

Heritage Happenings

Newsletter of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Summer Issue ~ Vol. 8 No. 1

July 2011

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



Inside this issue:

Officers	2
from the editor's laptop	2
New Members	2
Volunteer Opportunities	2
What's New with Friends of BNC	3
Stories of the Stones	4
Upcoming Events at BNC	5
Our Outings, Now Are of Yore	5
Donations	6
Děkuji Vám	6
Live from the Cemetery	7
Friends of BNC Officer Elections	7
Friends of BNC Summer Meeting	8

Friends Receives National Trust Preservation Grant for Ceremony Hall Restoration

Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery was awarded a \$9737.50 grant from the **National Trust for Historic Preservation** from its **Cynthia Woods Mitchell Fund for Historic Interiors**. The seed grant funds will be used for phase one of our planned restoration of the cemetery's Ceremony Hall in the Crematorium building. This first step is a restoration study that will assess the condition of the decorative painting in the Hall and establish a protocol for its restoration and preservation. The estimated cost for the first phase is \$19,475, and with this grant and matching funds raised by our MayFest gala, we anticipate work can start later this summer.

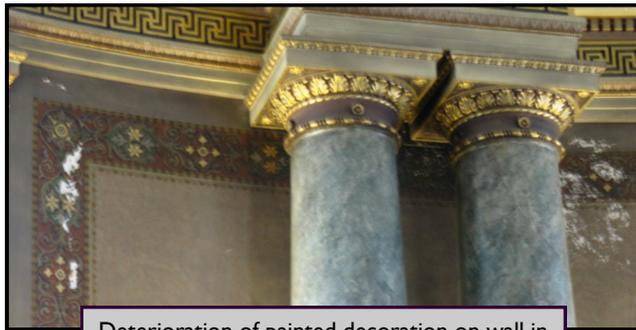
"Without organizations like Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery, communities and towns all across America would have a

diminished sense of place," said Stephanie Meeks, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. "The National Trust for Historic Preservation is honored to provide a grant to Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery, which will use the funds to help preserve an important piece of our shared heritage."

In 1997, a generous gift from George P. Mitchell established the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Fund for Historic Interiors in honor of his wife. The fund provides assistance in the preservation,

restoration, and interpretation of historic

interiors. Once a year, Mitchell Fund grants ranging from \$2,500 to \$10,000 are awarded to non-profit groups and public agencies. Over \$135,000 were awarded in 2010. Grants must be matched at least dollar for dollar with public or private funds.



Deterioration of painted decoration on wall in Ceremony Hall ~ photo by Chuck Michalek

Bohemian National Cemetery Receives Grant from the Czech Republic's Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Gatehouse windows ~ photo by Chuck Michalek

Just as this issue went to press, Friends received word that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic awarded Bohemian National Cemetery a grant to repair and restore the windows in the Gatehouse. This work will allow the windows to be opened on warm days, letting those wonderful Chicago breezes refresh the room, making it more usable throughout the year. Congratulations to Friends Board members **Andy Bultas** and **Juli Nelson**, who wrote the grant proposal on behalf of the Cemetery.

Heritage Happenings

Heritage Happenings is published quarterly by Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery, a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

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 cjsmetana@msn.com.

Copyright 2011 by Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery

Officers of Friends of BNC

President: Marge Sladek
Stueckemann

Vice-President: Andy Bultas

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

Publicity: Helene Schaeffer

Webmaster: carol jean smetana



from the editor's laptop

The front page of this quarter's issue looks a little different than usual: The exciting news of the grant awards pushed our regular features to the inside pages. You can find "What's New with Friends of BNC" on page three and "Live from BNC" on page seven.

The news from the National Trust for Historic Preservation of our successful grant application (thank you to our grant writers Andy Bultas and Juli Nelson) arrived just as we were coming back to earth after our successful MayFest gala, which raised the necessary matching funds. We now can proceed with the first phase of the restoration. This will be the largest project our young organization has undertaken, and we anticipate it will require hundreds of thousands of dollars and possibly span several years. We could use your ideas, energy, and support. To get involved, call Marge at 847-362-9036, or email us at info@friendsofbnc.org. Look for more information about the project in upcoming issues of our newsletter and on our website.

This issue's "Stories of the Stones" has a guest writer, Diane Minarik, a Friends member. Diane relates her personal childhood recollections of the Cemetery and introduces us to some of her family members now at rest there. She also shares some family photos taken at BNC decades ago. I couldn't resist her family history question ("brother? cousin?"), and one answer raises another question, and the next answer reveals ... well, I'll divulge some of the interesting findings in the next issue. I'd love to hear from more of you. We all have stories waiting to be discovered and shared!

The newsletter that arrives in your mailbox is black and white with shades of gray. But I actually create it in full color. If you would like some color with your newsletter, you can read the original version online at www.friendsofbnc.org/currentnewsletters.htm.

Na shledanou!
carol jean smetana

cjsmetana@msn.com

167 County Road A4A, Sapello, NM 87745-5026

Welcome to Our New Members!

Samantha Chmelik ... Chicago, IL

Karen Kuncil Kramer ... Flossmoor, IL

Fred and Ellen Ranck ... Wheaton, IL

Volunteer Opportunities

Want to play a more active role in Friends of BNC? Help can be used with fundraising, flyer placement, staffing our book and bakery tables at events, writing articles, and gardening/repair work on Wednesdays at the Cemetery.

For more information, call 847-362-9036
or email info@friendsofbnc.org.

What's New with Friends of BNC

MayFest was marvelous! Ninety-eight festive party-goers feasted, shopped, and were enchanted by the beautiful 12-foot-high maypole and the **Omladina Moravian Dancers** in spring-colored kroje. The men circled in one direction, ducking and holding their ribbons high, as the women stretched and ducked while circling in the opposite direction. The entertainment was the high point of the day, with lively folk music, other spring folk dances, and a wonderful announcer who explained Czech/Moravian spring customs.



Above: Omladina Moravian Dancers perform a traditional maypole dance at MayFest.
Below left: Beth Raleigh, General Manager of BNC, with Judy Baar Topinka; *Below right:* Consul General Dana Huňátová and Friends President Marge Stueckemann ~
All photos by Kathy Mallin

On each table sat a large pot of pansies, the Freethinker symbol that is depicted in the Ceremony Hall of the Crematorium. Each flowerpot was enhanced by a sign picturing one of the insignia found in the Hall, accompanied by a brief explanation. Albin Polášek's famous monument "Mother" looked out from magnets given to diners. Look for the magnets at upcoming Friends' events: We had some extras that will be offered for sale.



Tony Kartsonas, our restorer for the Ceremony Hall, explained what needs to be done, using three large posters with photos showing the deterioration. A short slide show illustrated the restoration work already financed by Friends and generous donors, including the repair of stained glass windows (\$45,000) and the Crematorium roof (\$65,000). Total proceeds for the day were \$12,500. With other donations and grant funding, we DO have the money to proceed with the first \$19,000 phase of the restoration, which should take place sometime later in the summer or early fall!

else who contributed their talents and expertise to make MayFest such a success! We were honored to have our most famous Illinois Czech, **Judy Baar Topinka**, Illinois State Comptroller, attend, as well as The Honorable **Dana Huňátová**, Consul General of the Czech Republic in Chicago.

Did you see the article in the "Play" section of the April 14th issue of the



Posters created by Friends member Chuck Betzold introduce MayFest supporter Renato Barahona to our restoration project ~ photo by Kathy Mallin

Thank you to ALL of the committee members and everyone

Chicago Tribune? It prominently featured our June 12th tour, and we received MANY phone calls from people all over Chicagoland, and we had a record turnout of 75! **Albert** will be leading another tour in September.

Summer means picnics, and we will be at the **Bohemian National Cemetery Picnic** on Sunday, July 17th. We can use baked items that day - homemade or store-bought. Please bring serving-size portions on a disposable plate, if possible.

Helping at the bakery or book tables is a great way to get involved. Donate just an hour of time; we'll pair you with an experienced person to take tickets for bakery items or to help sell books and gift items. We'll need people from 11:00 a.m. at the bakery table and from noon at the book table. If you can help, please email info@friendsofbnc.org or call 847-362-9036.

"Czech" us out at the **Czechoslovak American Congress Picnic** in Kiwanis Park in Brookfield on Sunday, July 31st, from 11:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. We can again use volunteers to help at our sales table. (Contact as above.)

"**Helen Sclair, Our Cemetery Lady**" will be the topic for our August 21st **Friends of BNC meeting** at 1:00 p.m. at the Cemetery. **Rob Plummer**, a good friend of Helen, will tell us about her expertise in cemetery lore and help us remember this woman who was featured yearly on the PBS Chicago station explaining the importance of cemeteries. Helen is now at rest at BNC, and after the program we will go place a wreath at her grave. We will have refreshments, and elections will be held.

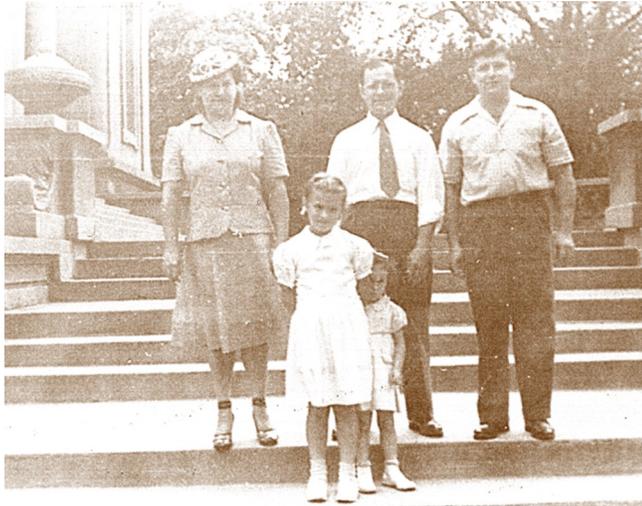
Marge Sladek Stueckemann
President

Stories of the Stones

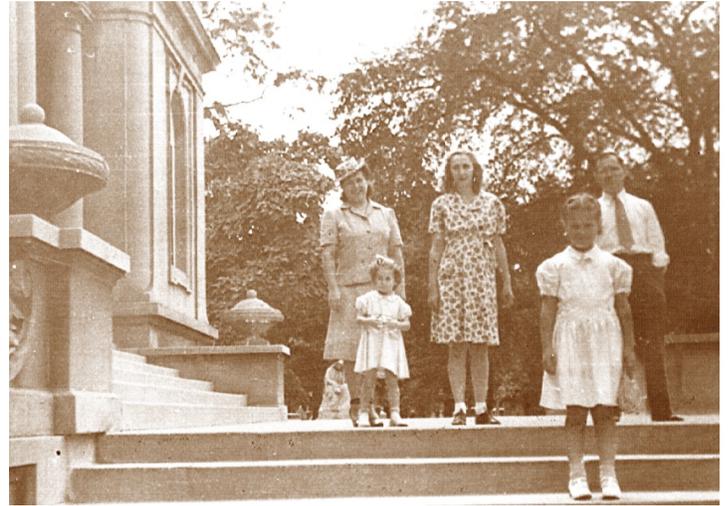
by Diane Minarik



[Editor's note: In my columns, I invite readers to share stories and photos of BNC. Friends member Diane Minarik responded. - cjs]



Left to right: Mildred Minarik (wife of Joe), Dolores & Millie (daughters of Mildred & Joe), Joe Minarik, Augie Minarik (Diane's father) ~ Spring/Summer 1946



Another photo on the Columbarium steps ~ left to right: Mildred, Millie, Sophie Minarik (Diane's mother & wife of Augie), Dolores, Joe ~ Spring/Summer 1946

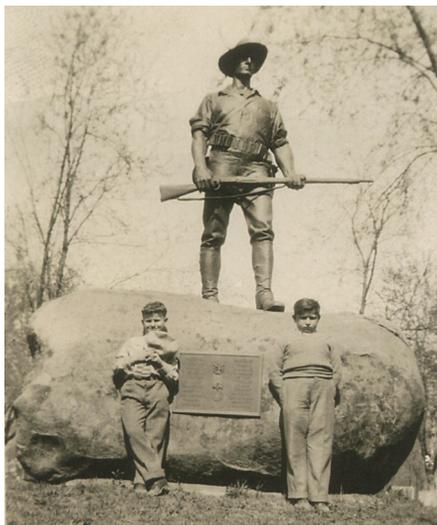
As an adult, I can appreciate the beauty of the cemetery. As a small kid, I was terrified (especially of the Pilgrim monument -- even my parents called it "death"!). Walking into the columbarium was also a tad scary. I loved the remembrances & flowers at the niches, but it still gave me the "willies." I have the key to my paternal grandparents' niche now (good grief: eye level/bronze urn: must have cost a king's ransom) and

try to change the flowers every once in awhile.

[Diane sent the above photos of a Minarik family trip to BNC. In the photo above right, Sophie is pregnant with Diane - possibly Diane's first trip to the Cemetery! - cjs]

I have two photos of my late father August (Augie) Minarik and my late uncle Joseph (Joe) Minarik, taken at the cemetery in the mid-20s or so, when they were children. (My father August was born in 1914 and his brother Joseph was born in 1911.)

[When I saw the photo (right) of the two boys at the Kryl marker, I asked Diane who were the Kryls. - cjs]



Joe Minarik on left, Augie on right, at Spanish War Veterans Memorial, circa 1926.

My great-grandparents Josef & Alois Minarik are buried in the Kryl plot. John Kryl (their son-in-law) was the husband of Louise Minarik, the oldest child of Josef and Alois (Vernor) Minarik. Josef and Alois were Augie and Joe's grandparents. John Kryl was related (brother? cousin?) to the famous cornet player Bohumir Kryl. Bohumir's equally famous daughters taught violin to Augie (for certain) and piano (not-so-certain) to Joe. From what my father told me, it was probably all for naught (at least in Augie's case).



Brothers Augie (left) and Joe (right) in front of the Kryl gravesite marker, circa 1926

There are quite a few members of my paternal side buried at BNC. I wish I knew more of their stories, but I treasure the ones I have.

[I wanted to know more, too. In the next issue, I will share some of the stories I've discovered about the Kryl family - cjs]



Upcoming Events at Bohemian National Cemetery



Sunday, July 17th, noon to 4:00 pm ~ BNC Picnic

Enjoy an old-fashioned picnic on the scenic grounds of historic Bohemian National Cemetery. A selection of refreshments and beverages will be available for purchase. Live entertainment ~ Lawn chairs and bicycles are welcome. Friends will host a book table and a bakery table. If you would like to help, please call 847-362-9036 or email info@friendsofbnc.org.

Sunday, August 21st, 1:00 p.m. ~ Summer meeting of Friends in the Ceremony Hall of the Crematorium Building

Program by Rob Plummer on "Helen Sclair, Our Cemetery Lady."
Free for members and non-members.

Saturday, September 24th at 10:00 am & 1:00 pm ~ Tours of the Tombstones guided by Albert Walavich

Meet in the Gatehouse for a 2-hour walking tour
\$10 Friends members ~ \$15 non-members

Our Outings, Now Are of Yore

The following is an excerpt from an editorial published in the Chicago Bohemian newspaper Denní Hlasatel on June 25, 1915. The author describes the changing nature of Bohemian community picnics.

The beginning of the outing season cannot fail to remind every old settler that our outings are not what they used to be ... There is something lacking, and you cannot find what it is until you think of the "marches" without which an outing was unthinkable. ... No more do we wait until we hear the music under our windows, in order to get up and run to the depot. Now we simply leave when we please, and the car takes us where we are going and brings us home from the picnic again exactly when we please.

When there was a picnic, there was no half-way preparation for it. ... Such an outing needed days of preparations, and getting up early on Sunday morning in order not to miss the train. Saturday was a busy day for the mothers, roasting meats and baking cakes so that their marriageable daughters could show off with their culinary skill before their dancing partners. The food was so good that very few of them could resist thoughts of marriage license and honeymoon. As a rule, the meal was a huge banquet, as you could learn from the fathers and lovelorn lads who used to tote

heavy baskets, full of food, to the depot early Sunday morning. It is quite different these days. Trains are hardly ever used for a trip to the picnic grounds any more. ... Perhaps, after all, it is nothing to be sorry for that we have discontinued patronizing railroads and have thereby made our outings more convenient and more easily accessible. But all of us certainly miss the parades without which a picnic could hardly be imagined. ...

Perhaps you still remember the picnics of the Český Národní Hřbitov (Bohemian National Cemetery) held every year in the adjacent garden. ... That was in the early days when we had to take a train to the Cemetery, and were happy to get there even in that inconvenient way. The parade used to march to the Northwestern Depot, from where a number of special trains took the picnickers to Irving Park, where the parade was reorganized and marched to the Cemetery. For those who have never had that experience, we suggest that they picture unpaved streets, which either had no sidewalks at all or had merely board walks, and to remember that the old non-Bohemian settlers in

Irving Park never looked with particular favor on the Bohemian picnickers. To this we add that such outings were frequently made shortly after a rain, and that the Irving Park mud is not any better than any other mud, so you should be able to visualize the beauties and fascinations of such a march. But just the same, thousands of our people participated in such parades at least twice a year, once on Decoration Day and once when the Národní Hřbitov had its outing, a full-fledged festival. ... But marching to picnics? Why, look here, it was too much effort to walk for two days during the recent streetcar strike. The fare is just a wee nickel, and the car will take you almost to the end of the world, that is the end of the world situated somewhere in the neighborhood of Berwyn. ...

We are not quite sure that the end of the "magnificent" picnic parades is greatly regretted, but we know that our old settlers and those fond of group activities remember them every summer and recall how many miles they had to march with picnic parades...

Donations

Sponsors (\$100—\$499)

Steven Caputo *in memory of*
Randy Mallin
Lillian Huelsman *in memory of*
T. Cepak & J. Ruzicka families
The Meyers Fund

Donors (\$25—\$99)

Anonymous *in memory of Randy Mallin*
Donna Desai
Leora Ekl
Debra & Joseph Garcia *in memory of*
Randy Mallin

James Herter *in memory of*
Randy Mallin
Linda Kostuba *in honor of*
Anna Sophia Mach
Patricia Murphy *in memory of*
Randy Mallin
Karen Russell *in memory of*
Randy Mallin
Carol Sandowski *in memory of*
Randy Mallin

MayFest Donations

Benefactors (\$1000 or more)

Regas W. Chefas

George Drost
Helen & Jerry Gaydusek
Daryl Glowa
Rudolph Jansa
Brad Suster & Hector T. Hernandez

Frank S. Magallon
Judith Mason
David Pimm
Laddie J. & Janice M. Polz
Eugene & Patricia Sikorovsky
JoAnn Starha
Leonard Tufo
Gladys Wheeler

Patrons (\$500—\$999)

CSA Fraternal Life
Duke Dellin

Donors
(\$25—\$99)

Chuck & Martha Cervenka
Yvonne Faggi
Gwendolyn N. & Carl J. Ferguson
Barbara A. Kostka
Members of Lodge DuPage Pioneers
#409
Art & Kathryn Lorenz
Douglas B. & Diane L. Macdonald

Thank You (\$1—\$24)

Bernie & Ellie Babka
Nada Dobias
Mr. & Mrs. Otto Hoffman
Melody C. & Laine P. Sikula

Sponsors (\$100—\$499)

Ronald J. & Arlene M. Borkey

Thank you all for your generosity.

Your donations help preserve and enhance Bohemian National Cemetery.

Děkuji Vám!

MayFest Committee Members

Andy Bultas
Charles & Martha Cervenka
Barbara Hoffman
Marilyn John
Judie Mason
Juli Nelson
Carol Jean Smetana
Marge Sladek Stueckemann

MayFest Underwriters

Duke Dellin - *favors*
George Drost - *entertainment*
Gethsemene Gardens -
pansy plants

Restoration Posters

Chuck Betzold

Grant Writers

Andy Bultas
Juli Nelson

Flag-placement volunteers for Memorial Day

Friends members

Alan Avery
Kathryn & Art Lorenz

CIT employees led by Sheila Kowalski

Connie Davis
Pretty Kalaria
John & Amy Michalec & family
Nitzzy Perez
Victoria Quero
Chris Reich
Tom Weidemann



Live from BNC

The heavy rains in the months of April and May caused flooding in the Chicago area, including at Bohemian National Cemetery. The lagoon overflowed its banks; water ran over the road by the Columbarium and also flooded the area around Gethsemane Gardens. **Duro of Mulroy Demolition and Excavation**, after consulting with **Jerry Gaydusek** and **Chuck Michalek**, installed catch basin systems around the lagoon to alleviate the flooding in both places. He also spread stone on the service road from the garage area to Gethsemane Gardens. **Andy Bultas**, **Chuck Cervenka**, **John Illse**, and **Duro**, checked the drainage of the lagoon and found that the east end drain wasn't functioning. With his digging machine, **Duro** located the drain pipe and discovered it had collapsed. To correct this problem, another catch basin has to be installed. It will be set at a level that will control the height of the lagoon, with an inlet to let the water flow to the catch basin.

Jerry Gaydusek, Chuck Michalek, Andy Bultas, **Chuck Betzold**, John Illse, and Chuck Cervenka have been working in the Crematorium/Columbarium building. The exhaust motor in the morgue was removed, rebuilt, and reinstalled with a second exhaust motor. New signage was hung in the driveway area, new door checks installed on the doors leading to the chapel, and wooden push bars installed on the doors.

The Cemetery hosted many activities in May and June. On the seventh, CSA Fraternal Life held their Join Hands Day at the Cemetery. About 40 members attended to clean the cemetery. **Linda Kostuba** and **Patty Volkman** supervised the cleaning of the Crematorium/Columbarium building. They made charts with what had to be done and volunteers signed their names by the assigned chore. At the end of the day all chores were completed and the building looked wonderful. **Ken Dvorsky** supervised the cleaning of the Gatehouse. Chuck Betzold designated outside areas for clean-up, and 15 large bags of trash were removed. Chuck Michalek and Andy Bultas brought cleaning supplies and equipment to the various work sites.

About twenty people attended the cemetery's annual Mother's Day celebration on May 8th. On May 30th, Bohemian National Cemetery held its annual Memorial Day commemoration in the Ceremony Hall of the Crematorium/Columbarium building. The Colors were posted and **Vera Wilt** and **Angie Bultas** spoke. Children from the **T. G. Masaryk School** in Cicero recited a Czech poem, and the **Half and Half Singers** performed. At the ceremony's conclusion, many people then participated in the Odd Fellows' 92nd Memorial Service at their monument. The Memorial Day events were well attended.

On June 4th the Bohemian National Cemetery's delegate meeting was held at the Gatehouse. On June 8th the Cemetery welcomed a delegation from the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including **Stanislav Kázecký**, Commissioner for Czech Communities Living Abroad, and **Jana Režná**, Consul of the Czech Republic in Chicago. Their tour of the Cemetery was conducted by Chuck and **Martha Cervenka**, Ken Dvorsky, Chuck Michalek, Andy Bultas, and Chuck Betzold. Highlights included the World War II monument, the Crematorium/Columbarium, the Civil War monument, the Spanish War Memorial, the Cermak mausoleum, and the Masaryk Mausoleum, with its Benes and Stepanek wings.

On June 12th, the Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery's tour of the cemetery, led by **Albert Walavich**, was enjoyed by approximately 75 people. Many participants commented on the beauty of the cemetery grounds and statues and on the magnificence of the Crematorium/Columbarium building. Many people who do not have family buried at Bohemian National Cemetery come to visit and marvel at its beauty. Everyone is welcome to come and visit our magnificent Cemetery.

Andy Bultas
Vice-President

Friends of BNC Officer Elections

On August 21st we will elect our 2011-12 officers. We are pleased that all the current officers are willing to serve again. Nominations from the floor are fine if you have the consent of the person..

President Marge Sladek Stueckemann
Vice-President Andy Bultas
Secretary Mary Syrup
Treasurer Juli Nelson
Membership Henrietta Bartizal Pons

Directors

Publicity
Webpage/Newsletter

Martha Cervenka
Chuck Cervenka
Evelyn Krenek Fergle
Helene Schaefer
Carol Jean Smetana

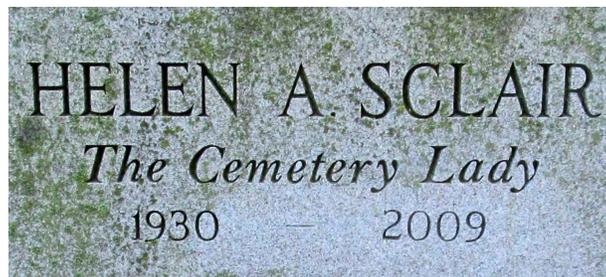
*Friends of Bohemian
National Cemetery*

611 Harvard Lane
Libertyville, IL 60048

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



we're on the web
www.friendsofbnc.org



AN ADVOCATE FOR THE DEAD

Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery Summer Meeting
Sunday, August 21st, at 1:00 p.m. in the
Ceremony Hall of the Crematorium Building at BNC

Join us for a talk by cemetery employee Rob Plummer on "Helen Sclair, Our Cemetery Lady." Helen was a nationally recognized expert on cemeteries, burial practices, and funereal art. Her home reflected her passion: it was a veritable museum of unusual and intriguing historical objects, postcards, and documents. Helen described herself as "an advocate for the dead" and worked tirelessly to identify and preserve old cemeteries. We are especially proud to claim her as the inspiring motivation behind the founding of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery.

Our free program is open to members and non-members. A short business meeting will include the election of officers. Added bonus: A chance to see the Ceremony Hall where the first phase of restoration work will begin later this year. See you at BNC, 5255 N. Pulaski Road, Chicago!