

# THE GERMAN SOCIETY OF MARYLAND

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

## VEREINSNACHRICHTEN

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### **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

Dear Friends and Members,  
Please contact your state senator and your three delegates and ask their support for bills now before the Maryland General Assembly: S.B. 131 and H.B. 142. These laws will declare October to be German American Heritage month in Maryland. It will be most helpful in preserving our heritage and foster the mission of our Society. See articles inside.

### **TESTIMONY IN ANNAPOLIS**

Our Society gave testimony before the Maryland Senate and the House of Delegates in support of the proposed law to designate October as German American Heritage month in Maryland. Director Shelley Arnold spoke before the Senate committee and also the house committee. Our officers and directors H. J. Siegfried Otto, president, vice president Tom Werner and treasurer Ted Potthast also presented testimony. In Annapolis on Feb. 9, the Senate Bill 121 was introduced by Senator Klausmeyer; our members, delegates Susan Auman and Bill Frank sponsored House Bill #142. The testimony of Pres. Otto, Ted Potthast and Shelley Arnold is printed in this newsletter. The designation of heritage month will remind Marylanders of how our ancestors helped build this great state.

### **OFFICIAL NOTICE**

The annual meeting of the members of The German Society of Maryland will be held on Friday, April 29, 2011 in the dining room of the Zion Lutheran Church, City Hall Plaza, Baltimore, Maryland. A dinner, free to members and prospective members, will begin at 6:30 p.m.. The meeting will commence after the dinner.

### **THREE DIRECTORS LOST;**

Three members of our Society's Board of Directors have died in the past three months: Frederick Riedel, Robert Fritsche and Charles Wunder. Three new directors were elected to complete their terms: Paul-Gerhard Otto, Lauren Rizzo, and Rev. G. Richard Dimler, S.J.

### **BOEHNER ELECTED SPEAKER**

John Boehner, a German American, was elected Speaker of the House of Representatives, next behind the vice-president in line of succession to the presidency of the United States. In the book by Prof. Dr. George Jones, "*German American Names*", the name "Boehner" means "bean dealer". We trust that his heritage will help in his leadership as he takes over from native Marylander Nancy Pelosi.

## KALENDER

- March 5 Buergerverein Fasching
- April 29 Annual membership meeting
- May 1 AGAS German Festal at Blobs
- May 15 High School Awards
- June ? The Great German Picnic
- July 22-23 German Festival Timonium
- July 27-31 Bus trip Milwaukee Festival

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 now be found on our web site.

For more local German-American happenings, check the web site of the Deutschamerikanischer Bürgerverein von Maryland: [www.md-germans.org](http://www.md-germans.org)

### FASCHING IN ADLERSAAL MARCH 5

A traditional German Fasching is set for Saturday, March 5 sponsored by the Buergerverein at Zion's Adlersaal, 7 pm to 11 pm. Music by Heidi and the Heimat Echo Band. \$25 per person. Assorted snacks, German beer, soda and set ups. Prizes for costumes, various categories. Open to all. Come and help make a Karnival atmosphere for this Fastnacht. To reserve a spot, send check payable to "Buergerverein" to Loy Vogel 12732 Cunninghill Cove Rd., Baltimore, MD 21220..

### THE MENCKEN SOCIETY

The only member of the German Society of Md who himself has a society named after him is Henry Louis Mencken. "The Mencken Society" devotes itself to the study of H. L. Mencken and his work; the appreciation of the Menckean brand of skepticism, criticism and humor; and the enjoyment of good discussion and company. The society contributes funds to the Pratt Library to support the Mencken Room and honor its first

treasurer and long-time president, Arthur J. Gutman. Membership dues are \$35 each year and include a subscription to Menckeniana. Address all correspondence to the society president or treasurer at P.O. Box 16218, Baltimore, MD 21210. Visit the society's website: [www.mencken.org](http://www.mencken.org)

(from the society's publication, Menckeniana)..

### THE GERMAN CATHEDRAL

A new book on the market about the churches of Baltimore was described by Jacques Kelly in a Baltimore Sun article on Jan. 2. The book describes the many churches built by our ancestors and now maintained by the faithful at great expense. One such church is St. Alphonsus at Park Ave. and Saratoga Sts., built by the Germans of Baltimore in 1840. It is aptly referred to as the German Cathedral. Its current pastor, German Society member Monsignor Arthur Bastress is quoted by Kelly discussing the seven roofs of the church and the 23 stained glass windows which he is committed to maintain. The book is by Lois Zanow and Sally Anderson. The book: "Monuments to Heaven: Baltimore's Historic Houses of Worship".

### DR. GEORGE FENWICK JONES

We have learned that Dr. Jones, a dear friend of our Society, died last year. He was a director of our sister Society, the Society for the History of the Germans in Maryland. Dr. Jones was a U.S. Marine paratrooper for 6 years in WWII. He studied German literature in Heidelberg, Germany and Zurich, Switzerland and in Oxford, England as a Rhodes scholar. He received his PhD from Columbia University. He taught German at Princeton for 9 years and for 25 years was professor of German at the Univ. of MD. He received the Cross of Honor for Science and Literature from the Republic of Austria and the Cross of Merit from The Federal Republic of Germany. Among his many publications is The Dictionary of German American Names.

## TESTIMONY: PRES. OTTO

### Statement by H. S. Siegfried Otto at the hearing in Annapolis - H.B.132

I am the President of The German Society of Maryland and a former pastor of the Zion Church of the City of Baltimore in 1755, It is the oldest church in the nation that has maintained uninterrupted worship in the German language for more than 250 years,

The purpose of The German Society of MD is to preserve and promote the German heritage, language and traditions through educational, social and benevolent programs. The society aims to promote the unity, and continuity of the German American community in the State of Maryland.

Through our Educating Fund we support the American Association of Teachers of German of MD/DC Metro Chapter with grants to Maryland students with a budget of \$8,000 for 2011. We have supported the teachers association itself and Towson University in its exchange program with the University of Oldenberg, Germany.

Our emphasis is our German American heritage which is not an ethnic, racial or political entity, but a tradition of language, culture and social values.

In an age of fragmented social identities, we celebrate a sense of rootedness which is connected with our immigrant heritage. German speaking immigrants came to America for the sake of a better future for their children, They took the risk of the journey into the unknown because they wanted to escape social, economic, political or religious oppression. While they had to be creative and adapt to a new situation, they contributed greatly to the welfare of the new nation.

Commemorating the German American heritage in Maryland would celebrate the courage, the sacrifice, the determination and social values of the immigrant experience that contributed to what makes our country great,  
Thank you for the privilege of this testimony.

## TESTIMONY: TED POTTHAST

Generations of Marylanders of German ancestry have labored and fought to build this state. By passing House Bill 142, the legislature will enable the German

American community to tell its inspiring story, Marylanders of German ancestry have protected our State from the Revolutionary War to the present.

### MILITARY TRADITION

A few blocks from where we sit, on the lawn of our State House, is a statue of **GENERAL deKALB**, who came from Germany to fight for our independence. He commanded the Maryland Line and was killed in the Battle of Camden, S. C. His statue guards the building where our laws are made today.

**GENERAL JOHN STRICKER**, known as "The hero of the battle of North Point" helped drive the invaders from our shores. He was one of the founders of The German Society of Maryland.

**SGT. HENRY GUNTHER**, a Baltimorean, was the last American soldier killed in World War I. On Nov. 11, 2010, The German Society of Md erected a monument to him in Baltimore.

### EDUCATION AND LITERATURE

The German university system was brought to America upon the founding of THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY, many of whose first professors were German immigrants.

**HENRY L. MENCKEN**, known as "The Bard of Baltimore" is a literary giant whose works are read the world over.

**OTTMAR MERGENTHALER** revolutionized the printing industry with his invention of the linotype, earning him the title of "The second Gutenberg". Both Mencken and Mergenthaler were members of The German Society of Maryland. German Americans have been leaders in the fields of industry, labor and education.

**NANCY GRASMICK**, Maryland's current superintendent of education, was named Maryland's German American of the year in 2009,

### POLITICAL LEADERS

In the field of politics, several recent governors had German American ancestry: **THEODORE R. MCKELDIN**, **WILLIAM DONALD SCHAEFER**, **ROBERT EHRLICH** and even **MARTIN O'MALLEY'S MOTHER** is of German ancestry. Also, numerous members of our Senate and House of Delegates.

Naming October as German American Heritage month will enable our state to gain national attention for the accomplishments of its citizens. A special month for German Americans will instill a pride in their heritage

## **THANKS TO STURGILL, ROGER**

Jack R. Sturgill, Jr., Esq. and Jane E. Roger, both members of our Society, are working hard to get the legislature to pass the German Heritage Month legislation. Jack and Jane were both elected in November to the state central committee of their parties: Jack, Democrat and Jane Republican. As state committee members, they contacted every member of the Maryland Senate and House of Delegates to urge them to vote for the laws (S.B. 121 and H.B. 142) declaring October our heritage month. Both of them are influential in their parties. Jack's wife, Marcy, is a former director of our Society. Jane and Jack, thank you for your help. In helping to get the law passed, you are working to remind all of us that German speaking people brought greatness to our state and country and their traditions need to be honored and preserved.

## **WHO'S PRESERVING FOR OUR GERMAN HERITAGE? IF WE DON'T, NO ONE WILL**

Nearly all of the media, radio, television, newspapers and magazines are today owned by giant corporations with their own agendas with a single motive: profit. We can't count on them for some simple publicity, even when we accomplish good things for the community. We can't look to the media to spread the word of our heritage. Even the U. S. government seems to be trying to abolish ethnic groups: the U.S. census, which for over 200 years collected data on the national origin of its citizens, removed the ethnicity question from the census in 2000. The govt. is now in the "race" business. You're either black, white, hispanic, American Indian or one of a few other racial groupings.

One of the purposes of The German Society of MD is to preserve our heritage. How can we do it? It's up to our members to think of ways to do so. It's up to us as individuals to do our part. Start in your own family and tell your children, nephews and nieces where they came from; tell them of the contributions of our German-speaking ancestors to the greatness of America. Our club photographer, Denis Smith, said his father told him: "You're German; be proud of it!" Denis lets the world know it. So should we.

Think of ways you can preserve your own family traditions, and by doing so, help preserve our German heritage.

## **CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATORS**

State senators and delegates make up the Maryland General Assembly, the body which passes our laws. The current session is full of controversial issues and the legislators are being heavily lobbied (gay marriage, major budget cuts, redistricting, etc.) They have many distractions. This makes it even more important that we contact our senators and delegates to direct their attention to the bill of interest to German Americans and to no one else. We have found that the legislators react when their constituents contact them. Recently our vice president Tom Werner sat at his computer and did a Google search to find the email addresses for his representatives. He sent an email to his state senator, Tom Brochin, and asked him to support S.B. 121. Senator Brochin replied promptly, promising to vote for the bill when it comes before the full senate. This bill, naming October as German American month in Maryland, doesn't cost the state anything. It involves no appropriation of funds. Politicians actually like to vote for laws; it's what they do, it's their main job. This bill is not controversial. We can get it passed just by asking.

So PLEASE don't sit this one out. PLEASE contact your senator and delegates and ask them to vote for it. Call, write or send them an email.

## **SOCIETY GIVES \$1,000 TO AID SUMMIT ON FUTURE OF GERMAN LANGUAGE**

What can be done to keep German language courses in our schools? A regional meeting was held on Saturday, Feb. 28 at Catholic Univ. in D.C. Our director, Dr. Mohamed Esa was organizer of the event. Our Society is represented by Pres. Siegfried Otto, Vice-presidents Merl Arp and Tom Werner, Brigitte Fessenden and Ted Potthast, our directors Dr. Mary Upman and Dr. Maureen Helinski and our office manager, Baerbel Otto and many of our members who are German teachers (including the daughter of our director, Christel van der Berg). Also attending were teachers from elementary to graduate school, German businesses, community organizations, state and county school administrators and a speaker from the German Embassy. Watch our next newsletter for a full report.

## OUR MEMBERS USE THE INTERNET TO KEEP US ABREAST OF OUR HERITAGE

Two of our members, Shelley Arnold and Walt Mathers, have created websites which benefit the German community. Shelley's website is directed to Maryland; Walt's is a regional website which encourages the posting of events and the exchange of comments and ideas.

### GERMAN MARYLANDERS.ORG

Shelley explains this website on its homepage:

"This website is dedicated to those of German ancestry. Some have been recent arrivals, but for the most part, these pages contain information about our ancestors who arrived in America many years ago and settled in Maryland.

The site is divided into several sections. The profile section contains many persons who have made very important contributions to Maryland and the United States. I am always looking for additional profiles. If you, your parents, grandparents or great grandparents were German and lived in Maryland, send me a profile. I will be happy to post it. Every story is important. Whether your ancestors were inventors, manufacturers, brewers or a stay at home Mom. They all contributed. Their every step paved the way.

This project began as a simple gathering of information in order to present it to the Maryland General Assembly during the 2011 session. The goal: declare October German Marylander month. While researching I discover the many contributions German Marylanders made to the state. Other ethnic groups are frequently in the news, some good; some not so good. I don't want my children or grandchildren to forget their roots and how blessed they are to be of German descent.

Send me your story. Send me an email or comments. If you have any updates or new information to post, send them to me. You can reach me at [germanmaylanders@gmail.org](mailto:germanmaylanders@gmail.org)

If you do not have access to the internet, send your material to the office of our Society and we will give it to our director, Shelley Arnold.

## DER WECKER

The brainchild of Walt Mathers, this website was initiated in January, 2009 as a source for communication among persons interested in German American activities in the Chesapeake region.

"Visitors" to the website may post items of interest to the community and may engage in communications with other visitors. The site has attracted individuals and organizations both within and outside the region and has met with every-expanding success: in the first year it measured nearly 6,000 "hits". Mr. Mathers monitors the site to prevent postings of inappropriate materials. The website contains links to very many other sites of interest to German Americans and others interested in the German American culture and heritage. It is a marvelous sources of general knowledge and provides an opportunity for the public to express opinions. It is also a source of information about what is going on in the German American community in the region.

The simplest way to connect with Der Wecker is to do a Google search for "German American Forum". In order to gain access, you must register, but you may register using a nickname and need not reveal your own email address. Anonymity encourages honesty in reporting; scurrilous comments or criticisms of individuals are not permitted. Der Wecker was created to "bring the German American community into 21st century communications."

This website has many useful features. You can post comments which bear upon the German American heritage and culture; you may ask questions, which many visitors will read and provide answers (you will receive the answers even though you do not reveal your email address) you may offer suggestions; you may even offer personal items for sale to other visitors.

Registered visitors include many organizations, not only in the Chesapeake Region but nationally.

Since the internet is the universal lifeline of young people, we urge our members to encourage their children and grandchildren to visit these websites, including our Society's own: it may turn them on to delving into their own heritage.

**Our Society thanks Shelley Arnold and Walt Mathers for their initiative in creating these media to foster our German American heritage.**

## Robert Karl Fritzsche



**December 17, 1951 - November 13, 2010**

Robert Karl Fritzsche, an architect and construction specifier, died on Saturday November 13, 2010 from complications of ALS, colloquially known as Lou Gehrig's disease. He was 58 years old. He is survived by his wife of 27 years, Lori (nee Hancher), his daughter, Melisande (24), and his son, Peter (21).

Born in Baltimore to an immigrant German machinist/US Merchant Marine engineer and a Michigan bookkeeper, Mr. Fritzsche was educated in Baltimore City public schools, graduating from the Baltimore Polytechnic Institute (Ae1) in 1969. He graduated in 1973 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Architectural Design from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology where he played intercollegiate soccer and worked part-time as an ice hockey referee. On a dare, he successfully auditioned for the MIT Glee Club, unwittingly beginning a lifelong avocation. He joined the Baltimore Handel Choir and met his wife there when she joined after a very reluctant audition at the insistence of a friend. It was love at first sight and they were married 4 years later at St. Casimir's in Canton with the Handel Choir singing the nuptial mass.

Mr. Fritzsche apprenticed at Bonnett and Brandt and received a Master of Architecture degree in 1977 from the Catholic University of America. He worked part-time for the American Institute of Architects on a three-person team who compiled the AIA Energy Notebook.

In 1979, he passed the Architectural Registration Examination and became a member of the American Institute of Architects. He was employed at Mark Beck Associates, then RTKL Associates where he contributed to the design of the Wachovia Tower and the SunTrust Tower. He later managed the design of the Worcester MA Airport Terminal and Phase One of the Renovation of Bancroft Hall at the Naval Academy. Mr. Fritzsche specialized in project management and construction specifications and contributed to the Nature Center at Deep Creek Lake State Park.

At the time of his retirement in 2009, he worked for Peter Fillat Architects as Senior Project Manager, contributing to the Waterfront Marriott hotel, the Renaissance Convention Center hotel in St. Louis, and the Bear Creek Ski Lodge and Hotel. He was a proud member and past president of the Baltimore Chapter of the Construction Specifier's Institute, from whom he received the Chapter's highest honor, the Kelsey Y. Saint Award.

Mr. Fritzsche was proud of his German heritage, sending both children to the German Language School at Zion Lutheran Church. He was a lifetime director of the German Society of Maryland and a member and President Emeritus of the Arion Gesangverein.

A Memorial Mass will be held on Saturday, December 11 at 11 a.m. at St. Michael the Archangel Church, Willow Avenue and Belair Road. In lieu of flowers, donations to the ALS Association ([www.alsa.org](http://www.alsa.org)) may be made in Robert's memory.

## WHO WILL WRITE THE BOOKS ON MD'S GERMAN COMMUNITY'S DAILY LIFE?

When you enter the Jewish Museum of Maryland on Lloyd Street in Baltimore, you immediately see a bookstore filled with books for sale on local Jewish life. The Jewish Museum is worth a visit. The first wave of Jewish immigrants were from Germany, and so a great deal of German American history is found in the treasury that is the bookstore. In the early years of The German Society of Maryland, there were always some Jews in leadership positions. What happened to the Jews in Germany in the 1930's and 40's had an adverse effect on the attitude of Jews toward German Americans and Jews ceased joining our Society, even though eligible for membership.

Will writers come forth to author the stories about the daily life of German Americans in Maryland? We have scholarly works, such as *The Maryland Germans* by Dieter Cuntz, which is being updated by Professor Randall Donaldson; but they are scholarly works, not a book of photos and tales of the daily life of German American families. If we are to preserve the traditions and culture of our predecessors, we need ordinary citizens who like to delve into history to ferret out family photos and stories and put them into print; or at least, in the electronic media.

Which of us will be the first to take a go at it?

## FIRE STRIKES OLD STEIN, GERMAN RESTAURANT IN ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY

Fire broke out on early morning New Year's Eve at the Old Stein Restaurant in Mayo, below Annapolis. It quickly escalated to 3 alarms; there was no fire hydrant in the area and firefighters had to break through ice in a nearby creek and pump water into a trucks to transport to the fire. 40 pieces of equipment and 89 firefighters were on the scene. Significant damage resulted.

The restaurant was opened in the early 1980's by Karl Selinger and his wife, Ursula, immigrants from Neustadt, Germany. It is currently operated by their son, Michael and his wife, Beth.

German restaurants, which once thrived in central Maryland, have gradually disappeared; the

German American community can ill-afford to lose another, and we have hopes that The Old Stein can be restored and up and operating soon.

## THREE DIRECTORS ELECTED

The recent deaths of directors Rob Fritzche, Fred Reidel and Charles Wunder created vacancies which were filled, pursuant to our bylaws, at the Feb. 4 meeting of our Board. The newly elected directors are: Paul-Gerhard Otto, Lauren Rizzo and The Rev. Prof. Dr. G. Richard Dimler, S. J.

Paul Otto is the son of our President, Siegfried Otto and our office manager, Baerbel. He has been a loyal worker for the Society for many years, helping out in our activities and programs. Paul holds a position in information technology at the Gilman School in Baltimore.

Lauren Rizzo is a recent graduate of McDaniel College and was a stellar student of Dr. Mohamed Esq's German classes. At one of our Awards Banquets a few years ago, she addressed our Society in German to thank us for our work in assisting students. Lauren received an ovation for her presentation. We are delighted to bring to our Board an individual who has benefitted from one our most important programs. Lauren is presently on the staff of the Gilman School.

Both Paul and Lauren are the result of our efforts to bring young people into posts of leadership in our Society.

Father Dimler comes to us after a few years as a parish priest in California. He is a native of Maryland and has been a member of our Society for a dozen years. He holds a doctorate in Germanic Languages from the University of California at Los Angeles. He studied in Germany for two years, in Mainz and in Muenster. He taught German at Loyola High School and at Loyola College in Baltimore, and for 30 years served as professor of German at Fordham University in New York City. He has written several books and published numerous articles in German studies and served as the editor of the scholarly philosophical journal, *Thought*. For

many years he spent his summers in Germany in research projects at the National Bibliotek and various university libraries and museums. He has held membership in the American Association of Teachers of German and in numerous scholarly organizations relating to German cultural subjects.

Fr. Dimler, a Jesuit, is the first Catholic priest to serve on our Board in the 228 year history of the German Society of Maryland. His career with high school and college students, and his pastoral work, will serve us well in fulfilling our mission.