

The Call to Remember

Newsletter - Vol. VI, No. 2

EASTLAND DISASTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mar/Apr 2004

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Prior to the formation of the *Eastland* Disaster Historical Society in 1998, the sole resource available to the public for information regarding the *Eastland* Disaster was George Hilton's authoritative and fact-filled book, *Eastland: Legacy of the Titanic*. (This book can be purchased by clicking on the "Merchandise" link at the bottom of this newsletter.)



As a result of strong collaborations with other people and organizations, we now have several options available via a variety of formats/media:

- Our *award-winning* Internet web site.
- The double *Emmy-award-winning* documentary from WTTW Channel-11 on VHS video.
- The book being written by Jay Bonansinga (available later this year) that describes *what the tragedy was like*.

We also have contracted with a publisher for another book to be released in 2005. And we still hold fast to our dreams of doing a major motion picture, a series of children's books, as well as releasing a song on CD. Stay tuned!

PUBLIC PROGRAM

We will be presenting our *Eastland* Disaster public program at the Elmhurst (Ill.) Public Library on Tuesday, July 27, at 7:00 p.m. The library is located at 125 S. Prospect Avenue. Please call the library at 630-279-8696 for more information.

EDHS RECEIVES AWARD

The *Eastland* Disaster Historical Society received an award from the *Illinois State Historical Society* (ISHS) at the annual awards ceremony sponsored by ISHS. The awards were presented April 24.

"When it comes to documenting and interpreting our history, Illinois publishers, museums, and historical societies continue to push the envelope of excellence," said Awards Chair Russell Lewis of the *Chicago Historical Society*. *"This year's entries in the Association of Illinois Museums and Historical Society (AIMHS) Awards competition reflect highly on the communities and institutions that produced them. Our congratulations to all who participated."*

EDHS received a Certificate of Excellence award for our newsletter, **The Call to Remember**. The ISHS Award Committee declared, *"This highly engaging newsletter, and its electronic counterpart, demonstrates the effectiveness of good design and easy access to make newsletters as an efficient and compelling way to communicate with history-minded audiences about a specific historical event."*

The award received this year is the fourth state award received by EDHS, adding to the two awards from 2001 and the one from 2003.



(David Scott, ISHS President, presents award to Diane Weck, EDHS member since 1999.)

EASTLAND CORNER

Emily Bechman worked at Western Electric where she met and married Frederick Biehl. And even though they both worked for Western Electric, Emily did not join her husband for the excursion and picnic because she did not like the idea. Frederick died on the *Eastland*, not long after they were married. Emily was a bride at 18 and a widow at 19.



(Emily Bechman Biehl.)

A year after the tragedy claimed her first husband, Emily married George Berner. George and his brother, Walter, were also on the *Eastland* when it rolled into the Chicago River. They both survived. George was one of Frederick's best friends.

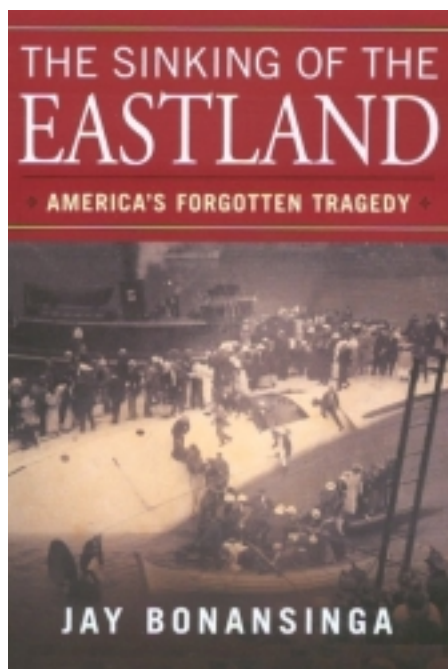


(George and Walter Berner.)

JAY BONANSINGA BOOK UPDATE

On April 23, Jay began his publicity and promotional tour for the upcoming release of his book, **THE SINKING OF THE EASTLAND: America's Forgotten Tragedy**. Jay addressed the attendees of the 105th Annual Meeting of the *Illinois State Historical Society* (ISHS). The audience, comprised primarily of historians and professors, listened intently as Jay described his approach to writing a book about the *Eastland* Disaster. Jay's captivating discussion, titled *Restless Ghosts, a Bloody Eye, and Eggs in My Coffee*, was followed by an energetic question and answer session.

We have been working with Jay for over three years now. As we near the October 5 release date of the book, it is very exciting to see the book coming together, including proof sheets, title, and jacket.



In addition to being a great book to read (once you start, you won't be able to put it down!), it will make a great gift for family members and friends! The book will be available through EDHS.

FEATURED ORGANIZATION

The largest number of victims of the *Eastland* Disaster is buried in Chicago at the **Bohemian National Cemetery**. The Cemetery was chartered in 1877 by the State of Illinois as a not-for-profit organization for the purpose of providing a facility for interment, cremation, and inurnment of the remains of deceased persons. Originally organized as a last resting place for persons of Czech birth, extraction, or descent, it is currently operated on a non-sectarian basis: While it historically served (and currently serves) people of Czech and Slovak birth or extraction, today it also serves people of other ethnic backgrounds.

Spanning 126 acres on Chicago's northwest side (at Pulaski Road and Foster Avenue), it has been known as a beautiful *Garden of the Dead* and is a Chicago landmark. Rich with genealogical information, the cemetery is the final home for over 116,000 people.

Recently, a new partner/peer organization has been formed. Known as *Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery*, their mission is to **Promote** the history, **Enhance** the beauty, and **Preserve** the artistic heritage of the Cemetery.

Information regarding *Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery* is available by calling or emailing Marge Sladek Stueckemann (847-362-9036 or mdstueck@aol.com).



(The Fenik family was completely wiped out. They are among the dozens of *Eastland* Disaster victims buried at the Cemetery.)

CMS NEWS

The *Chicago Maritime Society* has reserved an evening on the Brig *Niagara* on July 29 from 6-9 p.m. (Docking will be at the Columbia Yacht Club.) CMS will follow this event with a Chicago River cruise (David Solzman narrating) on August 29. For more information, call CMS at 312-421-9096.

89TH ANNIVERSARY EVENT

To commemorate the 89th anniversary of the *Eastland* Disaster of 1915, EDHS is hosting a respectful observance of Chicago's greatest tragedy. The anniversary commemoration will be held the afternoon of Saturday, July 24. The day will include two functions.

1:30 p.m. Ceremony - to be held at the northeast corner of Wacker Drive and LaSalle Street (open to the public at no charge). Bring an umbrella if the weather looks threatening!

2:00 p.m. Program - to be held at *Bob Chimm's Crab House of Chicago* (tickets required - see order form included with this newsletter). Our featured speaker will be Jay Bonansinga, who will discuss his new book (see article in column 1).

Imagine a day visiting with many others who share one very important thing in common - a personal, family connection to the *Eastland* Disaster.

This will truly be a memorable day for all who attend. **Register now** for either or both functions - **seating at the 2:00 p.m. program will be limited!** Make your reservation(s) quickly and receive a discount! Annual dues-paying members of EDHS will enjoy a 25% discount on the ticket price.