

# Heritage Happenings

## Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery



Winter Issue Vol.5 No.4

April 2009

*carol jean smetana, editor*

### What's new with Friends of BNC

*An armored train traveled across Siberia in 1918-19 during the Russian Revolution bearing brave Czech and Slovak Legionnaires, those who abandoned fighting for the Austrians and became a force for the Allies. Their story is a wonderful tale vividly brought to life in the movie, "Accidental Army: The Amazing True Story of the Czechoslovak Legion."* Seventy-five members and guests came to Klas Restaurant for our winter meeting on January 25th, with five more joining us for just the movie. Our own member John Iltis joined Bruce Bendinger and Jean Hruby to give us a wonderful introduction to the movie and tell of their recent trip to Prague to promote it in the "old country."

*"Every Czech is a musician" - have you ever heard this saying?* The book committee is currently pursuing Frank Kubina's life as we gather information about him and his memorial niche. Frank was the longtime director of the Lyra, a men's singing group that performed at BNC many times through the years. Kathy Mallin, granddaughter of J.A. Mallin who did the décor in the Columbarium chapel (and many other places), is spearheading this effort. If you have information about Lyra or Frank Kubina, contact Kathy via email at [kmallin@ameritech.net](mailto:kmallin@ameritech.net). You can also call me at 847-362-9036, or mail a letter to Kathy's attention in care of Friends of BNC, 5255 N. Pulaski, Chicago 60630. The book about

the history of BNC, especially the interesting monuments, is in the research stage right now. We are delighted to welcome Kathy and also Chuck Michalek (author of the article in this issue) to the committee to write the book.

*Be sure to mark your calendar for October 11th for our gala dinner celebration and fundraiser to continue the ongoing restoration projects. We already have a beautiful Czech*  
*(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>Oops!</i>	2
<i>New Members</i>	2
<i>Officers</i>	2
<i>Reflections of a BNC Volunteer</i>	3
<i>Donor List</i>	4
<i>from the editor's laptop</i>	4
<i>Upcoming Events</i>	4
<i>Shop &amp; Share</i>	5
<i>Memorial Day at BNC</i>	5
<i>BNC Tour</i>	6

### Live from BNC

This winter has been very severe, considering all the snow and cold weather that we have had to endure. However, thanks to our employees, the cemetery has been open to visitors throughout this severe weather. The roads have

been plowed, and salt has been spread on icy areas. Family members have been able to visit the gravesites of their loved ones. There is also a plus when visiting the cemetery in the winter: the snowy landscape is

beautiful to look at. You can also see the animals that live in the cemetery, such as the coyotes, rabbits, squirrels, and birds. Of course the geese remain all year round. There is a special treat, however, as you may see a couple

of hawks that reside in the cemetery.

The electrical work in the Columbarium has been completed by Ambient Light & Electric, Inc.  
*(continued on page 2)*



## What's new with Friends of BNC

(continued from first page)

vase, hand-painted, as one of the first silent auction offerings, and also a Czech-language, 75-year-old BNC book. Would you be able to offer something for this auction? Or could you put together a basket of items (beer went over big last time), or ask at your local business or restaurant for a gift certificate? With items like those, we realized over \$5,000 for BNC

restoration from silent auction proceeds in 2007 and hope to duplicate or exceed that amount this year.

*I hope you will also join us at the next event, the wonderful two-hour BNC walking tour with Albert Walavich on Sunday May 3rd at 1:00 p.m. - only \$10 for members!*

**Marge Sladek Stueckemann**

**OOPS!**

The January 2009 "Eastland Disaster" article in Heritage Happenings stated that the disaster involved employees of the General Electric Company; the correct name is the Western Electric Company. Thank you to all our careful readers who brought the error to our attention.



**SAVE THE DATE!**

FRIENDS IS PLANNING A SUNDAY AFTERNOON FALL GALA WITH PROCEEDS TO BENEFIT RESTORATION OF BOHEMIAN NATIONAL CEMETERY.

THIS EXCITING EVENT WILL TAKE PLACE ON SUNDAY OCTOBER 11, 2009, AT 1:00 PM AT PORRETTA'S ELEGANT BANQUETS IN CHICAGO. WE'LL HAVE FURTHER GALA DETAILS IN OUR NEXT ISSUE. MEANWHILE YOU CAN FIND INFORMATION ABOUT PORRETTA'S AT [WWW.PORRETTAS.COM](http://WWW.PORRETTAS.COM).

### Welcome new members

Fred Dingels of Chicago, IL  
Joseph J. Hasman of Evanston, IL  
Jerry A. Kolar of Gurnee, IL  
Katherine Lorenz of Lemont, IL  
Sharon Schiltz of Sycamore, IL  
Darlene & William Trnka of Des Plaines, IL

### Officers

President: *Marge Sladek Stueckemann*  
Vice-President: *Bill Hosna*  
Secretary: *Gladys Wheeler*  
Treasurer: *Juli Nelson*  
Directors: *Martha and Charles Cervenka, Evelyn Krenek Fergle*  
Grants chair: *Andy Bultas*  
Membership: *Henrietta Bartizal Pons*  
Newsletter: *Carol Jean Smetana*  
Publicity: Open and seeking a volunteer  
Webmaster: *Sue Zielinski*

## Live from BNC

(continued from first page)

The electric service to the Columbarium is now connected overhead. It was connected this way as the previous service was underground, and the floods in September caused the loss of electricity to the Columbarium. A whole new electric service and a new transformer were installed also. This brings the Columbarium sufficient electrical power to run the new retort.

Throughout the cold and snow work has continued around the cemetery by the volunteers. Ken Quick and Andy Bultas redistributed lines to the electric circuits so there wouldn't be an overload on any one circuit. They also worked on the lift so that it could be operated from upstairs and downstairs. This way, when there is a service in the chapel of the Columbarium, the casket can be brought up

from the lower level and then lowered from the upper level, thus making the service a little more efficient. Two spotlights that illuminate the casket area have also been repaired, adding more lighting for better viewing. Ken Dvorsky, Ken Quick, Chuck Michalek, Chuck Cervenka, Ray Capek, and Andy Bultas have replaced all the old style bulbs on the lower tier of the Columbarium with compact fluorescent bulbs. This will help keep the cost of electric for lighting down. Ken Quick and Andy Bultas also installed new fluorescent lights in front of the retort so that viewed cremations can be better observed. They also installed an electric heater in the retort office room.

The center bungalow had a new electric service installed and was rewired by Ambient

Lighting & Electric, Inc. New windows were also installed in the center bungalow; a volunteer provided the funding for these windows. Radu (John) Illse has done all the inside remodeling and moved into the bungalow with his wife and small daughter just in time for Christmas.

There is a little mystery that has transpired over the last few months. A large military helicopter has been flying and hovering over the cemetery. It is unknown at this time why it does this, but it is believed to be a Marine helicopter.

**Andy Bultas**



## Reflections of a BNC Volunteer

by  
**Chuck Michalek**

those childhood cemetery trips. I remember the cemetery filled with steady streams of cars transporting countless visitors, including old babushka-clad ladies who hauled sprinkling cans and shovels to make proper the resting place of their dearly departed loved ones. And suddenly my mind is filled with the animated stories my grandmother and parents repeated time after time while visiting the

to

On some days, springtime volunteer assignments take us elbow to elbow with the rows of monuments and tombstones to help prepare a grave site for a crescent- or heart-shaped planting of flowers. As I carefully negotiate the rows of resting places, I am overwhelmed at the artistic splendor and craftsmanship revealed in so many of BNC's monuments. One of my favorites – a graceful angel's hauntingly beautiful face watches over departed souls. Although her eyes reflect the sadness of those who mourn, at the same time the angel's countenance reveals a hopeful expression, as if to say, "You are at peace." Unfortunately, all too many of the inscriptions on the tombstones are beginning to fade, as the markers themselves crumble, tip, or even sink into the good earth, ironically coming closer to what they remain they announce. It is as if Mother Time is letting us know that indeed death will win the battle against our once youthful human body and that even the sturdy, crisp, and sharply engraved granite and marble tombstones cannot escape the ravages of time – and somehow all will be reunited in the end.



the people might have been like now what they would say if I had the opportunity to pose some question to them as we stood over their eternal resting places. Today, many of the tombstones still have ceramic-like pictures attached. As a child, the many faces captured in those photographs, faces revealing a spectrum of human experiences, fascinated me: gentle smiles, stern glares, some confident, others fearful, some much too serious, and a few with a young child's gaze of innocence. Nowadays, I carry a tube of outdoor glue,

In reflection, I think of BNC as "our family cemetery," for it is the resting place of many of our families' roots. Yet, sadly, I know that I and my siblings and their children and their children's children, like the larger society around us, rarely take time to acknowledge that which speaks to the past. And so I realize that the challenge of maintaining a cemetery like BNC is not just about scraping paint, repairing old doors, and straightening tombstones. It is also about sharing with others the awareness of life and heritage so majestically revealed at the Bohemian National Cemetery.

and if I come upon a fallen picture, I reunite that long-forgotten face to its proper place of commemoration.

As a dedicated BNC volunteer during the past several years, I have begun to appreciate what a gem Bohemian National Cemetery is, both as a cultural landmark and as a resting place of personal and family significance. Amidst the toil of performing volunteer tasks – such as scraping decades-old paint, repairing an ancient, rickety stairwell in the muscular yet graceful water tower, or changing light bulbs high up beneath the majestic, gold-gilded, domed ceiling of the national landmark Columbarium – the grounds and monuments of the cemetery never cease to fill my mind with awe and wonder. Perhaps it has to do with the memories they evoke of childhood trips to the cemetery. Ma, pa, "babicka," my brothers, a sister, and I would all pile into our old 1950 Plymouth to make the sojourn through Chicago. We would drive along Pulaski Road from 26th Street to Foster Avenue and finally arrive at BNC's castle-like stone entrance gate opening onto a land of sacred humanity. Row after row of profoundly sturdy markers heralded the countless lives of those "fellow Bohemians" who walked this earth for some period of forgotten time; after they had made their earthly contributions, they ended their lives resting beneath the soil in this magnificent cemetery. Back in the 1950s, visiting what seemed to be an ancient burial ground hardly represented a high priority for a rambunctious, ten-year-old, Westside, 26th-Street kid who'd much rather be wielding a bat and taped-up baseball in a pick-up game in some narrow alley.

Yet half a century later, as I now shingle a roof on the cemetery's old, decaying potting shed or feebly struggle to straighten and "correct" a part of the endless, rusting iron fence that surrounds its more than 120 acres of urban countryside, my thoughts call me back



## Donor list

*We greatly appreciate all of your generous donations.  
Your gifts help preserve and enhance our beautiful cemetery.*

### Sponsors \$100 - \$499

Charles & Martha Cervenka  
Guy Benda  
Henrietta Bartizal Pons  
Jane Pugh  
Jean Uhlir  
Jon & Natalie Dvorak  
Linda Tassin  
Linda Uhlir  
Paul Blecha  
Paul & Susan Kucera  
Susan Meyers  
American Czechoslovak Engineers  
Society  
CSAGSI  
Lodge Young America

Howard & Mary Jo Habenicht  
Helen Hanzalik  
Marilyn John  
Anne Kozak  
LaVerne Kriz  
Cecila & Dan Kumarich  
Lodge R.T. Craine Jr #7 CSA  
Lodge Yankee-Jungmann #77  
Carol Malin  
Kathy Mallin  
Otto Meisner  
Dolores Niewinski  
Frank Papp  
Mildred Potas  
Tom & Judy Ruzicka  
Eugene & Patricia Sikorovsky  
William Stevens  
John Voss  
Joan & Fred Vydra

### Donors \$25 - \$99

Patricia Brown  
William Chuhak  
CSA Lodge DuPage Pioneers #409  
Richard & Marilee Davies  
James Fergle

### Thank You \$1 - \$24

Eleanore Dachota  
Sharon Larson  
Robert & Joan Muell

*Donors listed are from December 2008 and the first two months of 2009.*



*from the editor's laptop*

*As the new editor of Heritage Happenings, I'd like to introduce myself. Although I now live in the mountains of northern New Mexico, I grew up in the Chicago suburb of Clarendon Hills and lived in the area again from 2001 to 2004. I return yearly to visit family, friends ~ and two cemeteries, one of which is Bohemian National Cemetery. My interest in genealogy first led me to cemeteries, and I now find them fascinating in their own right. My passion for genealogy dates back to 1978, when I worked as an assistant director on Roots: the Next Generations, the second miniseries based on Alex Haley's best-selling book. A year later I made my first visit to Prague and felt like I had come home. In 1995, my dream came true: as a Foreign Service Officer with the U.S. State Department, I was assigned to Prague for four wonderful years. I studied Czech, researched family in the Trebon archives, explored ancestral villages, and even connected with distant relatives- by leaving a note on a grave in a cemetery in southern Bohemia! For me, cemeteries are places to honor the dead, but they are also places to learn, to discover, to celebrate, and indeed to connect with others! Why is BNC special to you? Send your stories to me at 167 County Road A-4A, Sapello, NM 87745 or via email to [cjsmetana@msn.com](mailto:cjsmetana@msn.com). Na shledanou! ~ carol jean smetana*

## Upcoming Events at Bohemian National Cemetery

**Saturday, April 25th** Spring Clean-up sponsored by the CSA Czech insurance company ~ all are welcome ~ meet in the gatehouse at 9:00 a.m.

**Sunday, May 3rd** Two-hour walking tour begins at 1:00 p.m. ~ for more information, see this issue's "What's New ..." and the back page.

**Sunday, May 10** Mother's Day celebration

**Friday, May 22nd** Friends-sponsored flag placement on veterans' graves ~ meet in the office at 10:00 a.m. ~ lunch out afterwards if you care to join us!

**Monday, May 25th** Memorial Day celebration ~ meet in the office at 9:00 a.m. ~ see see page 5 for more information

**Summer Picnic** date to be determined ~ for more information, contact the cemetery by email at [bnca2003@sbcglobal.net](mailto:bnca2003@sbcglobal.net) or by telephone at 773-539-8442





# SHOP & SHARE IDENTIFICATION SLIP

AMOUNT OF PURCHASE

03408678

--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

GROUP NUMBER

STORE NUMBER

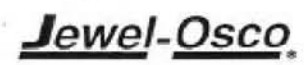
DOLLARS

CENTS

GROUP: **Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery**  
 YOUR SHOP & SHARE DAYS: **May 11-13 & 18-20, 2009**

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE SIGN THIS SLIP AND TURN IT IN TO YOUR CHECKER WHEN YOU SHOP.  
 PARTICIPANTS CAN MAKE PURCHASES AT ANY JEWEL-OSCO ON THE DATE ABOVE.  
 IDENTIFICATION SLIPS ARE NOT TO BE DISTRIBUTED IN FRONT OF ANY JEWEL-OSCO.



MAY 11-13 AND MAY 18-20: CLIP THIS COUPON & TAKE IT TO ANY JEWEL-OSCO. BUY YOUR GROCERIES & PERSONAL CARE PRODUCTS, GREETING CARDS & POSTAGE STAMPS, TOO. WHEN YOU GIVE THE SHOP & SHARE COUPON TO THE CHECKER, FRIENDS OF BNC WILL RECEIVE A DONATION OF 5% OF YOUR TOTAL SPENT - AN EASY WAY FOR YOU TO HELP US FUNDRAISER WHILE SHOPPING FOR THE ITEMS YOU NEED. THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!



*Monday, May 25th at 9:00 am*

*To honor all who served in  
 America's Armed Forces*

*The program will include a Sokol Spirit color guard, an inspirational address in English, the recitation of a Czech poem, and songs of each branch of service sung with the veterans in attendance. The cemetery will be decorated with large flags. Women attending will receive carnations, compliments of Friends of BNC.*



- paid advertisement -

## Friends of BNC:

It's been a bad winter, both for the weather and for the economy. If you want to protect yourself from this spring's weather, get a strong umbrella.

**If you want to see if I can help you protect yourself for a strong financial future, give me a call.**

Wayne Heimbach, CLU, CFP  
 Financial Services for Individuals and Small Businesses  
 847-414-5160

- paid advertisement -

# Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

611 Harvard Lane  
Libertyville, IL 60048

Phone: 847-362-9036  
Email: [mdstueck@aol.com](mailto:mdstueck@aol.com)



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



**TOUR BOHEMIAN NATIONAL CEMETERY**

Discover  
Bohemian National Cemetery  
as you have never seen it before!

Sunday, May 3rd from 1 PM to 3 PM  
with homemade kolace refreshments & a  
sales table of unusual Czech items afterwards.

Join Albert Walavich, outstanding guide, for a two-hour  
Friends-sponsored walking tour of the tombstones. Focused on  
the historical importance of Mayor Cermak, the super patriotism  
that resulted in the unusual war memorials, the artistry of tree,  
angel, and "littering lady" monuments, you'll discover just why  
Bohemian National Cemetery is honored to be on the National  
Register of Historic Places, one of only two Chicago cemeteries so  
designated.

Call 847-362-9036 for more information.

Cost: \$10 for members, \$15 for non-members.

Meet in the gatehouse.