

NEWSLETTER ISSUE-54

May-June,2006

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It was great to see so many members at our annual meeting on April 21st. and to welcome new ones and a visitor from Germany! Special thanks to all of you who brought desserts, which is a special treat at this event. Thanks to Mike Nieberding who arranged for the beverages and the "heisse Wuerste." The German Society again had a very good year and was able to give continued financial support for several worthwhile educational and charitable endeavors. While we can appreciate what we have accomplished, I would like to encourage more volunteer activity among our members and hope you may consider joining one of our committees. New ideas are always welcome and a willingness to work for their implementation. We have a beautiful office in the Mt. Vernon historic district that can serve as a meeting place for various purposes. Don't be shy! Let us hear from you.

Brigitte V. Fessenden, President

GERMAN SOCIETY PICNIC SUNDAY JUNE 25 AT OREGON RIDGE PARK

Plan now to attend our annual picnic. This year it will be held in the pavilion behind the dinner theater in Baltimore County's Oregon Ridge Park on Beaver Dam Road about a mile south of Shawan Road. The picnic will be catered by Old World Deli and will feature traditional German wurst and German food. Old World catered our annual meeting, to the delight of all who attended. Ample beer and sodas. Admission is \$17 for adults; \$7 for children ages 4-12; ages 3 and under are free. Plan to make it a family affair. Bring your sisters, brothers, Opa, Oma, uncles, aunts, cousins & friends. Get your tickets early, since only 200 tickets will be sold, due to the capacity of the pavilion. Some members have used the picnic for small family reunions. We'll keep the tradition of home-made desserts by members.

See page 7 for the ticket forms.

GERMAN FESTIVAL MOVES TO TIMONIUM FAIRGROUNDS

SATURDAY, JULY 28 AND SUNDAY, JULY

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The 106th Baltimore German Festival, the oldest such in the United States, will be held for the first time outside the city limits, at the State Fair Grounds in Baltimore County. The move is expected to shore up the attendance, which had been declining at the city site, Carroll Park. The festival will be held under cover of the grandstands at the Timonium race track. The

track features ample parking, and is well lighted for evening events. Enter the festival by using the Timonium Road entrance adjacent to the light rail track. The festival will also be accessible by light rail via a 10 minute walk from the light rail station at the north end of the fairgrounds. The festival is sponsored by the Deutschamerikanischer Bürgerverein von Maryland, the umbrella organization of German organizations of which our Society is a founding member. Our Society expects to take an active role in the festival. More details in the July issue of this newsletter.

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KALENDER

June 25 Annual picnic- at Oregon Ridge

July 29-30 German Festival Timonium Fair Grounds

October 28 Annual Awards Banquet

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

Articles from some 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

GERMAN EMBASSY INVITES OUR MEMBERS TO EVENT ON JUNE 1

The Embassy of The Federal Republic of Germany has extended an invitation to the members of our Society to attend an event in honor of a great German American, Carl Schurz, in the embassy auditorium at 10:30 a.m. on Thursday, June 1. (Carl Schurz died May 14, 1906. Pastor Roggelin, a member of our Society, noted that a memorial service was held at that time for him at Baltimore's Zion Church.)

TOM WERNER SUCCEEDS BOB GIBSON AS LEADER OF THE

BÜRGERVEREIN VON MARYLAND

Bob Gibson stepped down as president of the Bürgerverein due to family health and business matters, turning over the reins to Tom Werner, the vice president. Tom is a director of our Society. He is also president of Club Fidelitas, a club consisting of business and professional persons of German ancestry. Tom is one of the most active members of the Maryland German American community. He is now busy as chairman of our annual picnic and is in charge of the Baltimore German Festival. Tom owns and operates his own insurance agency.

Bob Gibson has been active in the Baltimore Kickers' Club for many years and served as tour organizer and leader for many of the Kickers' summer and Christmas tours to Germany. He is president of the American Philatists, whose headquarters is in Baltimore. He also leads the American stamp collectors on European stamp tours and is an expert in appraising stamp collections for estates.

ZINTL SCHOLARSHIP AWARDED TO TOWSON UNIVERSITY STUDENT

Our Society resumed its college scholarship program after a 5-year hiatus by granting a \$500 award to Towson University student, Esther Markloordt. She came to our annual meeting to accept the award and thank the society. Esther carries a 4.0 GPA and was tops in her German class. Esther was introduced at the meeting by Dr. Armin Mruck, a director of our Society and a professor at Towson Univ. In her thank-you note to the Society she wrote: "Your generous gift proves that helping students to further their German language skills as well as to broaden their cultural horizons is an important aspect of your Society. I am proud to have been selected for this scholarship and hope that you will continue to award this scholarship to many more students in the future."

The award is named after Dr. Carrie Mae Zintl who taught at Mt. St. Agnes College, Loyola College and The Johns Hopkins University. She was a director of our Society and chairman of our education committee. For many years she served as president of The Society for the History of the Germans in Maryland. In her will, she bequeathed \$10,000 to our Society.

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING

The finance committee met on May 10 to review the Society's investment policy and the results of the past year. Present were President Brigitte Fessenden, Treasurer Mike Nieberding, Chairman Ted Potthast and committee member Charles Wunder. Representatives of Merrill Lynch, Troy Bryant and Eric Watson, answered questions and made investment recommendations. The committee instructed the advisors to set a goal of achieving a return of "CPI + 5%". The consumer price index is to keep pace with inflation, plus a return on investment of 5% of the portfolio. Recent rises in interest rates had an adverse effect on our bond holdings but the stock index portfolio rose to compensate for the fixed income holdings. The approximate values of our holdings were: Education fund - \$240,000; General fund - \$260,000.

LOST AND FOUND - A very pretty grape-design pewter earring, found after our annual meeting on April 21 on the floor of the Zion Church dining room Please call Brigitte Fessenden at 410-532-7581.

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HARRY D. GRUEL, LIFETIME DIRECTOR, DIES AT 85

Harry was a member of our Society for 31 years and a director for 25. He worked steadfastly on our finance , nominating, festival, banquet, picnic, and education committees, served as comptroller and on several occasions turned down the nomination for the presidency. He was a willing worker but he shunned the spotlight. He had a brilliant financial background and when he sat on the board, his thoughts and participation produced many ideas and projects. His wife, Betty, accompanied him to our events. They worked together as a team with their dear friends, Don and Irma Tillman, on the food preparation for many of our events.

Harry's first trip to Germany was during WWII. He was a genuine hero who was awarded the Bronze Star medal. When the German artillery had pinned down the Americans outside Wurzburg, Harry climbed a steep hill while under enemy fire and called down the positions of the enemy guns which were quickly silenced by American action.

Harry grew up on a farm in Parkton, MD, attended Sparks High School and Western Maryland College. (A former Sparks student, Ann Hansen, told us how Harry was the handsomest boy in the school and all of the girls had their eyes on him.) He later attended Johns Hopkins University and received an accounting certificate. Harry and Betty shared a love for gardening, opera and traveling. They were members of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Rockdale where Harry served on the Church Council, Finance Committee and was an usher.

Harry was an avid member of the University of Maryland football and basketball teams and attended many games of the Baltimore Orioles.

He had a great love for the German Society. He extended his knowledge and friendship to us all. We are proud of him and grateful that we had the privilege to have known and loved him.

Harry is survived by Betty, his wife of 56 years, by his daughter and son-in-law, Lisa and John Godfrey, by his daughter, Renee Gruel, and by grandchildren, Ben, Mimi and Rachel.

A. VIRGINIA PHELAN, 77

Virginia died May 8. She was a devoted member of our Society. She was born Alice Virginia Paulus. Her feats as a bicyclist were detailed in her obituary by Fred Rasmussen in the

Baltimore Sun. He also wrote: "a lifelong student of German, she was a member of The German Society of Baltimore."

At age 50 she took up bicycling, joined the Baltimore Bicycle Club and wrote for Bicycle USA, the national magazine of the League of American Bicyclists. The bicycle was a frequent means of transportation for her. She even imported studded tires from Finland for cycling in the snow. She and her husband "Jack" toured Holland, Germany and Ireland. She recalled rest stops on the mountain peaks of the Black Forest to cool their tires en route to Basil, Switzerland. Between 1978 and 1989 she peddled 22,068 miles, which she duly recorded. In the process of maintaining her own bikes, she became an expert bike mechanic.

She often conducted bicycle tours of the city, pointing out historical spots such as the speakeasies of the prohibition era. When our Society put together a bus tour when the German-American Historical Society held its convention in Baltimore, Virginia served on the committee to list Baltimore's German heritage locations.

Her husband, Jack, served as principal of Mergenthaler Vocational-Technical School and of City College High School. He died in 1987. She is survived by her sons, Daniel, Robert and Thomas Phelan; her daughters, Ellen Wallace, Mary Eilerman and Claire Williams; many grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

N.J. GERMAN HERITAGE FESTIVAL The 33rd annual German Heritage Festival will be held Sept. 10 at the PNC Bank Arts Center, Holmdel, N. J. The event features all day entertainment, brass bands, folk dances, mass chorus, soccer tournament and German food. Beer. See www.germanfestival.org or call chairman Ted Hierl at 609-585-6757

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OUR SOCIETY GRANTS \$5,000 TO HIGH SCHOOL GERMAN STUDENTS

To encourage excellence in German language studies at the high school level, the German Society of MD made an award of \$5,000 to the American Association of Teachers of German to be awarded to those students excelling in the AATG exams. The Society received national recognition for our program at the annual convention of teachers of foreign languages held in Baltimore earlier this year and attended by over 6,000 teachers. The awards ceremony was held May 21 in the Adlersaal at Zion Church, City Hall Plaza. 98 students received cash awards. A record crowd of over 400 attended, including members of the students' families, their teachers, AATG representatives and members of our Society.

GUESTS FROM WASHINGTON

Representing the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany was Ralf Mildebrath, Cultural Department; Annina Luck, Cultural Counselor, Embassy of Switzerland, ; and Stefan Brunner, Cultural Coordinator, Goethe Institut Washington.

SPONSORS

Our Society is the founder and major sponsor of the event. along with the AATG. Other sponsors were: The Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany; The Embassy of Switzerland; The Embassy of Austria; The Goethe Institut of Washington.

Bavarian Haus, Shepardstown, W. Va.; Haribo, Baltimore; Washington Chapter of DANK - German American National Congress; Heidelberg, USA; Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange Program; and Deutsche Post Letternet. Zion Church of Baltimore provided its Adlersaal and facilities for the event. The Society provided refreshments after the event.

ALEX RUIZ, ST. PAUL STUDENT, WINS JULIUS HOFMANN MEDAL

The Julius Hofmann medal was given to the Maryland student who scored the highest in the national AATG examination, Alex Ruis of St. Paul's School.

The medal, bearing the bust of Hofmann, was commissioned in 1930 following the death of Pastor Julius Hofmann who personally fostered the study of German among children. He was a prominent member of our Society and for many years was Pastor of Zion Church. From 1930 until the outbreak of World War II, the medal was awarded in every public high school in Baltimore to the top student in the senior German class. A Hofmann Society was formed to preserve his memory and a fund was accumulated for prizes to students. Its last president was Dr. Carrie May Zintl. Its fund, in the early 1990's, was \$8,000. Due to declining health, Dr. Zintl asked our Society to take over the administration of the fund and our directors agreed to do so. We elected to use the annual presentation of the Hofmann medal as a means of preserving his memory.

DIRECTORS CITE NEED OF FUNDS FOR PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS

When the finance committee analyzed the two main sources of revenue (dues and investments), they concluded that changes must be made to continue and expand our present programs and to undertake new projects which are being pressed upon our Society. The committee instructed the investment managers to try to produce a higher net income. Our dues have not been increased for 25 years and inflation has taken a heavy toll on us. The directors are weighing an increase in dues against a potential membership loss.

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JOSEPH POTTHAST, 87

ELIZABETH M. POTTHAST, 97

HENRY G. HIRSCH, 97

ROSE MARGARET POTTHAST, 102

Teresa Potthast Hirsch sat with her sister, Elizabeth as she died at 5 pm on April 15, and lost her husband, Henry, 9 hours later, at 2 am Easter morning. One week later, on April 22, she lost her first cousin, Rose Potthast. Another first cousin, Joseph Potthast had died two months earlier in Borgholz, Germany. Teresa is the last family member of the generation which included her brother, Theodore Potthast, Sr., who served as a director of our Society for nearly 50 years and died at age 93. John Potthast was the father of Teresa, Elizabeth and Theodore. John's brother William was the father of Rose.

John and William emigrated from Borgholz, Germany to Baltimore in 1892 and married two sisters from Bavaria, Margaret and Anna Leib. In a German tradition, this made their children "double cousins." Joseph's father was Karl Potthast, the only one of the brothers to remain in Germany. The American and German families have remained close for 114 years. Last July, seven American Potthasts visited Joseph and family in Borgholz: 2 of William's great-grandsons and John's grandson (Ted, a Society director), two great-grandsons and 2 great-great-grandsons. They also visited the Leib cousins in Forchheim in Bavaria.

Joseph Potthast carried on the family furniture making tradition in Borgholz, which is still operated by his son, Karl. Elizabeth worked for a time at the Potthast furniture store on Charles Street in Baltimore.

Henry Hirsch taught biology, botany and other sciences in the Baltimore public schools for 41 years, at City, Poly and Forest Park. He had a great sense of humor, which he maintained even with a touch of Alzheimer's. His son, Tom, a physician, asked Henry how he was feeling and he replied: "Terrible. I've got pains and aches and miseries...but you have to expect those things at my age - I'm 75 your know." Tom said: "Dad you're 96." Henry replied: "Well I guess I'm not feeling too bad for 96!"

Teresa, at age 95, also has a good sense of humor. Her nephew, Ted, called her on April 22 and said: "Aunt Teresa, I have some good news and some bad news. The bad news is that Rosie just died. The good news is that you're the oldest living member of the Potthast family and that makes you our matriarch." Teresa replied: "I'm not sure I can handle all that responsibility. Does that mean I have to stop drinking and give good example?"

FREDERICK RIEDEL, NEW DIRECTOR

Fred Riedel has been an active member of our Society for many years and has appeared at nearly all our events. Fred was born and raised in South Baltimore, attended public schools and graduated from City College. He then served in the U. S. Army in Korea during the Korean War. He obtained A.A. degrees at Catonsville and Essex Community Colleges with honors. He entered the Baltimore City Fire Department in 1951 and retired as a Captain in 1994. From 1994 to 2004 he was a Park Ranger for the National Park Service at Fort McHenry. Fred and his wife, Louise, have a son and two grandchildren.

Fred's great grandfather, Johannes Riedel, came to America from Vielbrunn in the Odenwalt in the Grand Duchy of Hesse-Darmstadt. His great grandmother came from Prussia in 1866. (Germany did not become a nation until 1870).

Fred is a past president of Club Fidelitas. He is a member of Germania Lodge #106 AF&AM, Disabled American Veterans, American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Korean War Veterans.

HILDEBRANDT HONORS MENCKEN

Philip Hildebrandt, an active member of our Society, attended the ceremony and the laying of a wreath on the grave of our former member, Henry L. Mencken, on the 50th anniversary of his death on January 29th. Phil is past president of The Friends of the Mencken House and is instrumental in the house's maintenance and preservation.

CONDOLENCES to our member, KATHERINE GEPPI on the death of her mother, KATHERINE M. MEYERS who died April 17th. She was the mother of 12; grandmother of 21; and great-grandmother of 27.

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MEMBER PROFILE

ED DIPPEL: DESCENDANT OF DR. FRANKENSTEIN OF DARMSTADT

Our member, Ed Dippel, traces his ancestry to Johan Konrad Dippel, born in the Frankenstein castle in Darmstadt, Germany on August 10, 1673. Ed is a pharmaceutical sales manager who is a licensed boat captain on the side. His spare time is dedicated to his cabin cruiser and his wife, Shawn (Fiedler), also a member. He inherited his love of boats from his father, Ed has been a boater and a fisherman since boyhood.

His ancestor was made famous via a novel written by Mary Shelley (wife of the English poet, Percy Vyshe Shelley). While visiting Germany in 1814, she stayed near the Frankenstein castle and learned of the legend of Dr. Dippel (who referred to himself as Dr. Frankenstein because of his birth in the castle) He graduated from the University of Strasbourg and attained a reputation as a prominent theologian, philosopher, physician, and alchemist. But these accomplishments paled when compared to his skill as a scientist. He experimented on animals, and by running electricity through the muscles of dead animals, appeared to the local populace as having the power to bring them back to life. They claimed he sold his soul to the devil. Dr. Dippel was imprisoned several times for his activities and run out of several towns. For that time, he made important discoveries in the field of medicine and chemistry. While in Berlin, he formed a chemical compound called potassium ferocyanide which when mixed with oxygen, created a blue coloration which became widely used by artists and became known as Berlin or Prussian blue.

Reaction to his work caused him to leave Germany for Holland and then to Denmark. in 1714. After publishing several pamphlets offensive to the political powers, he was put in jail where he remained until 1726He returned to Germany and tried to negotiate with the Landgrave of Hesse to trade one of his secret formulas in exchange for the Frankenstein castle.

Dr. Dippel was immortalized as Dr. Frankenstein and the legend perpetuated by Mary Shelley's novel. Her monster has been plagiarized by thousands and made into movies and cartoons watched even today by children and adults.

(Thanks to Shawn Dippel for the research and for this article._

GERMAN AMERICAN PROPOSED TO HEAD CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

Air Force General Michael Hayden was nominated by President Bush as the director of the CIA. He was narrowly approved by the Senate committee and is headed for a full Senate vote.

Hayden is a name with deep Germanic roots. Composer Franz Joseph Hayden, born in Austria (1743-1809) wrote the music which was later adapted for the German National Anthem

A recent Baltimore County Executive, Roger Hayden, also shared the name.

RALPH MEYERSTEIN, 85

Born in Düsseldorf, Germany, Ralph was expelled from school because he was a Jew. He was present in his family's home on Kristallnacht in 1938 when storm troopers wintered and threw family possessions out the windows. in 1939 his parents sent him to England. They wrote to him, saying they were being thrown out of their home, that they would write again when they were relocated and telling him that their life insurance was in good standing. He came to America and ultimately to Owings Mills, MD, a Baltimore suburb, where he died

May 27. He pursued his parents' insurance policy for many years. Finally the Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance awarded him \$8,000 in 2002. He preserved his Jewish faith. His son, Rabbi Meyerstein, is the spiritual leader of the Adat Chaim Congregation in Reisterstown, MD.

OZRO RICHARD STEIGELMAN, 77

"Dick" Steigelman was a long time math teacher at Hereford High School in Baltimore County. He graduated from West Point Military Academy and entered the Air Force and became a pilot of U-2 spy planes. Thereafter he began a long teaching career. He carried with him his military background, often threatening recalcitrant students with a "dishonorable discharge" for failing grades. He built his own glass-and-wood home on a secluded hill overlooking the Gunpowder River on a site he selected using his aerial analysis skills he learned in the Air Force.

NEW GERMAN RESTAURANT

Betty Gruel suggests a trip to a new German restaurant in Frederick, Md: "Hennings". 117A Thomas Johns Drive. Mon-Thurs 11 to 9; Fri.-Sat 11 to 10. Tel 301-668-7777. The owner is Henning Lorengem, formerly of the Wurzburg Haus in Rockville.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS:

Jelke, Jr. Thomas

Jelke, Sinha

LeRoy, Kevin

Moos, Candace

Moos, Eric

Nicklaus, Gwendolyn

Potthast, William A

Potthast, Alice

Spies, James

Spies, Sharon

=====ATTEND OUR ANNUAL PICNIC

JUNE 25, SUNDAY AT THE OREGON RIDGE PARK

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106TH GERMAN FESTIVAL 0 FOR THE FIRST TIME AT THE TIMONIUM

FAIRGROUNDS JULY 29 AND 30

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GIFTS TO OUR SOCIETY ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE

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**REMEMBER OUR EDUCATION FUND =====ANNUAL AWARDS BANQUET
SAT. OCTOBER 28**

IN ADLERSAAL