President



Donors



Charrissa Grimes

Sharon Sladek Triffon

Lodge Yankee-Jungmann #77

Thanks to these additional donors and their generosity in helping to restore the Columbarium.

Live from BNC

(Continued from page 1)

Five dignitaries arrived with Deputy Consul Bořek Lizec. The parliamentarians were: Mr. Jeroným Tejc, Mr. Stanislav Křeček (Vice Chairman of the Committee), Ms. Michaela Frková (Department of International Relations), Mr. Jiří Polanský (Vice Chairman of the Committee), and Mr. Zdeněk Prosek. They, as did all previous visitors from the Czech Republic, showed an extreme reverence for Cermak. Prior to laying the wreath, they all bowed their heads. After the wreath was laid they entered the mausoleum. As an American of Bohemian decent, it was interesting to

observe how they honor a man we take for granted. After Cermak's mausoleum they were taken to the Columbarium and given a tour of it. They were duly impressed.

I have been asked numerous times as to how the ownership of gravesites purchased at Bohemian National Cemetery is passed on from generation to generation. I spoke with Superintendent Roux regarding this question and he related the following. After gravesites are purchased, they are owned by the purchaser. Their spouse, having dower rights, is the owner of the gravesites, upon their death. Upon the spouse's death, if there is no

will, the gravesites revert to the children. If the children agree on one of them becoming sole owner, they must sign an affidavit provided by Bohemian National Cemetery stating so. Upon the death of this person, unless there is a will, the gravesites revert to this person's children, rather than their spouse. The gravesites cannot be sold and only the heir or heirs may have sole ownership. This procedure continues from generation to generation. The gravesites must remain in the family of the original purchaser.

Andrew Bultas

Natural nuances

One area that I never fail to visit at Bohemian National Cemetery is in the southern portion, north of the Chicago River and just south of the Columbarium. I am always drawn to bodies of water and the lagoon at BNC is no exception. Old trees surround the banks of its oblong ends and water lilies with pink flowers adorn a portion of the quiet water. If I move

“It dove headlong from the air into the water, submerged and returned to a tree along the edge of the lagoon.”

slowly and silently I may catch a glimpse of a feathered friend or two at this solitary location. My friends are not readily apparent, but are easily disturbed. I hunt them all summer with an inadequate, slow clicking camera and the visits become a stalking contest where I obtain photos that compare to those of the Loch Ness monster. What are those blurry shadows in the distance?

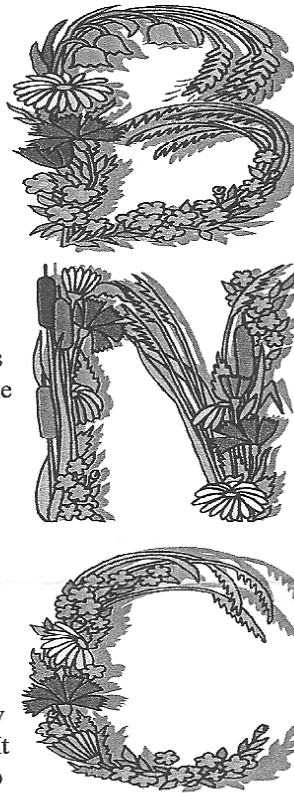
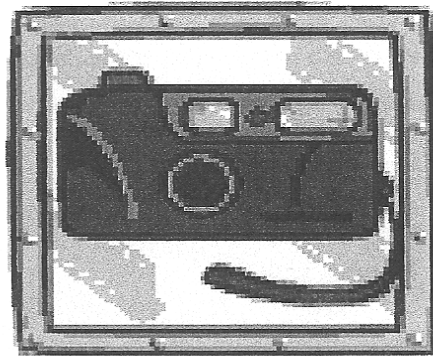
The largest of those blurs is a great blue heron, standing motionless and statuesque, sometimes high in a tall tree, maybe near its nest of sticks. At full height the long legged bird is four feet tall with a gray blue body and lighter colored head. When hunting in the shallow water its head will be hunched on its shoulders in striking position. More often than not, the whirr of my camera lens zooming in will send this heron to the sky, while I watch his long neck pull back into a loop as he heads toward the safety of the river. Once, in pursuit, I followed to the river, leaned over the fence for a better look and further disturbed the wildlife, sending two sunning turtles into the slow current. I obtained neither a blur nor a shadow to document my sighting.

The second creature in the shadows always roosts in the trees and is nearly as camera shy

as the great blue. The black crowned night heron has a shorter beak and legs. Its stockier body is an indistinct brown, indicating that it is either a female or an immature bird. When I approach within shooting distance this rooster will take flight to another tree at the opposite end of the lagoon. This heron may be common in fresh water swamps but is still a surprise to me in the middle of a busy city and I guiltily put my camera away, ashamed for disturbing its private domain.

A third surprise, was one astounding performance by a short tailed dive bomber. The belted kingfisher, with its striking blue body, white neck and reddish belt, was not nearly as shy as the herons had been. It dove headlong from the air into the water, submerged and returned to a tree along the edge of the lagoon. I was astonished with the feat and the notion that there even might be something worth diving for. Its adorned crown, large head and beak make the kingfisher easy to spot. Its aerial and aquatic acrobatics make it a joy to watch.

A fourth random feathered sighting at BNC



does not necessitate the lagoon. On occasion, I have seen the speeding form of a peregrine falcon in various sections of the cemetery. Peregrines are one of the fastest birds and were the one most often used in medieval falconry. They almost disappeared in the 1960's because of DDT that inhibited calcification and egg production. Ornithologists used captive stock and worked to establish breeders in suitable places, including Chicago. This falcon has a dark head cap with a brown and white marked underside, while my camera shot of the peregrine at BNC shows a plain blue sky without even a feather.

Returning to the lagoon, the final species is plentiful and not the least bit shy. Canadian geese are at home on the water, the banks and many lawn areas. They even cooperate and readily pose for shots with goslings and a few honks.

This particular summer I have been concerned with the added activity at the lagoon and its potential for disrupting the solitude of my feathered friends. Gethsemane Gardens is now renting the previously vacant area around the lagoon for plants, trees and shrubs. After numerous visits to BNC, I did not find any of the birds, except the geese, mentioned here and gave up looking. On one additional visit, I still could not resist a trip to the lagoon. I went without a camera and neither quietly nor slowly, but I did disturb the black crowned night heron out of its roost. Hopefully, they will all return and adapt to the changed environment.

Members notes

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

My learning of BNC was probably like many.

I was doing research on my father's side. The family I was researching were the Bily's.

My father had informed me that his grandfather was Michael Bily. When I asked what his great-grandfather's name was he did not know. So from that point, the search was on.

I was a rookie at that time in researching, but I moved forward. I had read somewhere that the Social Security application form that they filled out in the 1930's would list his parent's names. So I searched online and located the

proper form and I sent for a copy of his SSA.

Eight weeks later my prize was in my mail box. I opened the envelope with great excitement. Sure enough there was his father's name. Vitous Bily was listed on the SSA.

Now, I had a name. I searched on "ancestry" and found him immediately. His wife's name was Anna (1900 Federal Census). There, listed under Vitous and Anna was a son named Henry and under his name was Michael (there are 5 other children besides them).

The mystery was solved. But now I needed to know where they were buried. I already knew where Michael was buried. I called that cemetery, but no Vitous. I called a few cemeteries near where they lived in Chicago, but no luck.

After searching for a few days, I decided to see if I could get a death certificate. I researched, located and purchased a copy. Yes, on the death certificate it says "place of burial, Bohemian National Cemetery".

I called my father and he knew of BNC. So I called the office and got the hours of the cemetery. Within the week, I made the trip from Wilmington, Illinois.

I arrived at the office and was helped by a very nice gentleman. He took my information and came back with more amazing information. He explained to me that there were 7 people buried at the Vitous and Anna family plot. Wow, was I excited. He proceeded to list names and when and where they died. It was awesome information.

Ever since that day in March of 2003, I have been very interested in BNC. I have become a member of Friends and have made many trips to BNC for research and the great tours.

I thank all of you for the hard work you put into BNC.

John M. Persic Jr., Wilmington, IL

Archaeology presentation

"Walk & Talk with the Steps of Cyril and Methodius' Slavic Old World"

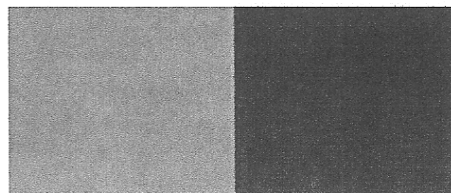
On Saturday, August 18 from 1:30—4:00 pm the Czech & Slovak American Genealogy Society of Illinois will host a presentation by Dr. John P. Staeck, College of DuPage Professor of Anthropology and Director of the Czech-American Archaeological Field School.

Dr. Staeck will tell of his research on the early medieval fortresses and places that Cyril and Methodius may have walked on in Great Moravia around 800 A.D. Dr Staeck covers the origins of the Czech people, culture and state from 400 B.C. to the post-Soviet Block era. He will take us vicariously to archaeological excavations at a 30 acre hill

fort with Neolithic, Bronze Age, Celtic, Medieval, and Early Modern components.

The program will be held at the First Presbyterian Church of LaGrange, Ashland and Elm Street, LaGrange, Illinois. It is located 2 blocks west of LaGrange Road (US 45) and 3 blocks north of 47th Street.

The event is free for visitors and guests. For additional information contact Marge Sladek Stueckemann (mdstueck@aol.com).

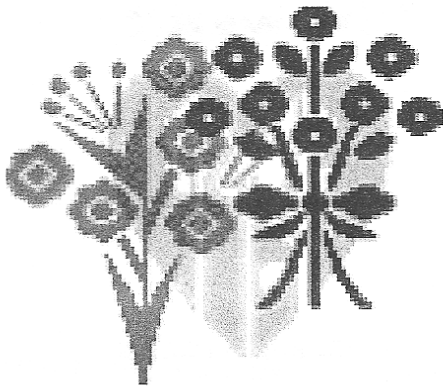


Welcome New Members

**Mary and Alan Avery
Roy Brabec
Beatrice Dvorak Cabanban
Gary Durante
Elizabeth Liapson
Stan Matosky
Joan Peterson
Barbara Rothbauer
Hyacinth Topinka
Jean Uhlir
Vacondio & Devine Family
George Vitlail
Alan and Cheryl Zak**

Monumental Musings

Summer at Bohemian National Cemetery is a time of flowers. Whether boldly red geraniums, gentle purple ageratums or pastel impatiens—the cemetery is a blaze of color set on a lush green canvas.



As time passes, however, there are those graves that once were beds of colorful blooms but, due to the passing of survivors, are now no longer decorated with living flowers. There are some families who anticipated the time when a living hand could no longer place floral tributes, and they created monuments of enduring beauty where the flower is now offered in stone or bronze.

There are, of course, the many instances of the figures of remembrance who are dropping a flower at the grave or are holding a floral wreath, but in at least three cases families have

“Three flower buds, not yet open to reveal their full beauty, are gently arched and ready to blossom at some future date.”

found wonderful ways to have flowers present through all seasons.

My first stop is Section 21 where Anna Lejcar has a beautiful monument with the most subtle sprig of flowers appearing in the upper left portion of the stone. Three flower buds, not yet open to reveal their full beauty, are gently arched and ready to blossom at some future date. The one thing that makes these flowers so extraordinary is that they appear on a monument of ominously dark granite. A stone so dark that one would hardly imagine that such delicate buds would thrive there.

In Section 22 the Lukes family has a large granite vase filled with a most impressive bouquet of flowers in full bloom complemented by lacy fern fronds. Standing more than three feet in height, this beautiful light gray granite monument could well serve as a floral remembrance for many of the families in the area. While the fully carved

flowers are beautiful, my eye has always been drawn to those lacy ferns. It isn't that they shouldn't be surprising as fern, Baby's Breath and other foliage are often used to frame a beautiful bouquet, but there is something so gentle about the way they caress the lip of the vase that touches my heart and always catches my eye.

The mausoleum of Hugo J. Chott takes me to Section 23. In the case of this monument, the beautiful art deco rendering of the flowers that are carved into the granite of the door opening and the beautiful flowers in the bronze of the door show that there will always be a thought of love given to those within this art deco treasure. Of course the whimsical crescent moon over the door brings a smile to my face as I am once again seeing the logo for the Crescent Dental Appliances company that was owned by the Chott family. Such a subtle way to advertise the company for all eternity.

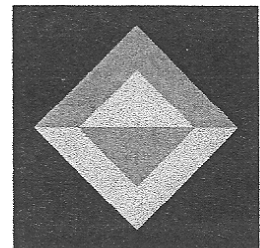
Clearly there are so many more examples to be found around Bohemian National Cemetery that this set of musings could go on for many pages, but I invite all of the readers to find their own floral muse in my favorite open-air museum.

Albert Walavich

Officers

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

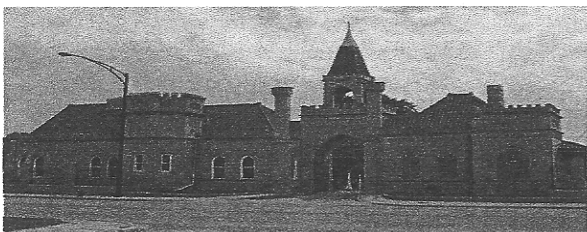
- Evelyn Krenek Fergle, Director
- Henrietta Bartizal-Pons, Membership Chair
- Andrew Bultas, Grants
- Sherida Hudak, Newsletter Editor
- Anna Schnedorf, Publicity Chair
- Sue Zielinski, Webmaster



**Newsletter of Friends of
Bohemian National Cemetery**

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Heritage Happenings

We're on the web

www.friendsofbnc.org

Events at BNC

Friends of BNC Meeting

Sunday, August 19, 2007

1:00 P.M., at the BNC Chapel

“Early Bohemian Life and Death” with Helen Sclair, FoBNC member also known as “The Cemetery Lady”. Illustrated with slides of Czech areas of long ago and information about how Czechs came to Chicago.

Join us for our open, free membership meeting and bring your friends!

Tours at BNC

Sunday, October 7, 2007

1:00 P.M.

beginning at the gatehouse

Friends-sponsored general two-hour walking tour of BNC led by Albert Walavich

\$10 members

\$15 non-members