

# Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery



Fall Issue Vol.6 No.2

October 2009

*carol jean smetana, editor*

## What's New with Friends of BNC

Did you know that Antonin Dvorak's father played the zither? I hope you are going to be able to enjoy the **Chicago Zither Ensemble** at our Gala Dinner on Sunday, October 11th! One of the players is a professional, and all do a wonderful job playing a variety of music. **The Honorable**

**Marek Skolil**, the Consul General of the Chicago Czech Consulate, and his family will be our special guests. Consul General Skolil will be presenting grant checks to BNC and to Friends of BNC. Don't miss this opportunity to celebrate the fifth anniversary of Friends at

a beautiful banquet facility!

Do you have a relative buried at BNC who lacks a headstone? Have you thought about having one placed on that grave? You could bid on this very item – a beveled stone with engraving included – at

*(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>Friends Coming Together</i>	2
<i>Veterans' Day, Donors, Officers, Thank yous, New Members</i>	
<i>Looking for Uncle Stanley</i>	3
<i>from the editor's laptop</i>	4
<i>Upcoming Events</i>	5
<i>GoodSearch update</i>	5
<i>Membership Renewal</i>	6

## Live from BNC

On June 19, 2009, a violent storm arrived in the Chicago area and caused a lot of damage. Large trees were uprooted, branches were blown down, and heavy rains caused flooding. Bohemian National Cemetery did not escape the storm's wrath: approximately 10 trees were uprooted at the

cemetery and many large branches blown down. Many sections of the cemetery were flooded, but fortunately, none of the buildings was damaged. After the storm the cemetery employees began the clean-up. Volunteers **Andy Bultas**, **Jerry Gaydusek**, and **Ken Dvorsky** piled the

broken branches at the roadside. Jerry, **Chuck Cervenk**a, and **Chuck Michalek** kept the chain saws sharpened and repaired, and Chuck Michalek helped with the cutting of the trees and branches. Ten downed trees as well as thirty-one dead trees and many branches were cut up

*(continued on page 5)*



## What's New with Friends of BNC

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the silent auction at our October 11th banquet. This is your chance to memorialize your loved one in a meaningful way, especially for those of us who value cemeteries and genealogy.

**Klas Restaurant's** fragrant potato pancakes were frying not too far from both the Friends' bakery table and our book table at the Bohemian National Cemetery picnic in July. Our thanks to all who made the delicious homemade pastries, which, along with those we purchased, were a gift to BNC: the cemetery netted about \$380 from our bakery table. Thanks to **Helene Schaeffer** and **Helen Souta** for organizing and serving at the bakery table, and to **Juli Nelson** for putting together the BNC picnic books.

The rain didn't dampen our spirits at the summer Friends meeting and election on Sunday, August 16th. Congratulations to our new secretary **Mary Syrup**, and to all the

former officers who were willing to continue – **Bill Hosna**, VP; **Juli Nelson**, Treasurer; **Martha and Chuck Cervenka** and **Evelyn Fergle**, Directors; and our appointees – **Andy Bultas**, Grants; **Henrietta Bartizal-Pons**, Membership; **Carol Jean Smetana**, Newsletter; and **Sue Zielinski**, Webmaster. I am honored to continue as President. The meeting wasn't all business, though. **Bob Syrup** on the drums and **Gary Edwards** on the accordion provided musical entertainment. Their performance began on the gatehouse porch, but when a driving wind sent sheets of rain into where they had set up, they moved their show inside. Gary surprised us all by finding Czech music and learning it for our event – how great to hear all those special Czech songs!! Our deepest thanks for such excellent and appropriate music.

Our newsletter editor, Carol Jean Smetana, will be a speaker at the upcoming Czechoslovak Genealogy

Society International's conference in Cleveland from October 14-18th. She is eligible to have a vendor table there and has offered to display our books, bookmarks, and other items. This will be another chance to fulfill our mission to "make BNC known to local, national and international audiences."

It is such a joy to reflect on our birthday and all that we have accomplished in these few short years. From the start, when Evelyn Fergle was appointed by the BNCA board as the convening chairwoman, we have worked not only to raise money, but also to branch out into new ways to connect people to this wonderful and historic place. From about 40 members in 2004 to almost 300 now, our members continue to provide the financial and volunteer support that enables this organization to thrive and successfully carry out our mission and vision. Thanks to all!

*Marge Sladek Stueckmann*



**Can you join Friends in placing flags on graves for Veterans Day?**

**Meet at 10:00 a.m. on Friday, November 6th in the BNC office to honor our brave veterans.**

### Donors

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

#### Patron \$500 - \$999

Eleanor Bilek Baldi

#### Donors \$25 - \$99

Hester Hildeu  
Village Green Questers

#### Sponsors \$100 - \$499

Rudolph Michalek

*in honor of Charles Michalek, Sr.*

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

Jean Reichel

### Officers

President: *Marge Sladek Stueckemann*  
Vice-President: *Bill Hosna*  
Secretary: *Mary Syrup*  
Treasurer: *Juli Nelson*  
Directors: *Martha & Charles Cervenka,*  
*Evelyn Krenek Fergle*  
Grants chair: *Andy Bultas*  
Membership: *Henrietta Bartizal Pons*  
Newsletter: *carol jean smetana*  
Webmaster: *Sue Zielinski*  
Publicity: *Still open -*  
*Still seeking a volunteer!*

### Děkuji Vám

Bakers ~

**Linda Kostuba, Helene Schaeffer, Mary Syrup and Patty Volkman**  
for special treats both at the BNC picnic and our August meeting

Book table helpers ~  
**Art and Kathryn Lorenz**

**Charlotte Sommer** who found our special favors for the dinner and sent them from Prague



**Welcome to our new members!**

**Bill and Sherry Gossman** Omaha, NE  
**Rudolph Jansa** Fernandina Beach, FL  
**Joy Kadlecik** Park Ridge, IL  
**Paul S. Kaderabek** New Lenox, IL  
**Josephine Simak** Chicago, IL  
**Charlotte Sommer** Prague, CR



# Looking for Uncle Stanley

by Chuck Michalek

Many people view cemeteries as archaic reminders of the past with little or no connection to the “real world” of today. The younger generation in particular prefers to “stay connected” via email, text messages, “twittering,” and You Tube snips, rather than hearing good old face-to-face storytelling. I recall how as a youngster my life was influenced by countless stories told at family gatherings and places like Bohemian National Cemetery. On walks with my dad past the cemetery’s war monuments, he talked about “the war to end all wars” and how we should never forget the soldiers who sacrificed their lives

for our country. My grandmother took me to BNC, too, where she told me vivid stories about a relative I never met – Uncle Stanley. Remembering these moments, it strikes me that that our ability to share stories about significant persons and events is vital to passing on our heritage and sharing the dreams of our ancestors.

So one recent weekend when one of my nieces asked if I could watch her two young children, I agreed and immediately

started planning activities that would not involve watching videos or sitting around inside. First on my list of activities was a “field trip” to BNC – this became the “Looking for Uncle Stanley” adventure. Six-year-old Mia and five-year-old Dylan had never heard of Uncle Stanley, and as we drove through BNC’s castle-like front entrance, they weren’t sure if we were looking for a real person or some fictitious character from a video game or cartoon. We headed for the Administration Building where we were greeted by Superintendent Phil. When we told him we were looking for Uncle Stanley, he asked for Stanley’s last name – Salajka. The kids could hardly pronounce it. After Phil located the name card, he marked an X on a cemetery map, which he then handed to an intrigued Mia and Dylan.

This was the “treasure map” that would lead to the resting site of Uncle Stanley (a site I knew well from the frequent family visits made many years ago). With their interest peaked and map in hand, the kids raced out the door with excited expectations, but suddenly stopped and turned to me to ask, “Who is Uncle Stanley?”

Thus began my telling of the story that my grandmother first recounted to me over 50 years ago. Stanley Salajka emigrated to the United States as a teenager just after the First World War. He moved in with his older sisters, Ludmilla and Theresa (Theresa was my



**Dylan and Mia find Uncle Stanley at Bohemian National Cemetery.**

**Dylan holds the photo from Aunt Anna.** photo by Chuck Michalek

maternal grandmother), who had left Moravia before him and settled in Chicago. Like so many other immigrants, Uncle Stanley came to the U.S. for the freedom and opportunity our country offers. He dreamed of becoming a published playwright and poet.

Uncle Stanley quickly adjusted to life in America and was soon directing local plays in the Chicago Czech communities of Pilsen and Lawndale. When I was young, I

listened eagerly as my grandmother described Stanley’s love for playing soccer and the fun he had with his group of friends. Standing with my grandmother at his grave, I asked, “What happened to Uncle Stanley?” She sadly replied that he died of tuberculosis. Pointing across the cemetery field to the remnants of the old Chicago Municipal TB Sanatorium (it was later torn down to make room for Northeastern Illinois University), my grandmother told me how she would regularly travel by streetcar to visit her brother at that sanatorium. Although he valiantly battled the TB, the disease gradually depleted and finally ended his young, promising life when he was only 29 years old.

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## Looking For Uncle Stanley

(continued from page 3)

Uncle Stanley didn't live long enough to become the famous playwright that shaped his dreams. But grandmother loved to talk about his energy and zest for life. And she was quick to share with me that when I was born 18 years after his death, my middle name was chosen as a remembrance to him.

This was the story I told Mia and Dylan while we followed the map to Uncle Stanley's gravesite. The kids loved the enameled oval picture of Uncle Stanley that was mounted on his tombstone many years ago – but their search for Uncle Stanley didn't end there. I had another surprise for them.

Recently, one of my mom's cousins now in her 90s and one of the last remaining relatives who personally knew Uncle Stanley, contacted me. Her father had been an actor, and she had located an old picture from the 1920s of the cast of one of his plays. Aunt Anna said the picture of the costumed actors was taken at a theater somewhere near 18th Street in the Pilsen neighborhood and involved the



from the editor's laptop

I hope you enjoy this issue's reader's contribution, "Looking for Uncle Stanley." Chuck Michalek not only brings to life a name and face on a gravestone but also demonstrates a delightful way to nurture an appreciation for our cemetery in younger family members. I have warm childhood memories of Memorial Days spent planting flowers on the grave of my Uncle Bob, while listening to my mother and uncle talk about their brother. Uncle Bob, a member of the renowned Marine battalion Carlson's Raiders, was killed in World War II before I was born. I began to know him through those family stories first heard at his gravesite. I'm sure many of you have similar personal stories connected to BNC. Inspired by the contributions of Nada and Milly Dobias (previous issue) and Chuck, I am inaugurating a new feature in the next issue. "Stories of the Stones" will feature a BNC gravemarker and the story behind it. Send your stories and photos to me at 167 County Road A-4A, Sapello, NM 87745, or email [cjsmetana@msn.com](mailto:cjsmetana@msn.com). If you'd like, I will help you write your story. If you don't know the story but have a favorite gravemarker - family or not - from BNC, send me the photo or the name on the marker, and we will research the story for you. If you don't have a photo of the stone, don't worry, I'll get one. Together we'll learn the "stories of the stones!"

See you at Porretta's! Na shledanou! ~ carol jean smetana

At left is the enamel photo of Uncle Stanley from his grave marker. Can you find him in the photo below?

[answer on last page]



Slovensky Spolek. And included in the photo was the serious, young director of the play, Uncle Stanley!

I pulled out that photo from Aunt Anna and laughed along with Mia and Dylan as they tried to guess which of the persons in the

photo matched the face on the tombstone.

The kids were fascinated – by the treasure hunt, by the story of Uncle Stanley, and by the cemetery itself. Certainly they will not remember all the details I shared with them that day – at least not after hearing the story

for the first time. But the cemetery is now part of their experience, along with Uncle Stanley, his dreams, and his zest for life. Many of BNC's monuments also fascinated them – some are now their "favorites." We will seek them out, along with Uncle Stanley, on our next visit to BNC.



## Live From BNC

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and removed to the dumping area by the river. This opened up the roads, and after the water in the flooded areas eventually drained off, people could once again visit their families' graves. Bohemian National Cemetery was back in operation before the other area cemeteries.

**Linda Kostuba** and **Patty Volkman** joined the cemetery volunteers. They planted the area around the gatehouse and have also been trimming the bushes around the Masaryk Mausoleum. Next time you're at the cemetery, pause a moment to appreciate the beauty of these areas.

Approximately 500 people attended Bohemian National Cemetery's annual picnic on July 19th. They enjoyed Bohemian bakery, primarily baked by volunteers, and food prepared by **Frank Saballus** from **Klas Restaurant**, along with watermelon and drinks. **Frank Berendt** performed music on his

accordion. Although the accompanying yard sale didn't do well, the picnic was a success, enjoyed by all who attended.

There was a problem with the retort's electrical system. Andy Bultas, **Ken Quick**, Jerry Gaydusek and Chuck Cervenka tried to correct it. However it was a problem that was covered by the warranty so **Universal** was contacted and they sent a technician out to take care of the problem. The technician repaired the retort and it is now in good working order. Chuck Michalek, Jerry Gaydusek, and Chuck Cervenka inspected the roof of the Masaryk Mausoleum and found that the skylights were dislodged and other things on the roof needed repair. Andy Bultas and Ken Dvorsky discovered that the paint on the Columbarium turrets was peeling. The **Allendorfer** firm had done the work on these areas, and in reviewing the warranties, Ken Dvorsky and Chuck Cervenka found out that these problems were covered.

Andy Bultas contacted Allendorfer and **Conrad Kotowski** came to the cemetery and went over the problem areas with Chuck Cervenka and Andy Bultas. Allendorfer has agreed to make the repairs at no cost to the cemetery.

Chuck Cervenka, Andy Bultas and Jerry Gaydusek found the aerator for the the lagoon lying in the nearby weeds. Chuck cleaned it up and found it was still operable. Andy Bultas contacted **Dorian** from **Gethsemane Gardens**, who had the aerator re-installed in the lagoon. It is now working and helps make the cemetery look good.

The **Czech Consul** informed **Marge Stueckemann** that the cemetery will be the recipient of a grant from the Czech Republic for approximately \$14,000.00 for reparations of the gatehouse bell tower. Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery wrote this grant application on behalf of the cemetery last year. The check will be presented to the BNC at

our October Gala Anniversary Dinner.

All the rain we had earlier this summer waterlogged the cemetery. Although this made taking care of the grounds difficult, because the mowing equipment would sink into the ground, the landscaping company continued mowing the grounds in locations where their equipment was still able to operate. Today the cemetery grounds are beautiful, thanks to the landscaping company, the cemetery personnel, Linda Kostuba, Patty Volkman and all the other volunteers. It is very pleasant walking around the cemetery. If lucky, you can see the deer that reside in the cemetery, along with coyotes, geese, ducks, red-tailed hawks and waterfowl that gather around the lagoon. Squirrels and rabbits are also plentiful. It is a pleasure to visit family graves and enjoy all the surrounding beauty in Bohemian National Cemetery.

*Andy Bultas*



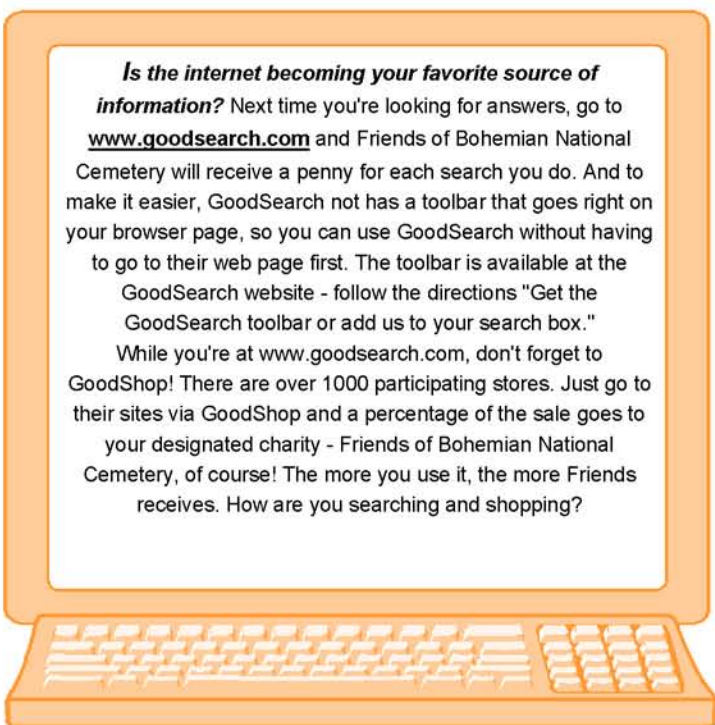
**UPCOMING FRIENDS EVENTS**

**Sunday, October 11th**  
Friends of BNC 5th Anniversary Gala & Silent Auction begin at noon

**Monday, October 12th**  
Guided walking tour, Czech luncheon & CSA Czech museum tour - activities begin at 9:30 a.m.

**Friday, November 6th**  
Veterans' Day flag placement-meet at BNC office at 10 a.m.

**October and beyond**  
Renew your membership today!



**Is the internet becoming your favorite source of information?** Next time you're looking for answers, go to [www.goodsearch.com](http://www.goodsearch.com) and Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery will receive a penny for each search you do. And to make it easier, GoodSearch not has a toolbar that goes right on your browser page, so you can use GoodSearch without having to go to their web page first. The toolbar is available at the GoodSearch website - follow the directions "Get the GoodSearch toolbar or add us to your search box."

While you're at [www.goodsearch.com](http://www.goodsearch.com), don't forget to GoodShop! There are over 1000 participating stores. Just go to their sites via GoodShop and a percentage of the sale goes to your designated charity - Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery, of course! The more you use it, the more Friends receives. How are you searching and shopping?

# 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)



## Membership Renewal Reminder

Your membership as a Friend of Bohemian National Cemetery is vital to helping preserve and enhance the natural beauty and artistic heritage of Bohemian National Cemetery. As a member, you will receive our quarterly newsletter and be entitled to discounts on merchandise and tours. Above all, you will enjoy the satisfaction of knowing you are helping us improve and beautify Bohemian National Cemetery.

Our membership year is January - December. This means that **all memberships, except those renewed for two years last year, will expire December 31, 2009.** Please send in your renewal now to remain in good standing! New members joining in the last quarter of a year (Sept.-Dec.) receive those 3 months as a bonus to their membership year beginning in January. **Thank you for your support.**

**Memberships:** One year: \$25 individual ~ \$20 student or senior ~ \$35 family ~ \$30 senior family

Two years: \$45 individual ~ \$35 student or senior ~ \$60 family ~ \$50 senior family

Friends of BNC is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit public charity. To make a tax-deductible donation to fund improvements at BNC, please write a separate check with a notation on the memo line.

Uncle Stanley is seated in the front row, fourth from left.

*Make checks payable to Friends of BNC.*

*Mail with coupon to:*

.FOBNC c/o Miss Juli Nelson

300 Claymoor #2F

Hinsdale, IL 60521-5076

### Membership Renewal

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code (+ 4) \_\_\_\_\_ -- \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_