

# Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Fall Issue  
Vol.5, #2

October 2008  
Sherida Hudak, Editor

## What's new with Friends of BNC



Borek Lizek, Deputy Consul from the Chicago Czech Consulate, sent me an email last winter—would BNC/Friends be interested in facilitating the proposed trip of the Junior Dixieland Jazz Band coming from Marianske Lazne in the far

western area of the Czech Republic? These 9 teens plus the director, his wife, and a translator were to be stopping in Chicago in August. I agreed to help, and the Friends board proposed a picnic as a way for them to perform at BNC. Bill Hudecek, VP of the BNCA board, took up the cause

and a wonderful event came about. Friends sponsored the baked goods booth with Martha Cervenka, Helen Souta, Helene Schaefer and Gladys Wheeler all making it a success. Our book table, organized by Juli Nelson, did about \$200 worth of “business” and also garnered two generous donations for the cemetery. Judy Baar Topinka was there as were people from the neighborhood, plus a gig family from Michigan and Indiana who had found out about it on our web page. The beautiful burr oaks in the park area just north of the Columbarium shaded us as we enjoyed the friendship, food and jazz. Some were wondering just how Dixieland jazz was the music of this group of Czechs, but the Czech people LOVE jazz! One can hear

*(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>Flooding</i>	2
<i>Memories</i>	3
<i>Fans forever</i>	4
<i>Consul General</i>	5
<i>Officers</i>	5
<i>Events</i>	6

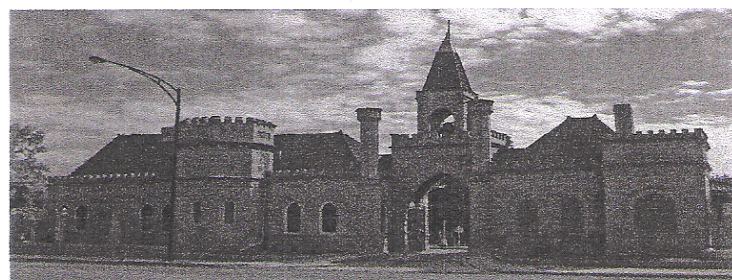
## Live from BNC

The new retort was delivered in June and placed in the designated area by the riggers. The ceiling over the retort was too low for the stacking to be installed. The contractor removed the ceiling over the retort where the stacking was to be installed. When the

stacking arrived Gehtsemame Gardens' foreman unloaded it with their fork truck. Two technicians from Universal Cremation Equipment Inc. came to install the stacking.

Volunteers Andy Bultas and Ken

*(Continued on page 2)*



## What's new with Friends of BNC

*(Continued from page 1)*

Dixicland played on the Charles Bridge in Prague. Everyone was impressed with the outstanding ability of these students.

With as many Czech-American groups as we have in our area, the idea of a "clearinghouse" group to plan activities was proposed many years ago. The

Czechoslovak American Congress was created from all these groups. Since Friends and BNC are both members of this group, both wanted to have a presence at this annual picnic, held on July 27th in Brookfield. Martha and Chuck Cervenka staffed our table with membership brochures, books, etc. About \$200 were taken in, and new people found out about what we are doing.

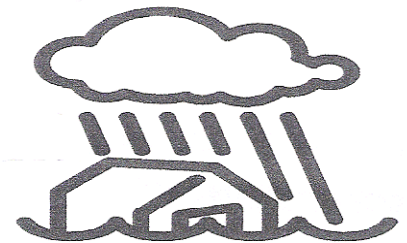
Houby Fest—a time to celebrate that wonderful fungus, the mushroom, will take place on October 4th and 5th in Cicero and Berwyn. There will be a special "Czech Oasis" this year, and after the parade down Cermak at 12:30 P.M. on Sunday October 5th, the Friends will have a table. Please come by to see us if you'll be there!!

**Marge Sladek Stueckemann**

## Flooding at BNC

Sunday, September 14th, found Superintendent Phil Roux watching the water rise on the southeast area of BNC as the swollen Chicago River overflowed its banks. The water rose from the lagoon swamping the trees and shrubs in the area we lease to Gethsemane Gardens. It stood

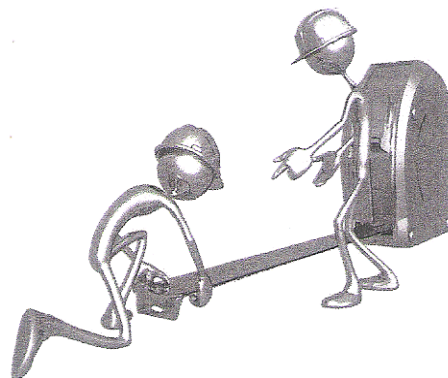
on the grassy areas but stopped short of the garage. Luckily, all the buildings are fine, and the water is receding as of Monday, September 15th. Those in the building just south of us, the former site of the Bohemian Old People's Home, had to be evacuated by boat.



## Live from BNC

*(Continued from page 1)*

Quick installed the electrical power to the retort. A Universal technician tested the retort to confirm that all was right. After many problems with the installation of the stacking the technicians finally completed the work. Everyone then consulted the technicians regarding re-installing the ceiling and how close to the stacking it could be placed. The retort was then run for a 24 hour period. Universal representative Terry McGlashan arrived to run performance tests and to train the operators. On July 30th, Nora Wilson performed the first cremation with some difficulties. Terry McGlashan returned and made adjustments to correct the problems. In August the re-installation of the ceiling over the retort was completed. The retort has been in use since then and Bohemian National Cemetery is back in the cremation business.



New roofs now cover all the bungalows and delegate Richard Schnedorf was appointed by President Dave Pimm to get estimates for repairs inside the three bungalows. Work also

continues on the water tower.

The biggest event this summer was the picnic on August 3rd. Approximately 150 people were in attendance. The appearance of the Dixieland Band from the Czech Republic was spectacular. The band consisted of youngsters ages 14 to 20. The group entertained throughout the entire picnic. Refreshments such as potato pancakes, watermelon, corn on the cob, hot dogs, polish sausage, bakery items, pop and water were provided at various stands. It was a wonderful picnic and enjoyed by all.

**Andy Bultas**

# Memories of BNC

*In October of 2007, as BNC entered the Partners in Preservation contest for grant money, individuals posted their own memories of the cemetery. The following are reprints of those postings.*

## Oh, How Well I Remember!

Submitted by *Betty, Dixon, IL*

It was a long, long time ago, but oh, how I remember my mother taking my sisters and me to the Bohemian National Cemetery where her mother and grandparents, aunts and uncles were laid to rest. Her sister Bessie Dvorak,

who was a victim of the Eastland Disaster, and who lost her life at the age of 18, was also buried

*“Betuska, Betuska, thank you for coming once again. We have missed you.”*

there in 1915, when my mom was 15 years old. When walking around the cemetery, I being so little, looked at the statues with awe and with understandable fear.... They seemed to loom above me and I wondered if they might topple down and crush me. We had come a long distance, from our home in Lombard, Illinois. The trip was long, the stay was long for this little girl. Now, all these years later as I reach my time to leave this earth, I still see my mother, down on her knees in front of gravesites, planting flowers at one gravesite after another. Mom always packed a lunch and we would go to some park and eat it there. Now when I think about it, since we walked such a long distance, we may have still been at the cemetery. It was a long day and we'd ride the streetcar....I didn't realize it then, but my mom's brother, my Uncle Tom Dvorak, was a streetcar conductor, and he is also buried at the Bohemian National Cemetery with his wife, Ella. Later, Mom's father, Thomas Dvorak Sr. and her younger brother, William Dvorak, were buried there. My father's Kepka family is also buried at Bohemian National Cemetery. You see, there

are many ties for me at BNC. Recently, I went there to look up my ancestors' gravesites and what a beautiful place it is. Just walking around, I could almost hear my ancestors calling out to me....”Betuska, Betuska, thank you for coming once again. We have missed you.”

## BNC in the late 1920's and early 1930's

Submitted by *John A. Storcel, Chicagoland*

I have fond memories of the Bohemian National Cemetery in the late 20's and early 30's, which was the start of the Great Depression. Many people lost their jobs and life savings, which caused them to sell their automobiles, so they would have some funds to sustain them for the future.

The cemetery became a very popular place on the week-ends, since it was located at 5500 N. Crawford Avenue (now known as Pulaski Road) and a few hundred feet north of the Bohemian Old People's Home (which has since relocated to Naperville, Illinois).

Because Crawford had a streetcar (trolley car) running from 3100 south to 50 some hundred north, it became the main route to the cemetery and the Old People's Home. People would pack their lunches and lawn chairs and walk to Crawford and the streetcar for their day's stay, visiting family and friends at the home and maintaining grave sites at the cemetery.

For many, the agenda for the day would be to walk to the Czechoslovenska Hostinec (sometimes called the Chez Patee) located at 2644 Crawford, owned by the Adam Storcel family, and have their breakfast consisting of a small sandwich, coffee and rum to wash it down, board the streetcar, then settle down on the straw seats for the next hour to sleep or converse with others till they arrived at the cemetery. On their return trip they would again stop at the Hostinec and have a night cap, looking forward to the next weekend.

I remember the funeral processions from the Hostinec down Crawford with 12 or more musicians walking and playing an instrument the whole distance of 12 miles to the cemetery and then performing the services. That was what I called dedicated friendship.

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## Fans Forever

*"If you think about it, people have been supporting the Cubs for 30, 40, 50 years, why shouldn't it be a part of their afterlife?"*

The ground-breaking ceremony for Beyond the Vines, an interment area patterned after the famous center field wall at Wrigley Field, took place on September 12th at 10:00 A.M. at Bohemian National Cemetery.

The Beyond the Vines wall will be 35 feet in length and 14 feet tall adorned with ivy and featuring a 7' x 4' stained glass scoreboard. Construction will be completed in early October 2008. Several interment packages are now available for current and future urn holders. Pre-planning arrangements are presently being offered for the most loyal fans in baseball. Packages will start at \$1,300. The

deluxe package will include a themed ceremony and an Official Major League Baseball (MLB) urn, manufactured by Eternal Image, who has licensing to manufacture urns and caskets with MLB team logos.

"Since the AP story broke and was picked up worldwide, we've been inundated with inquiries," said Dennis Mascari, President and Founder of Fans Forever Inc. "If you think about it, people have been supporting the Cubs for 30, 40, 50 years, why shouldn't it be a part of their afterlife? This is the whole concept behind Beyond the Vines, an eternal season ticket and luxury sky box for 280 loyal Cubs fans. I'm trying to transform the bereavement experience so that people are more at ease with their loved ones' final resting place," said Mascari. Wrigley Field just isn't a ballpark on Clark and Addison Streets; it's on the corner of Hope and Faith."

Licensed Cubs-themed memorial name plates made their debut at the ground-breaking ceremony. Sturdy brass name plates with the colorful Cubs logo will identify each sky box season ticket holder. A baseball-card style plaque with a photo of the departed and their statistics such as all-time favorite Cub player and most memorable Cubs game they attended were also unveiled. "I hope this will become

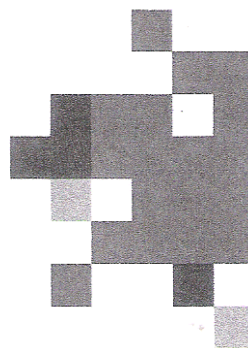
an innovative step into the future of the industry." As it is now, and has been through my lifetime, visits to the cemetery can become a bit on the gloomy side, beautiful but gloomy at the same time. I hope to change this," Mascari said. The baseball card name plaques will provide a common ground to those visiting their loved ones. Instead of being encircled by marble, now, a story can be shared with others about the dearly departed's 7th inning stretch, their passion. Portions of plaque sales will benefit families who cannot meet the expense of a proper burial for their children. Fans Forever Inc. is in the process of establishing a non-profit organization called "Lots for Tots", which will donate burial plots



for families in need. The cost for caskets, urns, burial vaults and memorial headstones will be raised through fund-raising events and donations.

### Welcome New Members

Gary Durante  
Gwen Ferguson  
Karen Kautsky Knapp  
Florence Klock  
Terry Ponic  
Anthony Slawniak



### Flags for Veterans' Day

Flags may be placed on veteran's graves the week of November 3-8th or November 10th. Friends will plan to meet at 10:00 A.M. on Friday, November 7th, to place flags. For those who can stay, we'll also enjoy lunch at a nearby restaurant. Meet in the office for flags and information.

## Letter from the Consul General

*This letter was received by Friends' President, Marge Stueckemann on behalf of all Friends members.*

Dear Ms. Stueckemann,

Recent celebrations of Chicago contributions to an independent Czechoslovakia and of the triumphal visit of the future President Thomas Garrigue Masaryk here in May 1918 offered a unique opportunity to commemorate the historical legacy and current vitality of the Czech-American ties in Chicagoland. I know that I am not speaking only for myself, when I recognize that former US State Secretary M. Albright's generous and brilliant "T.G. Masaryk Lecture on Democracy" was

the perfect culmination of the rich program, including the world premiere of the amazing documentary movie "Accidental Army", two events evolving around the Czech Chicago landmarks such as the Bohemian National Cemetery and, last but not least, the publication of a new book presenting the Czech-American community's contribution to the history of the city.

On behalf of our Consulate General I would like to express my sincere thanks for your continuous support and important contribution to the success of these commemorations. I would be grateful if you could also extend my thanks to all the Friends of the Bohemian National Cemetery and to everybody at the

Bohemian National Cemetery for their contribution to the success of the celebration.

I look forward to our further cooperation in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Marek Skolil

Consul General

Consulate General of the Czech Republic  
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Chicago, IL 60601  
chicago@embassy.mzu.cz

## Dekuji vam—thank you very much

Bedrich Smrcka, director, and the Junior Dixieland Band for wonderful music at the picnic.

Robert and Mary Syrup for providing the drum set plus transportation to BNC and also to Arlington Heights for the second concert.

Edward Cervenka, for donating the sound system speakers.

Martha Cervenka, Helene Schaefer, Helen Souta, and Gladys Wheeler for donating pastry and staffing the Friends kolace/coffee table at the picnic, and to Juli Nelson for staffing the Friends book table.

Debbie and Tom Barnstable, George and Beth Drost, and Gladys Wheeler for hosting our musicians for 5 days. Thanks to the Drosts for organizing a concert for them in Arlington Heights.

### Officers

Marge Sladek Stueckemann, President  
Bill Hosna, Vice President  
Gladys Wheeler, Secretary  
Juli Nelson, Treasurer  
Charles and Martha Cervenka, Directors  
Evelyn Krenek Fergle, Director

### Appointed Positions

Andy Bultas, Grants  
Sherida Hudak, Newsletter Editor  
Henrietta Bartizal Pons, Membership Chair  
Sue Zielinski, Webmaster

We would welcome a volunteer for the position of Publicity Chair.

# Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

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## Heritage Happenings

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

## Upcoming Events

Saturday, October 4, 2008

10:00 A.M.—noon and 1:00-3:00 P.M.

Fall Walking Tours of BNC led by  
Albert Walavich

Will include a short visit to the Columbarium  
provided no funeral is planned.

Come and see how terrific the stained glass  
windows look plus the vibrant colors of the  
Pilsen Butcher's window.

\$10 for members \$15 for non-members  
Czech refreshments in the gatehouse after  
each tour

Sunday, January 25, 2009

1:00 P.M.—2:30 P.M., Czech dinner 2:30 P.M. movie

Cost \$25 (proceeds will go to restoration)

Program: Movie: Accidental Army: The Amazing True Story of the Czechoslovak Legion

Place: Klas Restaurant, 5734 W. Cermak Rd, Cicero, IL

Join us for a delicious meal and a chance to view this newly produced movie about the heroic  
Legionnaires. This is a follow up to our tour last May where we honored 30 Legionnaires at rest  
at BNC.

Advanced Reservations required (no later than January 18th)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Number attending @\$25 each \_\_\_\_\_ Total Enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

Checks payable to Friends of BNC.

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