

Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery



Summer Issue Vol. 6 No.1

July 2009

carol jean smetana, 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

What's New with Friends of BNC

Did you know that you are part of a Czech community living abroad? According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, that is the category for Czech-American groups such as Friends of BNC. The Czech Republic has about ten million people, but Czechs and their descendants abroad number over one million, so the Czech government is very interested in our activities. Our contact is **Vladimír Eisenbruk**, the Czech Republic's Commissioner for Czech Communities Living

Abroad.

Ambassador Eisenbruk was in Chicago in June and toured the cemetery with **Martha** and **Chuck Cervenka**. He was most interested in the Eastland Disaster, so Martha gave him a copy of the Eastland Disaster book, in addition to our Columbarium booklet. As is usual for Czech dignitaries touring BNC, he knew about Cermak and FDR and commented on our big picture in the office.

Later that evening, the

Honorable **Marek Skolil**, the Consul General of the Czech Republic in Chicago, hosted a dinner for officers of local Czech-American organizations to meet with Ambassador Eisenbruk and share with him the goals of our groups. It is always a true delight to represent Friends at events like this, and I am so grateful for the chance as your president!

The Czech government supports these overseas Czech communities with grants. In 2004,

(continued on page 2)

Live from BNC

Beyond the Vines, the licensed, Cubs-themed memorial at Bohemian National Cemetery, was dedicated in early April. The well-attended ceremony, led by **Dennis Mascari**, owner of Beyond the Vines, was covered by the press and TV media. The

first inurnment was on May 9th.

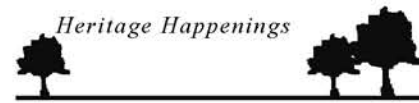
Thanks to **Ken Dvorsky**, the **CSA Lodges** sponsored "Join Hands Day" on April 25th to help clean the cemetery. The majority of the 35 CSA members who participated worked at the Columbarium,

cleaning the benches, niches, and rug. Other members worked in the pump house. They removed all the old hoses and cleaned out cabinet drawers, putting the contents, mostly plumbing parts, in buckets. They took away the debris and

cleaned the floor with a shop vacuum. Both the Columbarium and the pump house look great -- many thanks to the CSA for their help!

On May 10th, Bohemian
(continued on page 2)





What's new with Friends of BNC

(continued from first page)

Friends received a grant to assist in publishing our Columbarium booklet. In 2007, Bohemian National Cemetery received over \$14,000 in grant funds to begin the window restoration. Other generous donors also helped, including many Friends members. Check out the beautiful plaque with an engraving of the Columbarium that is now hanging inside the chapel, listing the names of these donors.

BNC received national publicity in the May/June issue of "Preservation," the magazine of the National Trust for Historic

Preservation. A great photo of our water tower accompanied an article promoting their annual online vote for Partners in Preservation grants. A couple of paragraphs described the water tower project, which was a recipient of a PIP grant two years ago.

When Friends first got started, we asked if we could have refreshments in the gatehouse. **Phil Roux**, BNC superintendent, told us, "Well, we've never done that before, but I guess that's fine." Now, thanks to BNC President **Dave Pimm** and the policies of the current BNCA board, the gatehouse is being promoted as a rental site for funeral

luncheons, as well as for events like the "Evening Under the Stars" fund-raiser reception held there in mid-June by the Peterson Pulaski Business & Industrial Council. The gatehouse is our special symbol, and it is gratifying to see the space being used more and bringing in much needed additional funds.

I look forward to seeing everyone at the picnic on July 19th, our meeting on August 16th, the tours on September 26th, and of course the gala dinner on October 11th! Have a wonderful summer.

Marge Sladek Stueckemann

Donor List

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

Sponsors \$100 - \$499

McDonald's Corporation
Richard Cinert
Chuck Michalek

Donors \$25 - \$99

Dien Zeigler - *In Memory of Georgiana Hudek*
Edward Duffek
John & Marilyn Nosko
Ruth Bartuska

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)

National Cemetery held a ceremony for Mothers' Day during which a wreath was placed at the Mother Statue. Refreshments were served after the ceremony.

On May 23rd, **Albert Walavich** conducted a cemetery tour for approximately 80 people. **Chuck Cervenka** assisted Albert in using the new portable microphone system purchased by the Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery. Refreshments included home-made kolacky contributed by one of the attendees. The successful tour received many positive comments.

We had beautiful weather for the Memorial Day services held on May 25th at the cemetery. Refreshments were provided by the Friends of BNC. The parade started at the south gatehouse, led by the **Sokol Spirit Color Guard**. The program in the Columbarium consisted of posting the colors, followed by songs by the **Half and Half Singers**, including the National Anthem, and a speech by funeral director **Roland Weis**. **Tom Pajer** played taps

to close the ceremony, and the Sokol Spirit Color Guard retired the flag. After the Columbarium ceremony, the **Bohemian Odd Fellows and Rebekahs** held their Memorial Day services at the Odd Fellows Monument. **Robert Baumruk** gave the invocation, and **Wayne Wolfe** delivered the benediction.

As spring arrived, the cemetery encountered a problem with watering. The recently refurbished water tower began to leak when it was filled with water. A liner is needed inside the tower to make it watertight, but no provision was made for a liner. Since people need water to maintain their loved ones' graves throughout the summer, a system had to be devised to supply water. **Chuck Michalek** said some cemeteries place water barrels throughout the grounds. He contacted a few car wash companies and found **Kevin** at **Pro Finish** in Elk Grove Village, who donated 35 used barrels from car wash solution. **Chuck Cervenka** provided the spigots and chains for the barrels. **John Illse** cut pipes, which were placed in the ground so the barrels could be chained to them. **Chuck**

Michalek, **Ken Dvorsky**, **Jerry Gydusek**, **Chuck Cervenka**, and **John Illse** washed out and assembled the barrels and placed them throughout the cemetery. Maps showing the locations of the blue water barrels, which will remain in place for the rest of the year, are available at the Administration Building. Thanks to all the volunteers who worked hard on this project.

Work on other areas of the cemetery also continues. **John Illse** is making progress on the west bungalow. **Ken Quick**, **Andy Bultas**, **Jerry Gydusek** and **Chuck Cervenka** installed an exhaust system in the front of the retort. **Ken** and **Andy** completed the rewiring of the south gatehouse. **Ken** rewired the old light fixture, which originally had been a gas light converted to electric. **Ray Capek** replaced glass block windows in the south gatehouse. There is still a lot of work to be done in the south gatehouse, but the rewiring has brought the building up to the electrical code.

Andy Bultas

note from the editor:
I recently received a letter
from twin sisters
Nada and Milly Dobiáš,
members of our Friends group.
Here is what they wrote:

Why BNC Is Special To Us
by Nada and Milly Dobiáš

We like to go to Bohemian National Cemetery, as the volunteers and cemetery staff keep it in such perfect order. We always put flowers on our dear young aunt's grave. Her name was Boženka Dobiáš. She was the first child of our grandpa Frank Dobiáš and his wife Anna. Boženka was born March 9, 1909, and died of diphtheria on November 9, 1914, when she was only 5 years and 8 months old.

Both of our grandparents were immigrants from Bohemia and came to Chicago around the turn of the century. They met here and married in 1905. Our grandpa was a very well known baker in the Chicago area and baked only



Nada and Milly Dobiáš at the grave of their aunt Boženka Dobiáš

Bohemian rye bread. Dobiáš Rye Bread was delivered all over Chicago to all the little grocery stores on the ends of all the blocks. Each loaf had a circular gold label with his name on it.

Since our grandparents were quite affluent, they traveled a lot back and forth between the United States and the land of their birth with their son (our dad) and another younger daughter. When they did live in the Czech Republic (then Czechoslovakia), they stayed for 25 years, and our dad met and married

our mother. We were born in Pilsen (Plzeň) on May 23, 1942, during the Second World War. Our family returned to the United States in April 1948.

Boženka's marble stone is carved in Czech writing, listing her birth and death dates. Her oval picture is mounted above her name. There is a white cement angel on top of the stone, and it is truly beautiful.

Boženka Dobiáš



close-up of oval picture of Boženka on her gravestone,

BNC - New Home of the "Eternal Sky Box"

by carol jean smetana

On April 22, 2009, several dozen people attended the dedication of a new columbarium at BNC - Beyond the Vines, a unique burial site for the ashes of Cubs fans. The red brick wall, 35 feet long and 14 feet high, incorporates 288 niches, or "eternal sky boxes" as creator-developer Dennis Mascari calls them. Designed to evoke the center field wall at Wrigley Field, the outdoor columbarium sports



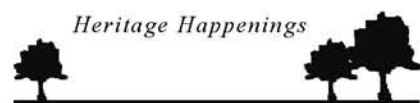
photo of Beyond the Vines by Juli Nelson

a yellow "400" sign painted on the wall and a 7- by 4-foot stained glass likeness, created by David Condon, of the iconic Wrigley Field scoreboard. Soon, a visitor sitting in one of the four authentic ballpark box seats at Beyond the Vines will see yet another familiar sight ~ green ivy climbing the wall. Learn more at



photo of stained glass image by Chuck Betzold

<http://beyondthevines.net>



Looking for a way to be a friend to Friends?



- ◆ You could volunteer to be our **Publicity Officer**: we have about four events each year for which you would create informational flyers and arrange for their

distribution, as well as send publicity and press releases to newspapers, organizations, civic groups, radio stations, etc.

- ◆ You could bring some home-made baked goods to the BNC picnic on July 19th
- ◆ You could donate an item or service, or ask your favorite businesses to donate items or services for our October gala silent auction ~ see insert for more information



from the editor's laptop

I was thrilled to receive the Dobiás sisters' letter soon after the publication of our last issue. Their story (see page 3) speaks directly to our Vision: to create an appreciation of BNC. The historic nature of the cemetery is immediately evident to visitors as they enter through its stone portal. The stately trees gracing the parklike grounds ensure its beauty in every season. Its many monuments, sculptures, mausoleums, and the Columbarium with its magnificent interior contribute to BNC's artistic heritage. Yet I believe that our personal experiences of the cemetery are the prisms through which we view these external elements, reinforcing our knowledge and appreciation of how truly unique and precious Bohemian National Cemetery is. We feel the vital necessity of preserving its character and heritage for the future. If you would like to share your story and help further our Mission and Vision, my address is 167 County Road A-4 A, Sapello, NM 87745 or email cjsmetana@msn.com.

I suspect I am one of the more far-flung members of Friends. I will be traveling to Chicago to participate in our fifth anniversary celebrations (see page 6) ~ I look forward to meeting many of you then. Na shledanou! ~ carol jean smetana

Upcoming Events at Bohemian National Cemetery

Sunday, July 19th

Bohemian National Cemetery Annual Picnic & Yard Sale

5255 N. Pulaski, Chicago, IL

Free Admission ~ Everyone Welcome

Yard Sale begins at 10 AM ~ the cemetery will be selling used lawn & gardening equipment. Proceeds will help cemetery restoration projects.

Picnic Noon to 4 PM ~ various food & beverage items will be available for purchase, or you can bring your own.

Donations of homemade pastries will be much appreciated!

Call Elizabeth Raleigh 773-539-8442 for more information.

Sunday, August 16th

Friends of BNC Summer Meeting

1 PM at BNC gatehouse porch

Czechoslovak-American Music Ensemble and elections

Saturday, September 26th

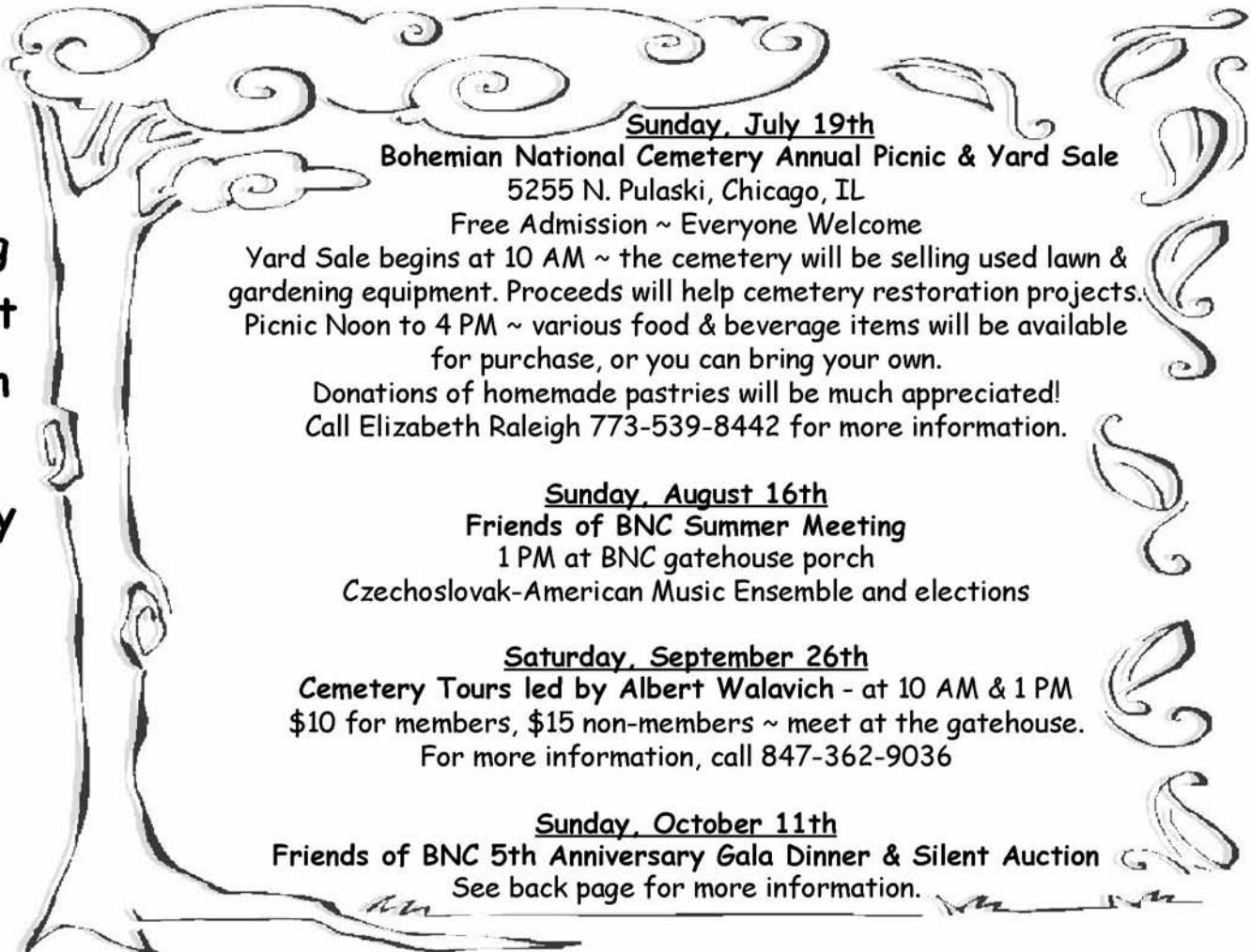
Cemetery Tours led by Albert Walavich - at 10 AM & 1 PM
\$10 for members, \$15 non-members ~ meet at the gatehouse.

For more information, call 847-362-9036

Sunday, October 11th

Friends of BNC 5th Anniversary Gala Dinner & Silent Auction

See back page for more information.



Fun Ways to Explore BNC Online

by Susan Golland

Even though I live in Chicago and can enjoy walking along the tree-covered roads of Bohemian National Cemetery, I also enjoy a virtual visit as well. For those readers who are internet-enabled, I've come across a few ways to explore the cemetery online. This is definitely not an exhaustive list, but hopefully I've found at least one site that you haven't yet explored.

Chicago Ancestors

(www.chicagoancestors.org) is a website from Chicago's Newberry Library. On the home page, you can type in a street address or intersection and find historical information at and around that location. If you type in "Foster and Pulaski," the intersection at the southwest corner of the BNC grounds, you may be surprised at what you find. Crime statistics document the location of a murder that happened in the area in 1900, and you can read about a picnic area called Nagl's Grove that served cemetery patrons until 1913.

YouTube (www.youtube.com) is a video-sharing website. If you type in "Bohemian National Cemetery," you can watch

a few clips of BNC visitors scanning the grounds for graves of relatives, all during the wintertime. For something a little different, check out a music video by R & B artist R. Kelly. His video, "To the Homies That We Lost," was filmed in the Columbarium of Bohemian National. Even if you aren't a fan of R & B, you'll enjoy seeing the Columbarium's few minutes of fame in a video by one of Chicago's best known pop musicians. Please note that some of the song lyrics in "To the Homies That We Lost" may not be appropriate for children or the workplace.

Flickr (www.flickr.com) is a photo-sharing website. By searching for "Bohemian National Cemetery" you will find 500+ results featuring a beautiful array of images of statues, tombstones, and close-up views of the porcelain photographs that adorn some of the grave markers at the cemetery. Some of the more interesting porcelain images include a person photographed in his casket, and a child with a bicycle, though the latter image is severely damaged.

Google Books (www.books.google.com) is one of the many offerings of the search engine Google. If you search the site using the advanced search option, you will find the book, "A History of Bohemia," written by R. H. Vickers, who is buried in a place of honor in Klacel Circle at BNC. Vickers was not a Bohemian himself, but he won a great deal of praise for this book, which many Bohemians regarded as the first accurate account of the Bohemian people in the English language. "A History of Bohemia" was published in 1894.

Illinois Harvest

(<http://illinois Harvest.grainger.uiuc.edu>) is a service provided by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to search the UIUC holdings plus other relevant websites. If you do a keyword search for "Bohemian National Cemetery," you will find a digitized version of BNC's 25th anniversary book, "Dějiny Česko-Národního Hřbitova v Chicagu, Illinois," published in 1902 by Frank Zdrubek. You can download all 200 pages for free to peruse at your leisure -- of course, you have to be able to read Czech!



Welcome to our new members!

Tom Croke Glenview, IL
John M., Norma, John R., & Scott Kmet
 Darien, IL
Linda Kostuba LaGrange, IL
John J. Popik & Family Chicago, IL
Paul Schwarz Evergreen Park, IL
Mary Ann Skutta Palatine, IL
Robert Teska Wilmette, IL
Nicholas Tokarski Riverside, IL
James Trnka Park Ridge, IL
Barbara Ziemba North Riverside, IL

Děkuji Vám

Russ and Joan Zizek and Linda Kostuba

~ who helped place flags on veterans' graves ~

~ Linda went back after Memorial Day to retrieve the flags and is now repairing those in need of tender, loving care ~

Helene Schaeffer and Helen Souta,

~ Chairs of the Friends' baked goods table for the BNC picnic ~

Gladys Wheeler

~ for serving so well as our 2008-09 secretary ~

Mary Syrup

~ who has accepted the nomination for secretary for 2009-10 ~

Bill Hosna

~ for finding that mic system for Albert ~

Chuck Cervenka

~ for adjusting and enhancing its use for the May 3rd tour ~

Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

611 Harvard Lane
Libertyville, IL 60048

Phone: 847-362-9036
Email: mdstueck@aol.com



We're on the web
www.friendsofbnc.org



Celebrate Our 5th Birthday!

Join us on **Sunday, October 11th at 1:00 P.M.** for our

Gala Dinner and Silent Auction

at **Porretta's Elegant Banquets**, 3718 N. Central, Chicago.

The event will feature an ad book, unique favors, and a reception hour with live music ~ a wonderful opportunity to get to know some of your fellow Friends! Proceeds will benefit restoration projects at Bohemian National Cemetery.

Come for the Weekend! For out-of-towners, the **Holiday Inn Chicago North Shore**, 5300 W. Touhy, Skokie (www.hiskokie.com), has set aside a block of rooms for Friends of BNC for \$99/night plus tax. Reserve by September 14th - phone 847-679-8900. Free parking and close to Porretta's and BNC.

The **Research Library of the Czech and Slovak American Genealogy Society of Illinois** will be open on **Saturday, October 10th** from 10 AM to 2 PM (www.csagsi.org). It is free, and experts will be available to help you search its extensive holdings. The library is located on the 2nd floor of the T.G. Masaryk School, 5701 W. 22nd Place, Cicero, Illinois (within walking distance of Klas Restaurant, if you get hungry after your research). In addition, Friends is putting together some special events on **Monday, October 12th**. The day will begin at 9:30 A.M. with a **guided tour of BNC**,

including the unique Cubs' Wall/Beyond the Vines. A **Bohemian lunch in the gatehouse** will be followed by a **guided tour of the CSA Heritage Museum in Oak Brook** (www.csafraternallife.org). We will help arrange transportation from BNC to Oak Brook and back, if needed. Cost will be about \$20 for all three events. Details will be in your invitations ~ look for them in your mailboxes in August.

Bring your family and friends and join in the festivities!

