

# THE GERMAN SOCIETY OF MARYLAND

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

## VEREINSNACHRICHTEN

OCT/NOV 2009 ISSUE #69

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### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I am writing this message in the heart of Oktoberfest season. When we think October, we think Oktoberfests and fun. We should also think with similar joy of German-American Day, designated by Presidential Proclamation as October 6. In November we recall with joy the fall of the Berlin Wall 20 years ago and the reunification of Germany. This transformation of the heart of Europe is marked in Germany and around the world as affirmation of democratic ideals and freedom. I and several other members of the Society attended the celebration of reunification, freedom and friendship between Germany and the United States at the German embassy and celebrations at the German-American Friendship Garden in Washington. Such events should remind us that despite economic problems, influenza and military conflicts, we should be optimistic and make this century better than the last.

JAMES D. SCHAUB, PhD.  
President

### BROCHURES AVAILABLE

Fliers explaining the Society's purpose and programs will be mailed to you on request. Call our office: 410-685-0450. Use them to recruit new members.

### ANNUAL AWARDS BANQUET HONORS NANCY GRASMICK

Dr. Nancy S. Grasmick, State Superintendent of Schools, will be German Society's honoree at our awards banquet on November 14. Dr. Grasmick is the nation's longest serving state school superintendent, having held the office 17 years under four governors. Her record of leadership has brought Maryland's public school systems to prominence in the country.

As our newsletter goes to press, there are still a few seats remaining for the event. If you wish to attend, please call our President, Jim Schaub at 301-814-9860 to inquire about availability. Tickets are \$55 a piece.

The event will feature a fine German dinner catered by Old World Caterers. A 3-piece ensemble will perform music during the event.

The printed program will feature commemorative pages sponsored by members and friends honoring ancestors and relatives and will include names of our benefactors who have taken ads as patrons and sponsors.

The event is not a "fund-raiser" but is an opportunity for our Society to show public admiration for a person of German-American heritage who has made a significant contribution to our state and nation. We are proud and delighted that Dr. Grasmick has accepted this award.

## KALENDER

- Oct. 29 "Club Night" Sour Beef Dinner at Zion
- Nov. 14 Annual Awards Banquet
- Nov. 28-29 Christkindlmarkt at Zion
- Feb. Fasching - Buergerverein (Mardi Gras)
- April 9 Annual Meeting of German Society

## FRITZSCHE AWARDED MEDAL OF THE GERMAN SOCIETY OF MARYLAND

**ROBERT K. FRITZSCHE**, a lifetime director of our Society, was awarded the Society's medal for his service and accomplishments within the Society and within the Maryland German-American community.

Our Society met in a special ceremony on October 13 to honor him. We were joined at the Zion Church by the Arion Gesangverein and members of other Buergerverein organizations.

Rob is an architect and an accomplished musician. For more than 20 years he has served as the president of the Arion Gesangverein, a choral society which has functioned in Baltimore for over 150 years, and which performed at the dedication of the military cemetery in Gettysburg when Lincoln gave his famous address. Rob Fritzsche has led our Society in singing of the American and the German national anthems, as successor to another of our famous musical members, Dr. Eltermann at our annual banquet.

Rob serves as chairman of our Song Book Committee. He is near completion of the songbook, having supervised the collection of 100 songs and aided by a computer program which prints the lyrics and music, he has prepared the selections for publication.

He was recently diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease. Although he is still able to work, the disease has limited his communication abilities. He carries a portable computer which permits him to speak by putting words on the screen.

Bob is a fluent speaker of German, having grown up in a German family; he spent several years studying in Germany while a youth.

Rob has served on our Board of Directors for nearly 20 years, and has assisted on a number of our committees. The awarding of our Society's medal to him was long overdue.

## GERMANY CELEBRATES UNIFICATION

Our Society's President Dr. James Schaub and Past President Brigitte Fessenden attended a gala event a guests of the German Embassy in Washington, DC on October 3 to celebrate the unification of East and West Germany. They reported that the ceremonies were awe-inspiring, the food lavish and the music expressive of the best German traditions. The weather graced the outside event and provided a beautiful evening. Our officers brought our Society's greetings and congratulations to the Federal Republic of Germany.

## SOUR BEEF DINNER

According to newspaper reports, church suppers of sour beef and dumplings are becoming a lost tradition in Baltimore. An exception is Zion Church at City Hall Plaza. Twice a year Zion puts on the best sauerbraten dinner to be found anywhere. Last year it began a "club night" for the local German organizations to come together for a repast and a chance to see some familiar faces. The current Club night is Oct. 29.

Jacques Kelly, well known columnist for The Baltimore Sun, compiled a list of some of this year's sour beef events, and there are not many remaining. One of our directors, Irma Tillman, reports that Zion's future in the sour beef business has been assured: Irma, one of the "old guard" and her contemporaries, have recruited and trained younger members of Zion's congregation in the art of making large quantities of sour beef and dumplings, and the task has passed down to the younger generation.

While the Church supper tradition in the city has been declining as the workers grow older, it seems that Baltimoreans will not give up on sour beef: many restaurants (even the Greek ones) have put the delicacy on their menus. It can be found all over town, especially in the suburbs where most Germans have moved. Quality varies. Rallo's on Fort Ave. serve the dish every Thursday and theirs is excellent. The Towson Diner serves a huge portion; it's good, but a bit sweet. If you find a restaurant which serves good sauerbraten, let us know and we will pass the word.

## FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY AWARD TO DR. MOHAMED ESA, GSOM DIRECTOR

Ambassador Klaus Scharioth presented the Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany to Dr. Mohamed Esa on Oct. 12, 2009, for his extraordinary service in promoting the German language. Dr. Esa has been chairing the language department at McDaniel College in Westminster, MD since 2007 and teaching German there since 1993. In 1995 he founded the German-American Day at McDaniel, which now draws over 1,000 students and persons interested in the German language, customs and culture.

Dr. Esa's innovative methods of teaching German are very popular among students and teachers. His interdisciplinary course, Kulturmetropole Berlin was recognized by the National College Board as one of the nation's best German courses. He has actively worked to promote the study of German in U.S. schools.

In presenting the award, Ambassador Scharioth referred to Dr. Esa's academic studies: born a citizen of Israel, he went to Germany to study medicine, but felt the need to get a solid education in the German language before entering medical school. He became enamored with the German language and instead went to obtain a doctorate in German at the University of Heidelberg.

Dr. Esa became a member of the German Society of MD in the early 1990s and has served as a member of our board of directors for several years. He has played a major role in putting on our annual awards banquet, arranging the program and for several years has produced a video presentation of the accomplishments of our honoree. His contributions to our educational program have been extraordinary.

## UMBC SEEKS STORIES OF GERMAN IMMIGRANTS SINCE END OF WWII

The University of Maryland Baltimore County is looking for stories of persons, especially women, who immigrated to Maryland from German after World War II. Susanne Sutton, lecturer on German at UMBC is teaching a class on German immigration to the USA. Her students are working to record the stories in sound and images and

will produce a digital story of the immigrants' experiences. The project seeks to discover the unique experience of the immigrant who left home to learn a new language and navigate a new culture; and to do this now, before the experiences are lost forever.

If you are willing to share your story with the students, please call Susanne Sutton at 301-604-7496 or email her at [ssusanne@umbc.edu](mailto:ssusanne@umbc.edu)

## GERMAN-AMERICAN DAY, OCT. 6

President Obama signed a proclamation declaring Oct. 6 to be German-American Day, following a tradition established by President Reagan. At a ceremony at the German-American Friendship Garden in the Washington Mall, our President, Dr. James Schaub read aloud a proclamation issued by Maryland's Governor Martin O'Malley. Another proclamation by the Governor of Virginia was also read. Many members of our Society, including Past President Brigitte Fessenden also attended the event. Some of our members, including Walt Mathers, were prevented by traffic mishaps from reaching the Mall on time, but made it to the luncheon afterward. Our Society is considering hiring a bus to go to next year's celebration.

## GUNTHER EVENT POSTPONED

Henry Gunther, the last soldier killed in World War I, was a Baltimorean who is buried in Holy Redeemer Cemetery on Belair Road. Plans to honor him on Veterans Day this year were postponed in order to complete a monument to be dedicated at the ceremony, as well as to give greater publicity and increase participation in the ceremony. Our Society is working with the cemetery, the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion to publicize the event, which will be held on Nov. 11, 2010. Gunther was a German-American whose devotion to duty is praiseworthy and deserves to be made more widely known. He was born to German immigrants and spoke fluent German. His home was on Pratt Street directly opposite Patterson Park, where a tree was planted in his honor. A VFW post was named after him.

World War I ended at 11 a.m. on Nov. 11, 1918, now called Veterans Day.

## **BERLIN WALL REMEMBERED IN ECUMENICAL SERVICE OCT. 4**

When the Berlin Wall fell on Nov. 9, 1989, our then President, Donald Tillman met with the Pastor of Zion Church, H. J. Siegfried Otto to plan a religious service of thanksgiving for the gift of freedom for all of our compatriots in Germany. While that meeting was in progress, Judge Gerard Wittstadt, president of the Society for the History of the Germans in Maryland placed a call to Pastor Otto, with the same purpose in mind. The result was a scheduling of the first German ecumenical service a few weeks later.

This year the 20th of such services was held. As usual, our Society contributed funds for the service and the reception afterwards. It was well attended.

Presiding at the service was Zion's pastor, Holger Roggelin. Pastor Siegfried Otto, who presided at the first such service 20 years ago, is a member of our Society's Board of Directors. Also participated in the service were: Father Charles Hergenroeder, a Redemptorist priest from St. Michael's Church, Fells Point; Father Richard Lawrence, St. Vincent de Paul Church; Father John Biermann, a Pallotine priest from St. Jude's Shrine; and The Rev. Helmut Edelmann, Propst, Lecturer, Kiel University Germany. Edelmann is presently in the USA performing a study of the works done in recent years by Lutheran clergy who were trained at two seminaries in North Germany specifically for service in the United States.

The preacher at the event was The Rev. Dekan Klaus Schmid a native of Germany who happened to be a vicar at the Zion Church when the wall fell. He spoke of the dangers of being a practicing Christian in East Germany under communism. Although the churches were open, communist spies were always in attendance and the Christians lived in fear, but many were not deterred and spoke out against communism, at great peril. Immediately after the wall fell, the churches were packed, at least temporarily. Rev. Schmid, since 2002 has served as the Dean of the Protestant Synod Bad Schwalbach within the "Evangelische Kirche in Hesse and Nassau".

The food for the reception after the service was prepared by the young members of Zion. Zion feared

that as the older women who had prepared food were "wearing out" such events would disappear. However, a call went out to the young members of the congregation who responded heartily. The "veterans" worked side-by-side with the neophytes, passing on to them the secrets and traditions so that the tradition of Zion's German food events will be passed on to the next generation.

## **ECUMENISM; THIS YEAR**

The clergy at this year's ecumenical service were Lutheran and Catholic. One of our members compared the two religions by saying that the Catholics have a boss (the Pope) but the Lutherans don't like to have a boss; and the Lutherans sing all 7 verses of a hymn but the Catholics usually stop at 2. Martin Luther began as a Catholic priest, and so the theology and liturgy of the two are very similar. After the reformation, Germany was split between the two religions and the two factions actually fought a long war against one another.

The famous Baltimore sculptor Hans Schuler must have been an ecumenist: he created the magnificent statue of Martin Luther which now stands next to Lake Montebello at the entrance to Druid Hill Park; but he also made the status of St. Ignatius Loyola, the leader of the Counter-Reformation, which stands on the campus of Loyola Blakefield, the Jesuit school on Charles Street.

## **CONGRATULATIONS TO CHRISTEL VAN DER BERG; 20 CONSECUTIVE YEARS**

Christel, our director and corporate secretary, is the only known person to have attended every one of our ecumenical services since the first in 1989. She was joined at a special table at the reception after the service by 9 others who were present at the first service: Pastor H. J. Siegfried Otto; Bärbel Otto; Judge Gerard Wittstadt and Dr. Rosemary Wittstadt; Dutch and Betty Niemann; Irma Tillman and Ted and Connie Potthast. Rev. Otto, Judge Wittstadt, Irma's husband Don Tillman (then our Society's president) and Ted Potthast formed the committee to initiate the function.

