

THE GERMAN SOCIETY OF MARYLAND

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VEREINSNACHRICHTEN

JUNE 2012 ISSUE #84

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Bärbel Otto

WERNER PRESIDENT

Thomas A. Werner was elected president of the Society by the Board of Directors at its meeting on May 10. He succeeds The Rev. H. J. Siegfried Otto who has served the past two years. Mr. Werner is an experienced leader in the German American community. In addition to having served as president of Der Deutsch-amerikanisch Bürgerverein von Maryland, (the umbrella organization of which our Society is a member), he has served as president of The Baltimore Kickers Club and the Club Fidelitas. For the past two years he has been our Society's vice president. His knowledge of the workings of the German American community is unparalleled; his contacts within and outside our Society are an invaluable resource.

Tom's administrative background should make the Society function smoothly and efficiently.

DIRECTORS: MEINZER, SMOOT, WITTSTADT

At the annual meeting of members on April 13, Gerhard Meinzer, Anton G. Smoot and Kurt D. Wittstadt were elected directors for a three year term. At a meeting of the Directors on May 10, the following officers were elected for a term of one year:

President: Thomas A. Werner
1st Vice Pres: Shelley D. Arnold
2nd Vice Pres: Dr. Armin G. Mruck
Treasurer: Theodore J. Potthast, Jr., Esq.
Secretary: Christel van der Berg

ANNUAL PICNIC

Our Society has joined with all the organizations belonging to the Bürgerverein von Maryland in sponsoring **THE GREAT GERMAN FAMILY PICNIC** on Sunday, June 24 at Kurtz's Beach. A brochure with complete details has been mailed to our members: on page 7 of that brochure is a form for your use in ordering tickets. We are working hard to revive the ancient German American tradition of the summer picnic: it is our hope that this will be the best picnic in the past 100 years! The brochure tells the story. If you need brochures to pass on to your family or friends, call our office. The key is to order the tickets NOW. Don't delay. The deadline for ticket money is Saturday, June 16. No admittance without a ticket, except for those 6 or under who are free. Bring lots of children: special events for them. Bring friends and family: make it a family reunion. Great music, food, drink and games. Spaten beer from Munich.

HAVE A VIDEO CAMERA?

Do you have a video camera? We want to make a short documentary of this year's Great German Family Picnic. So please bring your camera to the picnic and shoot some scenes. We hope to get a lot of photographers whose work can be pasted together to create a memory of an event which can form a part of our German Heritage. Take the movies and we'll find a way to put them together.

KALENDER

- June 14 German ship Hessen arrives:
Sailabration: War of 1812
- June 24 The Great German Family Picnic at
Kurtz's Beach
- July 28-29 German Festival at Timonium
- Sept 18 Banquet: The Society for History
of the Germans in Maryland
- Sept. 30 Ecumenical Service
- Nov. 3 Annual Awards Banquet
- Nov. 24-25 Christkindlmarkt at Zion Church

Visit the German Society's website:
www.germansociety-md.com

Articles from many past newsletters are posted on our website. Dr. Maureen Helinski maintains the site. "Pioneers in Service", the history of our Society, can be found on our web site. For more local German-American events, check the web site of the Deutsch-amerikanischer Bürgerverein von Maryland: www.md-germans.org

You are invited to add articles about your German ancestors to the website conducted by our director, Shelley Arnold; (germanmarylanders.org) and to register to visit and participate in the website "Der Wecker", founded by our member, Walt Mathers.

VOLUNTEER FOR FESTIVAL

One of the fun things you get to do as a German Society member is to "work the crowd" at our booth at the German Festival. We need at least 16 people to stay at our booth, hand out literature and talk to the people who stop by. Some of the people want to ask questions, but most of them just want to talk and tell you about their own German heritage. Once in a while somebody wants to join the German Society and you give them an application and if they want to pay their dues on the spot, take the money and turn it in. You get to meet a lot of nice people. We would like you to select a two-hour stint, beginning at noon, 2, 4 or 6 pm on Saturday or Sunday. If you can only do it for one hour, that's OK too. The point it: join in. Participate. Let your Germanity shine forth. To sign up, call our office and leave a message and someone will get back to you. If you have a question, call our president, Tom Werner at 410-825-7166. He's a very nice fellow and will be glad to give you some tips.

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

At the last meeting of the board of directors, two new officers were elected: myself as president and Shelley Arnold as first vice president. I have known Shelley for many years, both professionally and socially and I know she is a valuable asset to the Society. You should also know her as the driving spirit behind the endeavor to have October declared German American month in Maryland.

Siegfried Otto and Merl Arp did a splendid job as officers of the Society and I'm sure they will continue to contribute as Directors. Their vision and hard work have helped us organize, expand our efforts and move forward.

Attending the student awards ceremony on May 20th was an enlightening experience for me. It was rewarding to see all those bright young faces. We will continue to support gifted students of the German language.

It is pleasing to see that we have received numerous contributions to the Heritage Fund Program. This is a fairly new venture to meet one of the purposes of the Society and is doing very well. I encourage future contributions to keep this worthy program on track.

I'm truly sorry that I won't be seeing you at The Great German Family Picnic. because of a long-standing commitment. June is a very busy month for all of us, but this is surely an event you should plan to attend if you are able.

The 112th German Festival is quickly approaching and we are looking for volunteers for our Culture Stand. A 2-hour shift at the stand can be very rewarding to you and is a great help to our Society.

I look forward to working with and for the German Society during the coming year.

THOMAS A. WERNER, PRESIDENT

DON'T BE SURPRISED

...at The Great German Family Picnic when someone taps you on the shoulder and says: "you're drafted". We will need judges for the games, wranglers to round up the little ones, helpers to move things around, pass out song sheets and spread cheer.

VERNON H. WIESAND, ESQ., 92

Vernon Wiesand, past president and a lifetime director of our Society, died on May 26 at a nursing home in Salisbury at age 92. Vernon was the leader of our Society for many years in 1970's and early 1980's. At the time the Society had less than 200 members, but Vernon had a vision: he assembled a team which would expand the Society into the future: Fred Wehrenberg, Harry Gruel, Don Tillman, Dan Brooke and Ted Potthast. Vernon took the Society's office out of its tiny room in St. Paul Place and into spacious rooms at Calvert and Eager Streets, in a building which he and his brother William owned and which they gave to the Society at a nominal rent; and later moved our offices into space in a prestigious mansion on Mt. Vernon Place which was once his personal residence. Vernon acquired the title "judge" when he served as a magistrate hearing criminal cases before Maryland established its District Court system. He also represented the City of Baltimore on the staff of Simon Sobeloff, the City Solicitor who later became a federal judge. He was appointed to the Parks and Recreation Board by Mayor William Donald Schaefer and later became president of the board. While living at #15 W. Mt. Vernon Place, Vernon served as the president of the Mt. Vernon-Belvedere Improvement Association. While president of our Society, he presided over the printing of the second edition of our history, *Pioneers in Service*. He worked closely with Dr. Carrie Mae Zintl in efforts to preserve the history and heritage of German Americans and was active with Dr. Zintl, the long-time president of The Society for the History of the Germans in Maryland, When Vernon found it necessary to curtail his workload and move to Ocean City, he was honored by our Society which elected him to a lifetime directorship. He is survived by his wife of 59 years, Shirley, who played a large role in assisting him in matters of our Society, by a son and two daughters. His brother William, also a prominent member of our Society, died in 2009.

Mr. Wiesand had an important and integral part in preserving our Society in difficult times. His contributions are significant in the history of the German Society of Maryland. He was a loyal member, a powerful leader and a generous benefactor. He will live on in our hearts and memories.

DONATE TO OUR HERITAGE FUND

Keep in mind our Heritage Fund: the special fund established by our Society specifically for the preservation of our German American heritage. 100%

of our Board of Directors have already made contributions. The fund has collected nearly \$15,000.

WAR OF 1812 COMMEMORATION

Maryland plans many events to commemorate our state's role in the victory over the British in the war which began in 1812 and culminated with the redcoats turning their backs and going home after their unsuccessful attempt to burn Baltimore. One of the events which brought the war to an end was the Battle of North Point in which General John Stricker led the American troops and earned the title "Hero of the Battle of North Point." Stricker was vice president of The German Society of Maryland and was one of those who signed the incorporation papers when the General Assembly granted us our charter in 1817. Our Society is making plans to honor General Stricker by the commissioning of a medal bearing his likeness. We will soon be soliciting bids from artists and firms capable of designing and producing the commemorative medal.

ZION GERMAN CLASSES

The Deutsche Sprachschule of Zion Church was established in 1929 and opens its 83rd year with registration on Saturday, Sept. 8, 2012 at 10 a.m. Classes commence on Sat. Sept 15 and continue through Sat. May 4, 2013. For beginning, intermediate and advanced students. For information call 410-727-3939. You may send emails to zionbaltimore@verizon.net; or check the website at www.zionbaltimore.org

The school also offers a conversation program for advanced students on Monday nights from 6 to 8 p.m. beginning July 2 through August 8. The tuition is \$75. Contact the school principal, Eva Maus Kelleher at 410-377-9508. or email to omchen@aol.com

A POLITICAL ENDORSEMENT?

Our last newsletter mentioned that the name Hoyer, meaning "Guardian" in German, has a long history in Maryland; and that the politician Steny Hoyer holds a "safe" seat in congress. We received a complaint that our Society was endorsing a politician. The article did not do so. It simply pointed out the heritage of the congressman. Since the Johnson amendment to the Internal Revenue Code prohibits a 501(c)(3) organization from political activity, we do not endorse any political candidates. We may occasionally commend a politician for supporting a project in which we have an interest, such as those members of the Maryland legislature who supported the recent bill to name October as German American month.

FOREIGN BORN DIRECTORS

While many of our members were born outside the United States, our Board of Directors contains a large number of foreign-born. Those born in present day Germany are: Dandridge Brooke, Brigitte Fessenden, Eva Kelleher, Gerhard Meinzer, Dr. Armin Mruck, Anton Smoot and Christel van der Berg,

The Rev. H. J. Siegfried Otto was born in what is now Poland but when he was born it was Silesia, a part of Germany. Bernard Penner and Paul Otto were born in Canada. Dr. Mohamed Esa was born in Israel.

Dan Brooke was born while his mother was vacationing in Germany, but he grew up in the USA and became an officer in the Merchant Marine during WWII. His father was German. The parents of his deceased wife, Isolde, were both born in Germany.

OUR SOCIETY: WHO ARE WE?

Immigration from Germany to the USA has come to a halt and it's not likely that any numbers of German speaking immigrants will come here in the future. So what you see here is what you have. How will this situation affect our Society?

1. Decline of immigration means that our membership will be coming from persons who wish to be loyal to their heritage, those born in the USA most of whom will not have the ability to speak German.
2. We will need to make a serious investment in preserving and promoting the culture and heritage.
3. Teaching of the German language is on the decline, even in the German strongholds in the midwest. With the exception of a few Maryland counties, the teaching of German in public schools is becoming extinct. Our Society needs to help the teachers in the public schools to promote the culture and heritage and provide incentives to the students.
4. German language studies are more likely to survive in the private schools. Ways must be found to encourage them to retain German in the curriculum.
5. It has been said that a knowledge of the language is an absolute essential to an understanding of the culture. Since we have little control over the school programs and German is declining in the schools, we must find a way to promote the culture and heritage independent of language studies. This can be accomplished by spreading the knowledge of the major contributions made in the USA by "the German element," a term which we find in German American publications of earlier days.

CREW OF THE HESSEN

The Buergerverein will entertain 50 members of the crew of the German frigate Hessen when it is in the Port of Baltimore June 13-19 at a reception in a local hotel. The Hessen is here for the commencement of the commemoration of the War of 1812, America's "Second War of Independence". Another event is scheduled at the Zion Church, with services in German and English followed by a reception for the crew of the ship and any of the public who wish to attend.

HERITAGE IN GERMANY

We hear from various sources that the people in Germany are in danger of losing their heritage. Many do not know who their grandparents and great grandparents are. For years after WWII, Germans did not want to talk about the past. They did not want to bring up the bad things which happened during the years of national socialism. Even among people who immigrated to the USA after the war, there was a reluctance to talk about the past. We have heard that among some Germans there is a resentment towards the numerous monuments which are ubiquitous in Germany. Today's Germans do not have the curiosity about heritage which we find here in the USA among German Americans. At our annual meeting, in a talk by Rüdiger Lentz, the curator of the German American Heritage Museum in D.C., he mentioned that America may be the repository of the German heritage. Our own Society pre-dates the existence of modern Germany by nearly 100 years. Americans of German extraction are not reluctant to talk about "unpleasant" aspects of German history because those things are not a part of our German American heritage. Regardless, we have our own German American heritage, which is a proud one, and it is up to organizations such as ours to preserve it

This is a good reason for supporting the German American Heritage Museum in Washington. Its mission is consistent with our own. It stresses the accomplishments of the Germanic peoples after they arrived in the USA and the part they played in making our country a great world leader.

EXPERIENCE GEMUETLICHKEIT! PLAN TO ATTEND THE GREAT GERMAN FAMILY PICNIC; COME TO THE GERMAN FESTIVAL IN TIMONIUM.

DORCHESTER REPORT

We received this report from the Dorchester Co. faculty: On May 1, 100 students from Dorchester High and Dorchester Middle Schools had a cultural day. In the morning flamingo dancers performed and taught the students some Spanish dance steps. In the afternoon the German Society of MD President, Pastor H. J. Siegfried Otto and his family gave a presentation of German history and culture. Pastor Otto told of his experiences as a boy in Germany and spoke about the division between East and West Germany. The students viewed a video of the fall of the Berlin Wall and asked questions. The students were awed and inspired by the number of languages spoken by Pastor Otto's two grandchildren. Pastor Otto brought German foods, Stollen and Lebkuchen which the students enjoyed and returned for seconds. The next day the students discussed the Berlin Wall and the East-West division. The day was successful, raised the students' cultural awareness and sparked their curiosity about other countries and cultures.

WEIHNACHTSSTOLLEN, MARZIPAN UND LEDERHOSEN

Responding to the invitation by the German teachers Mrs. Jennifer Kraeer and Ms. Atille Kilmon, my two daughters Ulrike Otto and Susanne Otto-Bomio together with grandchildren Nicholas (10), Isabelle (7) and I attended the cultural event sponsored by North Dorchester High School. Ulrike and Susanne wrote the following accounts:

REPORT OF ULRIKE OTTO

Arriving at North Dorchester High School, we were met by a friendly group of about 100 students, ages 13 to 17 who had just finished a pizza lunch. After our introductions, our father immediately won their hearts by suggesting they may want to have some German desserts which we had set up on a table. The Lebkuchen, Mozart Kugeln and the marzipan balls were a big hit; one boy couldn't get enough of the marzipan when he asked "What is this, anyway?" The desserts at the beginning of our presentation served us well, as our father gave a brief overview of German history. We were impressed by their undivided attention. After our father gave his historical sketch which included Hitler and the holocaust, we (the daughters) talked about how life in Germany is now and that despite this history, German youth today are much the same as American kids. We also stressed that the Lederhosen which Nicholas was wearing is not what kids were wearing everyday either!

We then presented a video about the Berlin Wall which highlighted the Allies/American effort. After the video we offered more desserts and everyone took seconds-- "This stuff is really good" and "I never knew about the Wall thing"

were the two comments that led us to conclude that we managed to make it a worthwhile event.

REPORT OF SUSANNE OTTO

During our annual visit to Baltimore to see Oma and Opa, Nicholas (10) and Isabelle (7), my sister Uli and I joined Opa to visit North Dorchester High School. We live in Zurich and the children attend a bilingual Montessori school.

It was a long trip. The first highlight for the kids was crossing the Bay Bridge. The next highlight was eating lunch at a real American diner, with hot dogs on the menu. The diner was at a railroad crossing which did not have a barrier. This was quite unknown to us.

Then on to the school. It seemed huge to us. It had two sets of buildings and was truly in the middle of nowhere, Nothing to be seen anywhere close by. Only fields! That is hard to come by in Europe.

Nico remarked that American schools have only one floor and are quite spread out. Plus there is a cafeteria where kids can bring their own lunch. And the cafeterias have TV screens! Then Opa began to speak and we all introduced ourselves. It was funny to speak in front of lots of teenagers. Isabelle remarked that the kids were very polite. They even clapped and smiled!

Next Opa and Uli described some things about Germany, plus we watched a film about the Berlin Wall. After asking Nico and Isa if they learned anything about Germany, Nico replied that Germany was the second biggest producer of beer (after Ireland). Nico was struck by the documentary about the Wall and the methods used to keep East Germans inside the wall.

Nico thought at first he might get laughed at because of his Lederhosen, but instead he got compliments. The American kids were impressed by Nico and Isa being bilingual and they were hospitable. Upon leaving, Nico and Isa were flabbergasted: they had never seen so many yellow school buses waiting outside to pick up the students.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would like to say that it was an enjoyable experience for all. The students were attentive, asked questions and enjoyed the goodies from the Christkindlmarket and donated by the German Society. My family had a great time at the all-day excursion. I would like to encourage the Society to support the student exchange program to Germany pioneered by the two German teachers, Jennifer Kraeer and Atille Kilmon, now in its fifth year. So far 35 students and four teachers have participated in the program.

(Note: both Mrs. Kraeer and Ms. Kilmon are members of our Society. They studied German at McDaniel College under the tutelage of our director, Dr. Mohamed Esa.)

H. J. Siegfried Otto

FRANCE, GERMANY MIRROR USA

As German Americans we have always held an interest in the goings on in the Fatherland and its environs, so a comparison of the current status is natural for us. Both the US and Europe are in the midst of a financial crisis and the politicians are seeking diverse solutions. Nicolas Sarkozy of France has been supplanted by the socialist Francois Hollande. The socialists campaigned on solving the crisis by spending their way out of it via the "stimulus" theory while the Germans under Angela Merkel are advocating austerity. The same approaches are taken by American political parties. The French follow the lead of the Democrats and the Germans take the cut-back theory of the Republicans.

Germany has the strongest economy in Europe, boosted largely by exporting big ticket items such as cars and kitchens to the socialist countries of Russia and China. Those economies make certain people wealthy: Time magazine reported recently that 70 of the richest members of the Chinese parliament have a combined net worth of 80 billion dollars; they can buy a lot of well-made German products.

AN ANTI GERMAN SPIRIT?

Is there a hostility toward modern Germany in America today? You would think so if you heard Donald Trump on the Greta van Susteren show on May 7th. Claimed Trump: Germany could not take over the world militarily, so it's trying to do so today economically. The reason for the creation of the European Union and the Euro was to declare economic war on the USA and shift the world's economic power from the USA to Europe. The union of Britain, Germany and France would build the Airbus and take dominance in the airplane industry away from America's Boeing. But with the socialists taking over France, says Trump, the European Union will crumble and the Euro will disappear; the member states will return to their own currencies. Was Trump right? For us German Americans who retain strong sentiments towards the Fatherland, we hope Donald Trump's analysis is not correct.

WHY GERMANY EXCELS

Shawn Fiedler Dippel, a member of our Society and an economic philosopher residing in Baltimore County, explained why the Germans are becoming dominant in world commerce. It's because of the nature of the people. They are hard-headed, slow-moving and

don't make mistakes. They don't rush in, but carefully study every move. She quotes as an example the pharmaceutical industry where the Germans seem to be edging out the US: they see a need, develop a product, make sure it works, won't hurt anybody and then get it promptly to the market before the rest of the world knows what happened. Her philosophy: Germany is a good place to invest.

GETTING THE NEWSLETTER OUT

Most of the time, there's an event which the Society needs to publicize and distribute in a timely manner. For this issue it's a message soliciting ticket sales to the picnic; there's a deadline. We need to give Kurtz's a count on ticket sales. We need to get workers to help. There always seems to be sense of urgency about something.. When we are under the gun, we don't always have time to pass the text around to have it proof-read by several people; and so a few typos slip by. The question is: do we delay and strive for technical perfection, or do we tolerate a few slips. The answer seems to be for us to have a core of readers to whom texts can be faxed or sent via email and who can respond promptly. If you would like to be a part of the "news-letter committee", email us and sign up to help.

MANY THANKS

...to **Lila O'Meara Judkins** for her generosity in sponsoring the Grimm's Fairy Tale Puppet Show for the children at The Great German Family Picnic.

HISTORICAL REPORTS AVAILABLE

The official publication of our Sister Society, The Society for the History of the Germans in Maryland, has been published periodically since 1883. The reports contain many gems of German American history. Past copies are available at bargain prices. Call our office for information.

RECRUIT A NEW MEMBER

The activities and good works of our Society are dependent upon our members and we must constantly be on the look-out for new members. If you know of a prospective member, give him or her an application for membership. Call our office for a supply of membership forms.

BIG BAND MUSIC AT PICNIC

The 21 piece band of the Dockenspielers of York, PA will bring joy to your hearts. Bring the children so the German American culture may be absorbed indelibly into their fertile minds and souls. Plato said it over 2,700 years ago, in his Republic:

"Music is the most decisive factor in one's upbringing. It is above all rhythm and attunement that sink deep into the soul and take strongest hold upon it."

How well do the older ones among us remember the music at the family gatherings and festivities of our youth. The words of the folk songs we learned as children are sometimes the only pieces we recall of the language of our ancestors. Plan to bring all the children you can load into our cars and bring them to our Great German Family Picnic on June 24. They'll remember it until they also become the old-timers.

TEACHERS LOSE DUES EXEMPTION

The Society's Board of Directors on May 10 voted to revoke the exemption from paying dues which teachers have enjoyed for the past 25 years. In an effort to induce teachers of German to become members of our Society, the Board, under President Donald Tillman, invited German teachers to be members of our Society, exempt from paying dues. The theory was that the German teachers were working to carry out one of the goals of our Society, i.e. to foster the study of the German language. The motion to require teachers to pay the full \$25 annual dues was modified to grant the teachers a reduced rate of \$15, which becomes effective for the year 2013.

THE ALL-GERMAN CONCERT

It was a German experience for 30 German language students at local high schools and colleges. Their tickets were paid for by our Society and by Club Fidelitas. Twenty one of our directors and members supported the event by their presence. The concert presented works by Beethoven, von Weber and Schumann, all German composers; conducted by Jun Maerkl and featuring violinist Arabella Steinbacher, both Germans. It was the first professional concert for our life member Sara Wash, age 10, who leaned over to her grandfather at the intermission and asked: "Opa, is it half-time?" It was an especially pleasant experience, especially for the students who soaked up the German culture and part of their heritage.

Tickets were purchased through the Bürgerverein, Tom Werner, chairman of the event.

AN ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER?

Should the German Society create an electronic newsletter? Not in lieu of our Vereinsnachrichten, but as a supplement. Printing and mailing costs for this present newsletter seems constantly to be going up. While we want to communicate with our members more often, costs and resources make it difficult. More than half of the members have internet connections. This means we can publish news reports on our website for all to read; or we could send the members the news via e-mails right to your home computer. Going one step further, we can publish "letters to the editor" and also deputize members to submit their articles and ideas. We're not encouraging a "chat room", but rather something of substance in which members can provide well-thought-out words of wisdom to one another. Let's think about it.

SENTIMENTAL FAVORITE

German American Marylanders who bet their emotions in the Preakness had a horse to put their money on: BODEMEISTER. It sounds like a good German name, but when we hastened to look up "Bode" in Cassell's German dictionary, the word was not to be found. All German names mean something, so our next research resource was "German American Names: by our deceased member, Prof. George Jones, where we found some clues. We found "Bod, Bode (messenger) see also Boede". The name "Boede" gave a meaning: wooden tub. A couple of other names shed some light: Bodefild = swampy field; and Bodemeyer - farmer in the swamp. So perhaps a horse named Bodemeister would be a good mudder, the master of a wet track, Better still, lets's leave the etymology to one of the German professors among our membership Bodemester left the gate at Pimlico as the favorite, with odds at 2-1, but lost "by a neck" to I'll Have Another, after leading the race up to the last second. We lost our \$2 bet.

OUR BUBBLE IS POPPED

All our research is for naught. A report from our Society's secretary, Christel van der Berg, based upon competent authority, has it that the owner of Bodemeister named the horse after his son, Bode.... bursting our hopes of a German connection,