

# Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Fall Issue ~ Vol. 11 No. 2

October 2014

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*



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## Friends Receives Grant from Czech Republic

Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery was pleased to learn that the Foreign Ministry of the Czech Republic has awarded us a grant of \$1800 to be used for developing curriculum for children visiting the cemetery. We anticipate units in history, language, nature, any of which can be used by teachers, Scout leaders,



et al, and adapted to different age groups, to introduce children to the wonders of Bohemian National Cemetery.

If you are interested in more information about this project, please contact Marge at 847-362-9036.

We are grateful for the Czech government's support.

## What's New with Friends of BNC

Have you ever played the violin? There are some who say that every Czech is a musician, or every Czech is born with a violin under his/her chin! I don't know about that, but our wonderful **Mariánské Lázně Junior Dixieland Band** not only was a terrific group of teenagers but also had the added bonus of an extra violin

played by **Klára Moldová**, the Czech teacher sent here from Prague to work with the TG Masaryk Czech School. Klára is usually a classical violinist, but she joined right in with the jazzy pieces! I am sorry for those who missed our wonderful 10th anniversary celebration with the band playing on the north end of the gatehouse porch and

most of the listeners sitting on the historic bentwood benches closer to the doorway. We had about 65-70 people there to enjoy the afternoon, including **Judy Baar Topinka**, comptroller for the State of Illinois. Those attending received a commemorative booklet with a cover design copied

*(continued on page 3)*

## Live from BNC

Employees from **Duro Excavators** have continued their work on the wall along the river, filling the ditch they dug with crushed concrete and stone. Once the materials used for building the wall have settled, a fence will be built.

On July 13th, the annual Bohemian National

Cemetery picnic was held. The tents were assembled and chairs placed on the grounds Saturday evening. However, early Sunday morning a storm hit the area, heavy rains and severe winds struck, the tents were blown down, and the chairs scattered all over. **Phil Roux** and the cemetery employees

worked very hard that same morning to put everything back so that the picnic could be held. When the people arrived to set up the food, bakery, and soft drink stands, they along with the Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery and T. G. Masaryk Czech School

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## Heritage Happenings

Heritage Happenings is published quarterly by Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery.

Manuscripts, articles, photographs, and advertisements for *Heritage Happenings* may be submitted to carol jean smetana, 167 County Road A4A, Sapello, NM 87745-5026 or emailed to her at [editor@friendsofbnc.org](mailto:editor@friendsofbnc.org).

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### Officers of Friends of BNC

President: *Marge Sladek Stueckemann*

Vice-President: *Andy Bultas*

Secretary: *Helen Gaydusek*

Treasurer: *Juli Nelson*

Directors:

*Martha & Charles Cervenka,  
Evelyn Krenek Fergle*

Fund-Raising Co-Chair:  
*Kathryn Ruzicka Lorenz  
Thelma Malecek*

Grants Chair: *Andy Bultas*

Membership: *Gerri Romanelli*

Newsletter: *carol jean smetana*

Publicity: *April Hasson*

Special Projects: *Jerry Gaydusek*

Webmaster: *carol jean smetana*



### *from the editor's laptop*

Sometimes it can be quite frustrating living a thousand miles away from Chicago and all the Czech cultural events that take place there. How I wish I could have attended our tenth anniversary celebration: it sounds like everyone had a wonderful time! For those of you who, like me, cannot participate in Friends events as often as you'd like, I hope our quarterly newsletter helps keep you informed of what our organization is doing. You can also learn more at our website and on our Facebook page. Let me know if there is anything you'd like to see or read about on our website or in upcoming issues of our newsletter.

It is difficult for me to imagine visiting Bohemian National Cemetery and not being greeted with a wave and a smile from Phil Roux. It seemed I always had questions for him about where someone was buried or how the cemetery did things in the past, and after his teasing, "Oh no, not you again with another question!" Phil would patiently share his knowledge with me. Like so many others who knew him through his welcoming presence at BNC, I will miss him.

*Na shledanou!*  
*carol jean smetana*

## Děkuji vám!

**Linda Tassin** for making our anniversary booklet.

**Arlene Artist, Martha and Chuck Cervenka, Helen & Jerry Gaydusek, Art & Kathryn Lorenz, Frank Magallon, Juli Nelson, Lili Nemec, Mary and Bob Syrup** for refreshments and/or set-up at BNC picnic and/or CAC Brookfield picnic, and/or our 10th Anniversary celebration.

**Andy Bultas, Chuck Cervenka, Jerry Gaydusek, Chuck Michalek, and Rob Plummer** for set-up and clean-up for our 10th Anniversary celebration.

**Andy Bultas** for coordinating with Tony Kartsonas on entryway restoration.

**Chuck Betzold** for the fence banner for our October 4th tours.

## Welcome to Our New Members!

**Elon & April Hasson ...**  
Chicago, IL

**Robin Hurwitz ...**  
San Jose, CA

**Ron and Linda Roaks ...**  
Madison, IN

## WELCOME TO APRIL HASSON

who has joined us as our new Publicity Chair. Thank you for volunteering!

## AND A CALL FOR MORE VOLUNTEERS!!

Friends is in need of friends to volunteer to help with our projects and programs. As we embark on a major fundraising effort for the crematorium/columbarium 5-year restoration plan, our fund-raising committee will be in need of volunteers. Also, we have already begun planning our fund-raising gala for next September, and will need help in areas such as invitations, program, silent auction, decorations, place cards and nametags. If you are interested in helping in these areas or in any other way, please email Marge at [mdstueck@aol.com](mailto:mdstueck@aol.com).

## What's New with Friends of BNC

(continued from first page)  
from František Zdrubek's 1902 25-year history of BNC. It featured pictures of the board and Friends founders, a history written by **Evelyn Krenek Fergle**, and color pictures of highlights of our 10-year accomplishments. Thanks to **Linda Tassin** who created this special treasure.

Despite a very soggy open area at BNC, the picnic in July was still a success. Our usual potato pancakes and sausages were available, thanks to **Frank Saballus** from Klas Restaurant in Cicero, who came to cook over the open grill! Friends had its book table and sponsored the bakery table as usual. There were even some people dancing to the music, which was really special this year.

We also had our book table at

the Czechoslovak American Congress picnic in Brookfield. That proved a challenge because of gale-force winds, but we didn't lose any books or our tent, thanks to **Juli Nelson** and the others who helped that afternoon.

I am definitely saving the best for last - the entryway to the crematorium/columbarium is now restored. Look, especially, at the doors that were refinished. Since those doors have been keeping the north winds out of the building for just about 100 years (in 2019), they really needed some work and are much improved after **Tony Kartsonas'** refinishing.

We are just on the verge of unveiling the Master Plan for future restoration of the special domed jewel of BNC, the crematorium/columbarium building. Look for much

more on this and how we will proceed in the winter issue.

The year 2015 is the centennial of the *Eastland* Disaster. Please see the article on page five about the memorial being planned for BNC.

Come to our January 25th meeting to learn more about the events that will take place next summer to commemorate this, see newly discovered pictures, and have a chance to ask questions about the many stories of those who lost their lives on July 24, 1915, and now rest at BNC. **Chuck Michalek**, our own Friends of BNC member, will be the main speaker that afternoon. See you then!

**Marge Sladek Stueckemann**  
**President**



The newly elected Friends board gathered for a photo with Judy Baar Topinka at the anniversary party. Left to right: Chuck Cervenka, Martha Cervenka, Marge Sladek Stueckemann, Gerri Romanelli, Kathryn Lorenz, Juli Nelson, Helen Gaydusek, Evelyn Krenek Fergle, Judy Baar Topinka, Andy Bultas, & Jerry Gaydusek. Not pictured: Thelma Malecek, April Hasson, & Carol Smetana.



Judy Baar Topinka complimented Friends on our achievements.

## A Look Back at Ten Years of Friends Programming

by **Marge Sladek Stueckemann**

What might be a good program for a cemetery group?

"We can't just have cemetery tours! We need some kind of entertainment to be sure people will come." This was the thinking for one of our first tours, so in between the morning and

afternoon groups, we had the United Moravian Society singers, dressed in their kroje, perform in the Ceremony Hall. They sang the beautiful folk songs of our fatherland. In the following years, we realized the tours are attractive enough on their own, and we didn't have entertainment for

tours again!

"I walked home using the railroad tracks as my guide after I was discharged in the south after the Civil War." Dressed in his Civil War uniform, a re-enactor portrayed

(Continued on page 6)

## Rest in Peace, Phil Roux



The Bohemian National Cemetery community was saddened by the sudden loss this summer of cemetery superintendent Phil Roux on August 16. Phil was 67 years old and had worked at BNC for the past 44 years. With his long employment at the cemetery, he was a storehouse of knowledge about the cemetery and its operations. Several of the office employees who had daily contact with him commented he was "a wonderful man" who always wanted to help. They noted he was tremendously helpful and his long relationship with BNC enabled him to answer almost any question about the cemetery. The weekly volunteers would often notice the friendly and "light-hearted" rapport he had with longtime visitors to the cemetery.

Phil was born in northern Wisconsin (Rice Lake) on December 23, 1946, and had a passion for fishing, hunting and bowling. His love of the outdoors helped explain his fondness for the many animals and "critters" wandering amidst the grand trees and tombstones at BNC.

Phil will be greatly missed. Friends of BNC extends condolences to his wife Cheryl, his four children and grandchildren.

*remembrance and photo by Chuck Michalek*

## Donations

### Sponsors (\$100—\$499)

CSA Fraternal Life *in honor of Jerry Gaydusek, Fraternalist of the Year*  
CSA Fraternal Life  
Leonard and Irene Lanni *in memory of Alan Wolfe (Wayne Wolfe's brother)*  
McDonald's Corporation  
Paul & Sharon Triffon  
James Trnka

### Donors (\$25—\$99)

Marilyn & Elmer Cerny  
Juli Nelson *in memory of Linda Hudecek*  
Juli Nelson *in memory of Phil Roux*  
Don Picha  
Marge Sladek Stueckemann *in memory of Phil Roux*

### Thank You (\$1—\$24)

Valentine Husak *in memory of Linda Hudacek*

***Thank you all for your generosity. Your donations help preserve and restore Bohemian National Cemetery.***

## Eastland Memorial Proposal Approved by BNCA Board

by Chuck Michalek

Last year's Heritage Happenings contained an article (January 2013) describing the 1915 Chicago River *Eastland* steamship tragedy (844 victims) and mounting interest to create a suitable centennial *Eastland* memorial at Bohemian National Cemetery. The article noted that on board the capsized ship were numerous Czechs and Slovaks who either worked at Western Electric or were friends and family members of the workers. With the loss of life of many Czech and Slovaks, BNC immediately opened up section 16 to accommodate the many *Eastland* victims who would be buried at the cemetery. BNC Association records indicate that shortly after the funerals, the cemetery approved a proposal to build a suitable *Eastland* memorial. Despite the 1915 Board's interest in creating a memorial, the proposal was never acted upon ... until now.

With the formation of the Eastland Centennial Commemorative Committee (ECCP), a plan was developed to construct an *Eastland* memorial on a large triangle of land next to sections 13, 14 and 21. After exploring initial cost factors, the ECCP committee decided to pursue a scaled down memorial. In Spring 2014, BNC's superintendent and ECCP committee member Phil Roux identified a small available parcel of land at one of the corners of section 16, where approximately 140 *Eastland* victims were buried. At the July 2014 BNCA board meeting, the board voted to approve the placement of an *Eastland* memorial at BNC, which would be constructed with funds raised by the Eastland committee.



One of the markers at BNC for victims of the *Eastland*.  
"Here lies the Novotny family who died on the 24th of July 1915 in the catastrophe of the ship *Eastland*."  
James and Agnes Novotny, both 34 years old, and their children Mamie, 10, and Willie, 7, all perished in the *Eastland* disaster. James had worked at Western Electric for 7 years in the woodworking department.

Several design proposals have been obtained from a Chicago-area architectural firm, and a museum specialist is being consulted to assist with the memorial's final design, which will include a strong educational component. To provide a nautical point of interest at the memorial site, a large, salvaged Great Lakes steamship steering wheel has been obtained and will form a central point of interest. The *Eastland* committee is currently reaching out to individuals and organizations interested in contributing to the memorial. A number of outdoor memorial/donor bricks will be located at the site and contain the names of individual, families or organizations who wish to remember the *Eastland* by making a contribution (starting at \$250). If you would like to make a financial contribution, please make your check out to ECCP and mail to: Eastland Project c/o Bohemian National Cemetery, 5255 Pulaski Rd. Chicago, IL 60630. If you are interested in purchasing an engraved memorial brick or have any questions about the project, please contact BNCA delegate and ECCP chairperson Chuck Michalek at [michalekchas@aol.com](mailto:michalekchas@aol.com).

## Friends Programming

(Continued from page 3)

Frantisek Steiskal, Czech veteran, whose autobiography gave us enough information for this man to do a terrific portrayal of one of our cemetery's very interesting residents. To escort Frantisek to his final resting place, Ray Capek and Phil Roux dressed in the newly-discovered 1930s wool uniforms of the employees that would have met his funeral to lead the way to the gravesite. This final exit was most memorable, and the cleaned uniforms still hang in the closet in the office! Frantisek lived into the 1930's and was the parade marshal of the Memorial Day parade for years.

Did you ever think of Bohemian

National Cemetery being part of European history, especially going back to the time of Jan Hus, the reformer of the church who died in 1415? Carol Jean Smetana showed just how Czech history from Europe impacted the Chicago Czechs and had a big part in why Bohemian National Cemetery was founded. We all learned so much from her!!

Other programs that were most memorable included two different presentations, one more on the actual artistic techniques and the other on the life story of John Mallin, decorator of our columbarium/crematorium building. His granddaughter and active member of Friends did both presentations.

Treestones are always asked about when people tour BNC. Samantha Chmelik gave a fascinating study and then took us outside to look at the real thing!

More recently we enjoyed a terrific program about cornet player extraordinaire, Bohumir Kryl. Wayne Wolf alerted us to the talented presenters.

This is just a small sample of the many great presentations we have enjoyed!

Please let us know if you have any contacts or suggestions for a future program.

## Upcoming Events at Bohemian National Cemetery

### Fall/Winter Cemetery Hours

The cemetery grounds are open seven days a week, 8:00 am to 4:00 pm. The cemetery office is open Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 3:00 pm.

### Saturday, October 4th ~ Tours of the Tombstones at 10 am and 1 pm led by Albert Walavich

Same-day registration in the gatehouse for 2-hour long walking tours. \$10 for Friends members, \$15 for non-members. Refreshments in the gatehouse after/between the tours.

### Tuesday, November 11th ~ Veterans Day

Free and open to the public. Meet at the gatehouse at 10:30 am for a wreath-laying at World Wars I and II Memorial at 11 am. Return to the gatehouse for light refreshments afterward.

### Sunday, January 25th ~ Friends Winter Meeting at Klas Restaurant

Cocktails at 12:30, Dinner at 1:30, cost \$25, reservations required (see website and next newsletter for details). Program (free) at 3:00 pm, explaining the Eastland Disaster Centennial Project and the special memorial planned for BNC, with information on the Eastland victims buried at the cemetery. In addition, Tony Kartsonas will explain what was done to restore the crematorium/columbarium entryway, and there will be an update on the master plan for the c/c restoration.

## Live from BNC

(continued from first page)

who were also setting up booths found the picnic area flooded. Everyone persevered, however, and got everything ready for the arrival of the picnickers. As the day progressed, the sun came out and things dried out. Everyone had a wonderful time, enjoying the good music and good food. The floral contest was held and **CSA Lodge Yankee-Jungmann # 77** won. The picnic was well attended and enjoyed by everyone.

On August 3rd, Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery held their summer gathering at the cemetery, featuring entertainment, refreshments, and annual elections. All officers were re-elected. The entertainment was provided by the **Junior Dixieland**

**Band** from Mariánské Lázně in the Czech Republic, conducted by **Bedřich Smrčka**. The band was excellent and was joined by **Klára Moldová** from T. G. Masaryk Czech School who played the violin. Altogether, it was a very enjoyable affair, and all who attended said they had a great time.

After all these enjoyable events, during the rest of August and the beginning of September the cemetery sustained some horrible tree damage from the violent storms that occurred. High winds accompanied by severe rains flooded parts of the cemetery

and blocked roads. **Chuck Michalek, Chuck Betzold, Jim Miller, Tod Michalek** and **Andy Bultas** along with Phil Roux and the cemetery employees worked very hard to open the roads and remove the fallen trees and branches. The trees and branches



photo by Chuck Michalek

were so huge that they had to be cut up and some were so large that the end loader and skid steer had to be used to move debris to the road and then to the dumping area. Duro let the cemetery use his equipment to move the trees and branches.

Unfortunately, after the roads were opened and the branches picked up, another storm hit the Chicago area and the cemetery sustained more of the same kind of damage. This seemed like it was occurring week after week. However the volunteers and cemetery employees continued to

work on the clean up. The roads stayed open and people were able to visit the gravesites.

**Tony Kartsonas** has finished the restoration work on the vestibule and front doors to the crematorium/columbarium building. There will not be any more restoration of the interior of the building until the problem of the leaking dome is solved.

**Charles Pipal**, architect and historic preservationist, and **Dan Ruzic**, project manager, have drawn up an eight-year master plan that includes a solution to the leaking dome. (See July 2014 cover story.) Friends of BNC presented this plan to Bohemian National Cemetery board of directors for approval. The board listened to the proposal, asking many questions, and then approved the plan and gave Friends the authorization to proceed.

Bohemian National Cemetery has sustained a great loss with the death of **Phil Roux**, who passed away on August 16, 2014. Phil spent over 43 years working for the Bohemian National Cemetery, most of those years as cemetery superintendent. Phil was buried at Bohemian National Cemetery and now rests at the place he spent so many years working. Phil Roux will be missed.

**Andy Bultas**  
Vice-President

## Project Updates

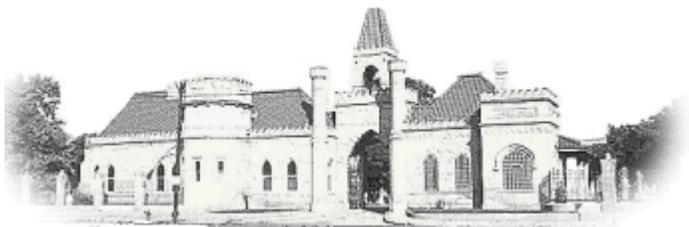
**Crematorium/columbarium Building Preservation:** As described in "Live from the Cemetery," the Bohemian National Cemetery Association board has approved the 8-year plan for the restoration of the crematorium/columbarium building, which Friends commissioned from Charles Pipal and Dan Ruzic. We will have more information on the plan and its implementation in our next newsletter, on our website, and at our winter meeting.

**Crematorium/columbarium Building Vestibule Restoration:** The painted decoration has been cleaned and sealed, the crown molding prepped and repainted, and the doors refinished.

# Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

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## Heritage Happenings

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



## MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL REMINDER

Your membership in Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery is vital to the preservation of our cemetery. As a member, you will receive our quarterly newsletter and be entitled to discounts on merchandise and our "Tours of the Tombstones." Above all, you will enjoy the satisfaction of knowing you are helping to maintain, 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, 2014.** New members joining in the last quarter of a year (Sept.-Dec.) receive those 3 months as a bonus, and their membership year begins the following January.

Please send in your renewal now!

### Memberships:

**One year:** \$25 individual; \$35 family;  
\$20 student or senior; \$30 senior family.  
**Two years:** \$45 individual; \$60 family;  
\$35 student or senior; \$50 senior family.

Send renewal form with check payable to  
Friends of BNC or credit card information  
to:

**Friends of BNC c/o Miss Juli Nelson**  
**300 Claymoor #2F**  
**Hinsdale, IL 60521-5076**

### Membership Renewal

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Membership \_\_\_\_\_

For credit card payment (Visa, Master Card, Discover, American Express), include:

Card number \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration date \_\_\_\_\_

Security code \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_