

Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

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October 2007

Sherida Hudak, Editor

What's new with Friends of BNC

Is saving the past sexy?

Opening my Chicago Tribune on September 7th, I was taken aback by this headline! Then when I read the article and saw Bohemian National Cemetery listed front and center, I was delighted! Have you thought of being a member of Friends of BNC as an "in style" activity worthy of being considered "cool"? Who knew!! The newspaper article is preserved as an artistic poster (thanks to new member, Chuck Betzhold) and on display in the office.

Using the email addresses that some members wrote on their application, we sent out information regarding BNC as one of 25 historic sites chosen by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and American Express. These 25 sites are part

of a contest which will determine funding for a proposed grant, ours being written to restore the 1898 wooden tank perched atop the water tower.

Although not of the kind of historic prominence of sites such as the Chicago Cultural Center, our water tower represents a historically significant landmark with strong community support (that includes us as Friends!). The contest involves people using email. By typing in this web page, www.partnersinpreservation.com you are able to cast a daily vote (until the end of the contest on October 10th) for Bohemian National Cemetery. If you don't have a computer, know we have

Is saving the past sexy?

currently moved from number 11 to number 9 out of the 25, an excellent showing! We hope that those who received an email about this were able to vote

and encourage any like-minded friends to do so as well. The winning sites will be announced in November. The site with the most votes is assured of funding, but there will be others who receive grants as well. Let's hope BNC is one of the lucky winners!

Marge Sladek Stueckemann
President

Live from BNC

The month of June was a busy time at Bohemian National Cemetery. A number of individuals from the Czech Republic came to tour and participate in ceremonies. Ivan Dubovicky from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech

Republic Analysis and Planning Department, along with John Richards, a former President of the Czechoslovakian National Council, requested a tour of BNC. On June 10th Andy Bultas, Ray Capek, and Ken Dvorsky

(Continued on page 2)



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

Inside this issue:

<i>Members notes</i>	2
<i>Help wanted</i>	3
<i>2008 dates</i>	4
<i>Donors</i>	4
<i>Monumental musings</i>	5
<i>Shop & share</i>	5
<i>Thank you</i>	5

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
sherhudak@comcast.net*

I now live in Arlington, Texas. My cousin in Illinois says you are raising funds for the cemetery and that it has been designated a historic site. How would I contribute?

All of my grandparents are interred there and my grandfather was an employee in the 1940's. His name was Jan Rajchot and he worked as a groundskeeper until he was

Live from BNC

(Continued from page 1)

conducted a tour for the two gentlemen. They were shown the Columbarium, Cermak's Mausoleum, the Klacel Circle, and the Masaryk Memorial Mausoleum. They also reviewed grave markers dated prior to 1900. Both gentlemen were surprised at the excellent condition of the cemetery grounds and the many historical monuments. The visitors pointed out the many famous Czech and Slovak people buried in BNC. Ken Dvorsky recorded those names and will continue to make a list of all the famous people buried in the cemetery. Upon leaving, Mr. Dubovicky gave a card with his address in the Czech Republic in order to stay in contact. Both Mr. Dubovicky and Mr. Richards were pleased with their tour.

On June 30th the cemetery was honored to

injured by a horse-drawn wagon (not a motorized vehicle as they now use) because he didn't hear it coming up behind him. That must have been in the late 1940's or early 1950's.

Our family was also involved in the C.S.A. (Czechoslovak Society of America) and I was a Miss CSA contestant in 1953 or 1954. I think the C.S.A. continues to select a "Queen" every year. Each lodge can enter a contestant. When I was competing, the young woman who sold the most raffle tickets won the honor. I came in 2nd place. I'm not sure how the contest is conducted currently.

My sister, Marilyn Novacek Vondrasek, and I were also members of Sokol Havlicek Tyrs, which was located near 26th Street on Lawndale Avenue, in the inner city of Chicago. That organization has moved to the western suburbs, to Downers Grove, I think. When our parents moved to Cicero, Illinois, I continued to attend Sokol classes in Chicago but my younger sister moved her membership to

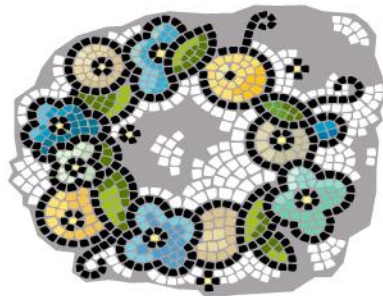
Sokol Slavsky. We both maintained our memberships until we married and moved away.

When I said that I was a "Sokolka" I meant that I attended Sokol classes. The classes were divided by age for children. Boys and girls had separate classes and meeting days. Once you turned 18 you were part of the Men's or Women's groups. The classes consisted of exercise, sports, and apparatus: balance beam, rings, horse, tumbling, etc. There was an annual Slet (show) where every class did a synchronized dance or exhibit and the adults performed almost professional feats on the apparatus.

In a couple of weeks we are going to Chicago for my husband's reunion from Riverside-Brookfield High School. If time permits we will drive to the cemetery. I haven't been there for many years, since my aunts died. We would drive there whenever we were in town.

Audrey Koeppe

have one of the ceremonies ending the Chicago Prague Days, the laying of a wreath at Cermak's Mausoleum.



Approximately 150 people attended the ceremony. Judy Baar Topinka spoke about Cermak's impact on Chicago politics. The Czech Ambassador, Petr Kolar; the mayor of Prague, Tomas Chalupa; Prague Alderman Radovan Steiner and Assistant Prague Mayor

Marketa Reedova were also in attendance. Petr Kolar laid the wreath in front of the mausoleum. Unfortunately, the Lord Mayor of Prague, Mr. Bem, had to return to Prague because of the death of one of his assistant mayors and was not in attendance. This day also was celebrated with a concert in the Columbarium. The group, Con Spirito sang Bohemian and Moravian songs in the Czech language. A string quartet also performed.

On August 18th, Helen Sclair, the well known "Cemetery Lady" spoke of "Early Bohemian Life and Death" in the Columbarium. This affair was attended by approximately 65 people and was our summer Friends meeting.

Finally, it should please a lot of people that the Great Blue Heron has returned to the lagoon area.

Andy Bultas

A letter from BNC Association

Dear Supporter of BNC,



At the April 2007 Anniversary Dinner we celebrated our past 130 years of service and our recent placement on the National Register of Historic Places. As we look to the future, one of our first plans is renovation of the magnificent Columbarium and chapel, including the stained glass windows and John Mallin's spectacular artwork.

As you may well imagine, this is a huge

undertaking. Financial assistance from the Friends of BNC, funds raised during the Con Spirito and the Horizon String Quartet performances, additional private donations, and the Anniversary Dinner proceeds are providing partial funding of this project.

We are very pleased to announce that in response to our grant application, the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs awarded BNC a portion of the cost to restore the windows in the Columbarium chapel.

Our current campaign of raising \$45,000 to restore all 9 stained glass windows is underway, and we invite your participation in this project. Donations of \$5,000 for each window are needed; each individual, family, or

organization sponsoring a window will be recognized in the Columbarium Donor Room.

If you are interested in helping in this way, please contact Ms. Elizabeth Raleigh at the cemetery office. Thank you for your consideration of this appeal on behalf of the beautiful, historic Bohemian National Cemetery.

Sincerely,

Raymond Capek, President

Bohemian National Cemetery Association

Phone: 773-539-8842

Thank you—dekuji vam

To Chuck Betzhold for donating beautiful signs to advertise the tours and also posters made from the Chicago Tribune article about voting for the water tower.

To Helen Sclair for her excellent pro bono presentation on "Early Bohemian Life And Death" illustrated with slides in the Crematorium/Columbarium on August 18th.

To Al Walavich for leading a special tour when Friends hosted the Northeastern Illinois Historical Council, made up of the boards of various local historical groups.

Help wanted

As usual, Friends will help place flags on veteran's graves to celebrate Veterans' Day on November 11th. Come anytime the week before to help. Just check in the office for the flags and locations. Friends will be there beginning at 10:00 A.M. on Friday, November 9th, if you'd like to have a partner. Lunch at Tre Kronor, the Swedish restaurant 1 mile east on Foster might be a possibility as well!

In 2008 we would like to explore hosting a fund-raising walk/race, hopefully in

cooperation with Northeastern Illinois University. Want to help plan?

We'd also like to host a Gatehouse Victorian tea.

Please call 847-362-9036 or email mdstueck@aol.com if you'd like to help. Thanks for your interest. To do flags, just come and help. No need to contact anyone.



Save the date

2008 Meeting

Sunday, January 27th at 1:00 P.M.

At Klas Restaurant in Cicero

Czech family style meal

Program topic will be cemeteries in the Czech Republic. More details will be in the winter newsletter.

2008 Tour Dates

Sunday, May 4th at 1:00 P.M.

Saturday, October 4th at both 10:00 A.M. and 1:00 P.M.

Tours will be guided by Albert Walavich.

2008 Clean-Up Dates

Saturday, May 24th

Saturday, October 18th

The first annual spring and fall clean-up days, with details to follow after January 2008.

Donor list

Patron \$500-\$999

Edward Dellin

Sponsor \$100-\$499

Sharon & Apostol Triffon

Ellen Yurka

Donor \$25-\$99

Christine Bisio

Jane Brown

Leora Ekl

Evanston Funeral & Cremation

Jean Frumkin

Mildred Halla

Calvin Hochel

Jan Jurena

Robert Krejci

Margaret Kruty

Lodge Brookfield #475—CSA Fraternal Life

Lorraine Marholz

Don & Lili Nemec

Richard Palicka

Thank You \$1-\$24

S. Golland

Norman Hurd

Welcome new members

Mary Akers

Chuck Betzold

Sandy (Alexandra) Carpenter

Tom Drebenstedt

Anne Kozak

Paul & Shirley Lawrisuk

Alice Mika

Dr. Robert & Jean Musil

Mr. & Mrs. E.W. Schnabl

Frank Skala

Richard M. Straka

Brad Suster

Robert & Josephine Vorel

We are the chosen

In each family, there is one who seems called to find the ancestors—to put flesh on their bones and make them live again—to tell the family story, and to feel that somehow they know and approve.

We are the storytellers of the tribe. All tribes have one. We have been called by our genes. Those who have gone before us cry out to us “Tell Our Story!” So, we do. In finding them, we somehow find ourselves.

How many graves have I stood before and cried? I have lost count. How many times have I told the ancestors, “You have a wonderful family; you would be proud of us.” How many times have I walked up to a grave and felt somehow that there was love there for me? I cannot say. It goes to who I am and why I do the things I do. It goes to seeing a cemetery about to be lost forever to weeds and indifference and saying, “I can’t let this happen.” It goes to doing something about it.

It goes to pride in what our ancestors were able to accomplish, how they contributed to what we are today. It goes to respecting their hardships and losses, their never giving in or giving up, their resoluteness to go on and build a life for their family.

Without them we could not exist, and so we love each one, as far back as we can reach.

Author Unknown

Monumental musings

This issue's Monumental Musings must be somewhat shorter than that which I have become accustomed to producing as I am far too busy casting votes for Bohemian National Cemetery in the partnersinpreservation.com contest to allow myself my usual time to muse upon the wonders of the cemetery.

An easy topic for me this issue is the mausoleum of perhaps Bohemian National's most well known resident, Anton Cermak.

The Cermak mausoleum, tucked well into the cemetery and not in the prominent position we might have expected, is one of those wonderful expressions of art deco style that we find scattered around the cemetery.

A beautiful gray granite, the mausoleum is one of those delightful examples of art deco era artists interpreting neoclassical architectural elements in the art deco style. The strong vertical emphasis of the chamfered corners of the building—fluted to echo columns—gives the building the feeling of being much taller than it actually is. At the cornice line there is a wonderful zig-zag pattern which caps the structure in a somewhat fanciful way.

The recently restored bronze door wanders into the period's fascination with all things Egyptian as the floral design is that of lotus blossoms.

The building was always an imposing occupant of the corner upon which it rests, but, with this year's addition of spectacular landscaping around the building and beautiful plantings in the granite urns on either side of the door, a decorative scheme designed and provided by Gethsemane Gardens, it has become one of the most spectacular places in a cemetery filled with many spectacular sites. Even if the casual visitor to the cemetery knew nothing about Mayor Cermak and his importance both to the city and the city's Bohemian community, the appearance of his mausoleum and its lush planting would make clear that this is a shrine of singular importance.

Try to make a point of visiting the Mayor's mausoleum while plantings are still in all their radiant beauty, but even if you miss the last flowering of autumn, I have the feeling that the trees and perennials around the mausoleum will offer a wonderful frame even in the bleakest days of winter.

Well, I have to go now. Partnersinpreservation.com is calling me to



Cermak Family Mausoleum, Section 21

remind me that voting for BNC in this historical beauty contest is perhaps one of the most important activities I can be engaged in until October 10th. As Mayor Cermak would probably have urged us all...."Vote early and vote often for BNC."

Albert Walavich

Oops!!

Stan Matoska

George Vytlačil

Please accept our apologies for misspelling your names in the last issue.

Shop & share



Last January Friends successfully participated in Jewel-Osco Shop & Share Days to raise funds for preservation and restoration of cemetery buildings. We need the help of all of our members again to 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 October 22, 23, and 24, 2007, so plan ahead.

Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

611 Harvard Lane
Libertyville, IL 60048
Phone: 847-362-9036
E-mail: mdstueck@aol.com



Heritage Happenings

We're on the web
www.friendsofbnc.org



New membership policy for renewals

All memberships will now expire December 31st. Please send in your renewals with this form to remain in good standing! People joining the last ¼ of the year will receive those 3 months as a bonus with their membership year beginning in January. Besides receiving our very interesting newsletter, your membership provides discounts on merchandise and tours, and the satisfaction of knowing you are helping us improve and beautify Bohemian National Cemetery! Friends of BNC is a 501c3 not-for-profit public charity. To make a tax-deductible donation to fund improvements at BNC, please write a separate check with a notation in the subject line. Thank you for your support!

Membership Fees

One year :	\$25 Individual	\$20 Students/Seniors	\$35 Family	\$30 Senior family
Two years :	\$45 Individual	\$35 Students/Seniors	\$60 Family	\$50 Senior family

2008 Membership Application for Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Make checks payable to Friends of BNC and mail to Juli Nelson, Treasurer, 300 Claymore #2F, Hinsdale, IL 60521

Name (please print) _____ Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____ Email _____

(Note: we do not share emails but do use them to communicate about events related to BNC.)