

# THE GERMAN SOCIETY OF MARYLAND

Founded 1783 Incorporated by Act of the General Assembly of Maryland, Chapter 100 Feb 3, 1818

## VEREINSNACHRICHTEN

APRIL 2012 ISSUE #82

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### **OFFICE MANAGER**

Bärbel Otto

### **MAJOR GIFT BY AWALT**

Our Society is grateful to Jane Awalt for her donation of \$25,000 to the education fund honoring her deceased husband, Robert Awalt. Along with her prior gifts to the Robert Awalt Fund, Mrs. Awalt's gifts total over \$41,000 and constitute the largest gifts to our Society since its founding in 1783. A ceremony commemorating Robert Awalt and thanking Jane Awalt is being planned. Mrs. Awalt is a former director of our Society. When her husband contracted Parkinson's disease, Mrs. Awalt was compelled to leave our board and restrict her activities to care for her husband. After he died, Jane wrote a book on caring for Parkinson's patients which received accolades from the specialists at Johns Hopkins University Medical School. The proceeds of her book went toward Parkinson's research. She has maintained her interest in our Society and has been a very devoted member.

### **OFFICIAL NOTICE**

### **ANNUAL MEETING**

**APRIL 13, 2012, 6:30 p.m.**

In the dining room of Zion Church, City Hall Plaza, Baltimore, MD the German Society of Maryland will hold its annual meeting of the membership to receive the committee reports and elect directors. All members are urged to attend.

The meeting will be preceded by a free German dinner for members and their families: they are urged to bring prospective members. The meeting will

commence after dinner, but not later than 8 p.m.

Contributions (voluntary) may be made at the door.

So that we may insure adequate food and drink, please call or write with your name and the number who will attend with you.

Phone: 410-685-0450

E-mail: barbelotto@verizon.net

Members are urged to bring desserts.

### **PLEASE CALL IF YOU'RE COMING**

Please come to our annual meeting, but please let us know you're coming. We have to purchase food and drink and we want to make sure we have enough. If people who haven't called show up, there may not be enough for everyone and some may go hungry. It's not fair. Be courteous.

### **THANKS TO GERHARD**

Our Society again extends thanks to Gerhard Meinzer for substantial additional gifts which he has recently made. We have also received many gifts to our Heritage Fund, including a gift from each one of our directors. They wish to lead by example and we hope our members will be inspired to contribute to our educational and cultural projects.

### **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

A message from President H. J. Siegfried Otto appears on page 3.

**KALENDER**

- April 13 Annual membership meeting
- April 28 German night at Meyerhoff
- May 6 AGAS party at Blob's Park
- May 20 High school and college awards
- May 28 Westminster City anniversary
- June 24 The Great German Family Picnic  
at Kurtz's Beach
- July 28-29 German Festival Timonium Fairgrounds  
(air conditioned)

Visit the German Society's website:

[www.germansociety-md.com](http://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](http://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](http://germanmarylanders.org)) and to register to visit and participate in the website "Der Wecker", founded by our member, Walt Mathers.

**CONGRATULATIONS...**

to our director, **Betty Niemann**, on her re-election for a third term as president of the Baltimore Kickers. Betty had previously served as president of the Edelweiss Club.

to our lifetime member **Katie Walsh**, for her first place among 80 regional finalists in the junior high school Scrabble tournament in Washington; she advances to the national finals in Orlando later this month. Kate is in 6th grade at Notre Dame Preparatory School in Towson.

**AGAS FUND RAISER: MAY 6**

Our Society belongs to AGAS: Association of German American Societies of Greater Washington. Our director, Dr. James Schaub represents us and is an officer of AGAS. The May 6 event is AGAS' sole fund raiser and it needs the funds. Please support AGAS by attending. Good food, beer, vendors and fun.

**ARNOLD REPORTS ON BILL**

Shelley Arnold, a director of our Society and the leader of the campaign for a legislative bill declaring October to be German American month in Maryland, reported as follows:

*"It is with deep regret that I report that our bill did not make it out of committee. I believe that says a great deal about the legislature and how they feel. I will be going back again next year for a German American Heritage Month. I believe it is important to our and future generations that contributions by German Marylanders are acknowledged. I hope you will all be on board next year to go again.*

Many have asked about the already declared months. There are three and they are:

- Black History Month in February*
- Women's History Month in March*
- Hispanic Heritage Month September*

*We should receive the same respect and acknowledgment that the other groups have. It is well earned by the German Marylanders for their contributions.*

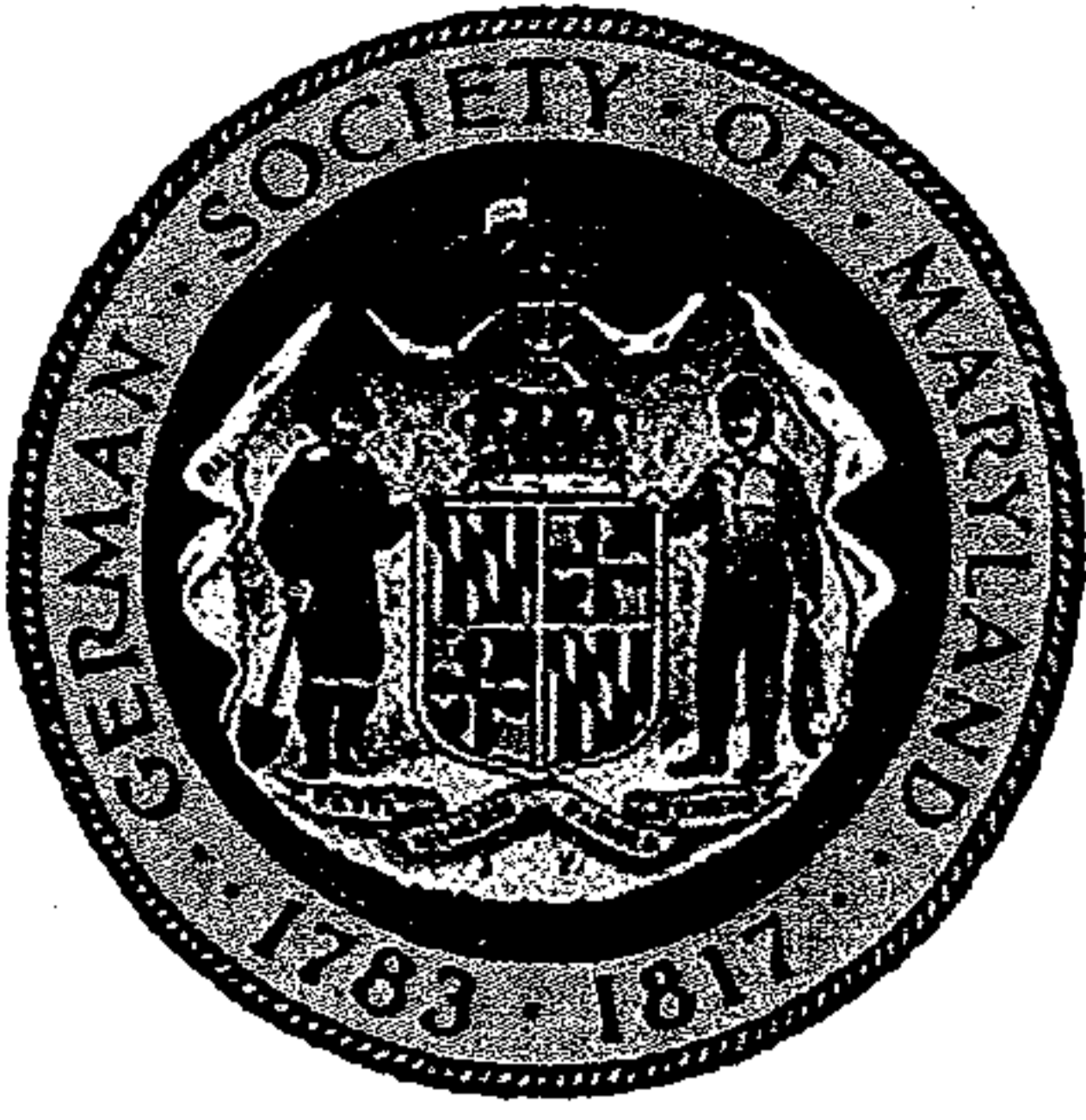
*I am very disappointed. I hope you will continue to contact your legislators throughout the year, not just during the session. I don't know what it will take, but it will happen. I hope you will continue to support this endeavor."*

**BREAKING NEWS UPDATE FROM SHELLEY ARNOLD**  
At 11:30 a.m. on Tuesday, April 3, 2012, the Senate voted 42-0 to move the German American Heritage bill. Your emails and calls helped move this bill. Now we go to the House. This will be more difficult because the Chairman is still sitting on HB102. I cannot tell you how happy I am with this vote.

It is true the session ends on Monday and I know some big ticket items like budgets and table games will keep them busy, but we can only hope. We need to work on the House side now. Call your delegate and tell them that SB42 was passed out of Senate and moving to the house to give it a favorable vote.

**DORCHESTER EVENT MAY 1**

The Otto family will represent our Society at an event to expose the students of Dorchester High School in Cambridge, MD to some elements of German culture. The event is sponsored by the school's German language teacher, a member of our Society. Our president, Siegfried Otto will attend the event with his daughter and grandchildren who will be visiting from Germany; the children in lederhosen and dirndl. Our Society will supply the students with a taste of Germany: lebkuchen, candies and cakes.



Founded 1783

# The German Society of Maryland

P.O. Box 22585 • Baltimore, Maryland 21203 • 410.685.0450  
www.germansociety-md.com

Dear Members of the German Society,

Come to the Annual Meeting and Participate

Our annual meeting will be held in the dining hall of Zion Church on April 13, 2012 at 6:30 p.m. Please enter at the side door, directly into the dining hall in the lane, either from the parking lot at the church or from Holliday Street.

Cold cuts, salads and bread will be catered by Old World Delicatessen & Bakery. We will provide beverages (beer, wine, sodas and coffee). We are asking our members to bring a dessert to share. A free will offering is appreciated as you enter and register. Please call our office if you plan to come and notify Bärbel Otto at 410-685-0450. The meeting will start after dinner around 8 p.m.

This year we invited Ms. Rachel Trageser, a scholarship recipient of our society who studied last year at the University of Salzburg, Austria. We will hear greetings from Ms Leah Dignan a highschool student from Fallston Highschool who is this year's winner of the Gerhard Meinzer Scholarship and who will spend time in Germany this summer.

We have also invited Mr. Rüdiger Lentz, executive director of the German American Heritage Museum in Washington D.C. Mr. Lentz will give a 15 minute address.

There will be reports from the president, the treasurer, Mr. Theodore Potthast, the education committee, chaired by Mrs. Maureen Helinski, and the nomination committee, chaired by Mrs. Brigitte Fessenden.

In 2011 we welcomed 61 new members, 13 of whom are students from one class of Loyola Highschool. In addition about 40 gift memberships were received for 2011. Our thanks go to all donors to the Society. Highlights will be reported at the meeting.

Two prominent members of the German American community passed away: Mr. Wolfgang Oehme, a nationally acclaimed garden architect whose obituary was noted in New York, Washington, Baltimore, and Towson. This year we also bid farewell to the beloved Alfred A. Zeller, musician, soccer player, one of the founding members of the Baltimore Kickers, and the honoree of the 2010 Awards Banquet as an outstanding German Marylander.

I hope that many of you will respond to this invitation and announce your coming (410-685-0450).

Looking forward to see you,

H. J. Siegfried Otto, President

**WOLFGANG WALTER OEHME**

May 18, 1930 - December 15, 2011

A long-time member of our Society and an honoree at one of our Society's awards banquets, Wolfgang was a world-famous landscape architect. He was born in Germany and lived in Chemnitz until he emigrated to the USA. His fame arose from his use of grasses in landscapes; grass was featured in two beautiful "cocktail table" books which he published, which received international notoriety. Wolfgang was friendly and unassuming; he often attended functions of our Society and was approachable by all. Although his primary venue of work was in our nation's capital where he maintained his offices, he had major projects: the length of Hudson Parkway in New York City. He was called back by his native Chemnitz, after it was liberated from communism and its unpleasant name of Karl Marx Stadt, to revive a famous city park. He performed landscaping for Baltimore County on Goucher Boulevard and in his retirement he volunteered to restructure the Washington Avenue park at the Courthouse. He could be seen early in the morning bending over and weeding the Courthouse gardens, as his hobby. His home on W. Joppa Road was surrounded by grasses so tall that they nearly hid his home from view. Wolfgang was introduced to our Society by his friend and our director, Dr. David Denisch. He became a devoted and loyal member to the end. Detailed obituaries appeared in the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Baltimore Sun and locally in the Towson Times. We expect to post them on our Society's website. Our president, The Rev. Siegfried Otto, visited him during his last days in the Gilcrest Hospice.

**ALFRED ANDREAS ZELLER**

May 21, 1924 - Feb. 11, 2012

Al Zeller, a member of our Society and the honoree at our 2010 awards banquet, died after a lengthy illness; he was on dialysis for several years. Al was born in Germany, married a Baltimore girl who was visiting relatives there and shortly thereafter came to Maryland. He was a professional tool and die maker when he came to America and instantly found employment. He was also an accomplished musician who founded his own band, The Happy Wanderers, which entertained German communities up and down the east coast. Once, when playing in New York City, he was told that his band could not play because they did not belong to a union. He protested: we are in the Dortmunder Union (the name of a popular German beer) and was allowed to play. After his retirement Al

played his accordion at the parties and picnics of the local German clubs, and entertained the Edelweiss Club at its bi-weekly lunches at the Eichenkranz Restaurant in Baltimore. On the night he was honored by our Society, he entertained us with his repertoire of stories and with his music.

**PICNIC AT KURTZ'S JUNE 24**

This year's German Society Picnic is combined with all the organizations belonging to the Bürgerverein. It will be a bigger and better GREAT GERMAN FAMILY PICNIC. Each club has membership on the planning committee which recently met to organize the event. This year's picnic will have something special for the children. To encourage bringing the little ones and the students, the clubs are subsidizing ticket prices. Children 6 and under are free. Students from 7 to 20 will be \$10: 21 and over is \$22. In contrast to last year, tickets will be mailed upon receipt of your checks. Since we must notify the caterer one week prior to the event, this means that your checks must be received by Saturday, June 17. This will allow time for tickets to reach you prior to the picnic.

Members of The German Society should send their checks, payable to "German Society", to our treasurer, Ted Potthast at 1819 Leadurn Road, Towson, MD 21204-1830. Members of the other Bürgerverein groups will receive tickets from their respective clubs and make payment to their own club.

**TAKE IN A STUDENT**

Towson University needs housing for male and female students coming from Germany for two weeks this summer. If you would like to have students as your guests for a couple weeks, call our office for information. Our members have done so many times in the past and have enjoyed the experience of having exchange students in the family.

**WESTMINSTER ANNIVERSARY**

The City of Westminster will celebrate its 150th anniversary with festivities and a grand parade on Memorial Day, May 28. The German Society has been invited to participate to commemorate the strong German heritage of that Carroll County community. We have been asked to join the big parade. The German Yagers fife and drum have volunteered to lead our contingent, to draw attention to our presence. If you like parades, please plan to join our group.

## FISHING IN GERMANY

We learn from the current issue of German Life magazine some differences in the fishing and game laws between the USA and Germany. Germans seem to take things more seriously: a German must pass a test before receiving a fishing license. As in the USA, each state has its own rules and fees. Bavaria charges a one-time fee of 15 Euros for youth ages 10 to 21. A lifetime fishing license is 300 Euros (about \$410). In Maryland kids up to age 16 fish for free: others pay about \$10 for a license. In addition to many rivers, MD has the Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean, and fishing is much more popular here than in Germany.

## LOSING THE HERITAGE

The first generation of immigrants named their children after an ancestor or a brother or a sister, uncle or aunt. The same held true of the second, but the third generations was not so faithful in preserving the family traditions and heritage. You can tell that the danger of losing the heritage is great when the fourth and subsequent generations begin naming their children after towns, movie actors and rock stars.

## MEINZER WINNER WRITES

Leah Dignan, the senior from Fallston High School, was selected by our Education Committee to receive the Meinzer Summer Scholarship, wrote to our Society and to committee member Dr. Maureen Helinski to acknowledge the award and express her gratitude:

*"I am so excited and happy that I was selected as the recipient of the Meinzer scholarship. I understand that I will be a type of ambassador representing the United States. I welcome this responsibility and will work to be a good example, respecting the culture while having fun and creating memories.*

*Sincerely, Leah Dignan"*

Leah will be attending summer school along with American high school students from around the USA in a program sponsored by the American Association of Teachers of German. Her scholarship is financed by a grant to our Society by our member, Gerhard Meinzer.

## ANGLICISED GERMAN NAMES

Report #14 of the Society for the History of the Germans in MD, in 1900, published a list of German

names which were changed in America. We will print the entire list in future newsletters, but here are a few which may entertain you: Arnstadt = Armistead; Baumann = Baughman; Batz = Bates; Breitkopf = Broadhead; Goetz = Gates and Yates; Jaeger - Yeager, Yager and Hunter; John = Jone and Jones; Klein = Cline, Kline, Little or Small. Loewe = Lyon or Lyons; Kohlmann = Coleman; Neumann - Newman; Reiss = Rice; Uhl = Ewell; Weber = Weaver; Werner = Warner; Wilhelm - Williams; Weise = Wise and White; Stephan = Stevens; Sauer = Sower; Rothmann = Redman; Ried = Reed; Schaefer = Shafer, Shepherd, Sheppard and Shepperd. Schuermann = Shurman and Sherman; Schmal = Small; Schmidt = Smith; Kuester = Custer; Lorenz = Laurence; Heinz = Hines; Mejo = Mayo; Gaertner = Gardner; Brauer = Brewer; Koch = Cook; König = King

## BARBARA FRITCHIE: MARYLANDER

A German woman, Barbara Fritchie (nee Hauser) proudly flaunted her patriotism when she defied Stonewall Jackson by displaying the Stars & Stripes from her attic window as he marched through the city of Frederick. She is immortalized in Whittier's poem, known to most school children:

*" 'Shoot if you must, this old gray head,  
but spare your country's flag,' she said."*

## AMERICA NAMED BY A GERMAN

It was a German who named America. Martin Waldseemüller, a cosmographer born in Freiburg, in his book "Cosmographiae Introductio" (1507) called the new land "America" in honor of the explorer Amerigo Vespucci. He put that name on his map which is now in the British Museum. Interestingly, the name is of Germanic origin, being the Italianized form of the German "Almarich", which means "eternal, brilliant, forceful."

## COMMUNITY TO HOST HESSEN

The German naval ship Hessen will be in Baltimore in mid June to participate in the celebration of the American victory in the War of 1812. Brigitte Fessenden, our past president, heads the committee to host the crew of the ship. The Baltimore harbor will be filled with tall ships to help commemorate the 1812-1814 war, called American's Second War of Independence

## **SUPERBOWL MENU: GERMAN**

The menu at President Obama's superbowl party at the White House last year had a distinctly German flavor: "Bratwurst, kielbasa...hamburgers, German potato salad, Snyder's potato chips and pretzels, ice cream, Hinterland Pale Ale, Yuengling Lager and White House Honey Ale" (from the brewery in the basement of the White House). Word is that Mrs. Obama planned a "healthier" menu for the this year's superbowl.

## **OUR 1812 COMMITTEE**

Would you like to research, write and/or speak? We are looking for people to be part of our War of 1812 Committee to gather information on General John Stricker: to research via internet, libraries and historical records to help put together a biography of General Stricker, one of the incorporators of our Society, who is known as the Hero of the battle of North Point. Research and describe the battle, its effects and significance in winning the war of 1812.

## **COMMEMORATE STRICKER?**

John Stricker was vice president of our Society. How can we best commemorate him and see to it that he receives proper honor in the celebrations Maryland will be holding over the next 2 years? A statue? A bust? A painting of him in battle? Strike medals for awards to honor him? We are asking our members for ideas. Our officers and directors have put on their thinking caps, but we need to tap the brainpower of the membership. Think about it and talk about it and let us know what you come up with.

## **ANNAPOLIS HEARING**

It was a rare warm and balmy Groundhog Day as the German Society contingent headed to Annapolis under a cloud-filled sky, hoping the cloud cover reached as far north as Punxatawney, PA so that Phil, the groundhog, would not see his shadow and thus bring an early end to winter. Tom Werner, Dutch and Betty Niemann, Shelley Arnold, Bernard Penner, Ted Potthast, Brigitte Fessenden and Dr. James Schaub all presented themselves at the hearing before the House Committee on H.B.102 which would declare October German American month in Maryland. Our members Susan Aumann and Bill Frank, both members of the House of Delegates, testified in favor of the bill.

Testimony was also given by members Schaub, Arnold, Penner and Fessenden. They described the many contributions made by German Americans in Maryland in the fields of medicine, education, politics, literature and the professions. Forty members of the House committee listened to the testimony. Our Bill was the last on the hearing schedule and our group had to sit through 6 other hearings, some of which were hotly contested with opposing testimony.

## **OLDER THAN GERMANY**

Our Society, founded in 1783, is nearly 100 years older than Germany, which did not exist as a country until after the Franco-Prussian War of 1871. What is now Germany was in 1783 a large group of independent kingdoms, duchies, and nearly 200 smaller political entities. When our Society was formed, "German" had a special meaning: it referred to people who had immigrated from German-speaking places. At the time of our founding, you were considered German if your origins were in the political boundaries of the present-day Federal Republic of Germany, but also from Austria, Switzerland and areas which today are part of France, Poland, Russia, Hungary and even trans-alpine Italy. Two world wars effectively caused the descendants of persons from some of those areas to eschew the name "German" even though it was the language of their ancestors. Most of the members of our Society today have either immigrated from the Federal Republic or whose ancestors came from that geographical entity.

## **FOLK MUSIC: IS IT DEAD?**

We frequently hear that the young people in Germany no longer have any interest in folk music and only want to listen to American-type rock and pop music. We are told that if we want to attract young people to our German ethnic clubs, we have to do away with the old folk music and give the young what they want to hear...rock music. Recent immigrants from Germany tend to ignore folk music; those whose ancestors passed down the folk tradition wish to preserve it. The organizations which are dedicated to preserving a heritage are not likely to let go of folk music so easily; nor will they abandon the classics. We encourage students to attend such events as the all-German performance at the BSO and we are providing them with 20 tickets for the April 28 event.

## THE EUROPEAN UNION LANGUAGE

The European Commission has just announced an agreement which will make English the official language of the European Union, rather than German, which was the other possibility.

As part of the negotiation, the British government conceded that English spelling had some room for improvement and has accepted a 5-year phase-in plan to establish "Euro-English".

In the first year "s" will replace the soft "c". Certainly, this will make the sivil servants jump with joy. The hard "c" will be dropped in favor of "k". This should klear up konfusion and keyboards kan have one less letter. There will be publik enthusiasm in the sekond year when the troublesome "ph" will be replaced by "f". This will make words like fotograf 20% shorter.

In the 3rd year publik akseptanse of the new spelling can be expekted to reach the stage where more komplikated changes are possible.

Governments wil enkourage removal of double letters which have always been a deterrent to akurate speling. Also al wil agree that the horibl mes of the silent "e" in the languag is disgrasful and should go away.

By the 4th yer pepl wil be reseptiv to steps such as replasing "th" with "z" and "w" with "v".

During se 5th yer, ze unesesary "o" kan be dropped from words kontaining "ou" and ve vil hav a reli sensibl riten styl.

Zer vil be no mor trubl or difikultis and evrivun vil find it ezi tu understand ech ozr. Ze drem of a united Urop vil finali kum tru.

And after ze fitz yer, ve vil al be speking German like zey wanted in ze first plas.

## GERMANS IN CONGRESS

Another German American name in the U. S. House of Representatives is Maryland's own Steny Hoyer. The name Hoyer means guard or watchman, according to the dictionary of German American Names (by our deceased member, George F. Jones, a professor of German at the University of Maryland), Steny Hoyer is the second ranking democrat in the House. The House majority leader, John Boehner is also a German American. (Boehner means bean-seller, not as prestigious a designation as a guard(ian) of our nation's laws). The name Hoyer appears as pastors in the annals of the early Lutheran churches in MD. Steny Hoyer's home county, St. Mary's, has changed politically and it now has more registered Republicans than Democrats. Hoyer's congressional district,

however, includes heavily Democratic Charles and Prince Georges Counties, so that his seat, which he has held since 1981, is not in any jeopardy.

## GERMANY GETS NEW PRESIDENT

On March 18 Joachim Gauck was elected President of Germany by a substantial majority of the country's lawmakers. Mr. Gauck, a 72 year old former East German pro-democracy activist, is a former pastor who opposed East Germany's communist regime. He was placed in charge of a federal agency overseeing the files of the communist intelligence service after the 1990 unification. Germany's former president resigned amidst allegations of corruption.

## TELL YOUR STORY

Look to the future but learn from the past: a wise proverb which of late is largely being ignored. Schools are dropping history as a topic of study, and where it remains, it is buried under the guise of "social studies" and is being highly politicized. Rumor is that the cities, in deference to black citizens, no longer teach history prior to Lincoln's emancipation proclamation. Thus, the story of our founding fathers, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson is deemed unworthy of study.

The near-death of the study of history damages the heritage of our people. Organizations such as our Society, whose reason for existence is the preservation of our German American heritage (and fostering the study of the language) must be vigilant. We must look for various ways to preserve the heritage: a suggestion has been placed in motion to encourage the telling of one's own story. Living history projects have sprung up in many places. At the University of MD Baltimore County the German department sent its students to local homes for the elderly to record the stories of the German war brides who married American soldiers after World War II.

Some have suggested that our Society get into the act and ask our members to tell their stories. Our sister Society, The Society for the History of the German in Maryland has had the same suggestion put before its directors. Perhaps the two Societies should set up a joint program to collect and record the stories which our members can tell about how their own families came to this country and what they did once they settled here. Is this something we ought to do? Let us have your thoughts.