



DANK Chapter 71

German Heritage Society of Erie

Mitteilungsblatt



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January February 2017



I know that some of you have been looking for your newsletter this month. Just getting through the holidays was a chore. After our Christmas celebration, it just felt like everything was going downhill. No snow, so I couldn't get the ambition to start baking my cookies nor getting up any decorations. Just as I started my baking, then one by one, we all came down with that stomach virus going around. Thankfully it cleared my house by Christmas Eve. Don't remember ever being that sick – well I don't need to tell you since every one that I talked to had had it in their family circle.

The year ended on a sad note as we learned of the passing of Carolyn Brabender, wife of Robert Brabender. Caroline was affected with Alzheimer's disease. Carolyn was a teacher, and so a donation was made in her name to the DANK Education Fund.

Then too, the start of our year was another shock, when we learned of the sudden passing of Christel Caldwell. Chris had been about her daily business, and midafternoon suffered a heart attack at home. She was taken to the hospital and shortly after 4 in the morning, she passed on. Chris loved dogs, having had her own for many years, then dog-sat for others, so a donation was sent to the ANNA Shelter in her name.

Our first meeting of the year is this month. Usually the weather has been so bad in January that we had to cancel so be sure to join us on February 15th. Don't forget...



Your safety is first and foremost during the winter months. Meetings will be cancelled if the weather conditions are deteriorating as reported on the news. We will notify you of a cancellation via email. No email on file? Please call Bev at 456-9599



Thanks to those of you who have shared your email address with me. We have been "green" to help conserve our trees/environment for two years, and we still are missing some email addresses. It will only be used to send you our newsletter in a pdf format that takes less space when sharing and to keep you updated on the happenings in the chapter, such as cancellations. Be assured that we will never share or sell our email list to any outside organizations or individuals without your permission. So please...drop me a line at DANK71@gmail.com so we can get our list up to date. If you haven't got an email account, we will continue to send information to you via the postal service, but remember it can take 4-5 days to reach you.



In Remembrance



In Memoriam...



Carolyn A. Cairns Brabender
January 11, 1928 – December 25, 2016

Carolyn A, (Cairns) Brabender, passed at age 88 years. Before Alzheimer's overtook her, Carolyn was a dedicated wife, mother and a teacher of faith, values and responsibility to her children and the Junior High School students she taught. She and her husband Bob joined DANK Chapter Erie in 1991; Carolyn had also been active in the ministry at Blessed Sacrament Church and a giving volunteer at the Gertrude Barber Center, now the Barber National Institute.

Carolyn is survived by Robert C. Brabender, her husband of 64 years, by their four sons Mark, Kirk, David, Robert, Jr. two daughters, Mary E. Cray, and Patricia Viglione and their spouses; six children, twelve grandchildren and fourteen great grandchildren.

A memorial gift was sent to the DANK Education Fund in Carolyn's memory to honor her years of teaching.

Ruhe in Frieden



In Memoriam...



B. Christel Kuster Caldwell
April 9, 1930 – January 7, 2017

Longtime member and benefactor of our Chapter, Christel Caldwell was stricken with a heart attack in the mid-afternoon of Friday January 6th passing in the early hours of Saturday, at age 86. Her passing came as a shock to all since Chris was so active - right up until Friday afternoon. She enjoyed taking her place at the Beer Ticket sales alongside George at the German Festivals.

Christel was born in Danzig, Germany the daughter of Eugene and Emmy Thomas Kuster. She was raised in Berlin, Germany where she was employed as a hospital dietician for many years. She married Karl E. Caldwell in 1975 and settled in Erie. She attended St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church and Lakewood United Methodist Church.

Chris loved dogs and after her beloved pets crossed the Rainbow Bridge, she became a dog-sitter for friends. She was a member of several local German affiliated Clubs.

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband Karl E. Caldwell in January 1999 and stepson Roy E. Caldwell.

She is survived by her companion George Stefanovski; a stepdaughter Judy Caldwell Edwards of Lafayette, Ind.; a stepson Blake D. Caldwell of Laurinburg, N.C. and Peggy Sorenson Caldwell (wife of Roy E. Caldwell) of Dallas, TX ; six grandchildren, nine great grandchildren and several nieces and nephews.

A memorial gift was sent to the ANNA Shelter in Christel's name.

Bißchen und Stückchen – Bits and Pieces



We extend our sincere best wishes and prayers to our members who are struggling with health issues. If you know someone we have missed, please let us know.

Glen Blodgett
 Robert Brabender
 Brigitte Chase
 Emil & Gretel Daeschner
 Fred Huttel, Jr.

Where to start? 2016 was not kind to some members. As we reflect on the incidents that had an impact on our Chapter, several members had varying degrees of illness requiring hospitalization and therapy. Others really don't let us know and we learned about it via the grapevine!

Then too we mourned the loss of long time members Hilde Huttel, Luise Dudkiewicz, and Carolyn Brabender who passed on and left an empty space in our lives.

On a positive note, we welcomed 10 new members this past year, five joining at our German Fest. The latest five are the grandchildren of Beverly Pochatko who received their

membership as a St. Nicholas gift. For years, I have advocated gifting our children/grandchildren with the gift of DANK membership to engage them in learning more about their heritage.

We celebrated the start of Christmas at a brunch with family and friends at the Männerchor Club. It was a small gathering, but we enjoyed each other's company. The Männerchor Gesangverein provided the music and it really gave us a start to the holiday season. Our youngest guest, Ava Lesniewski entertained us with her impish smile and determination that she was a member of the chor.

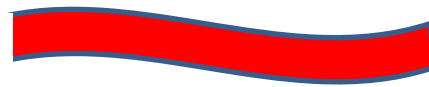
What is ahead for us? Using the tools learned at the leadership conference held in Chicago in October, we are going to focus on getting the word out about DANK. Like all chapters, we need to bring in new members and share with them the culture of Germany with its many traditions and rich history. There are so many things to share.

Weather permitting our next meeting will be at **7 PM on Wednesday, February 15th** at the Männerchor club. Make it an evening and join us for dinner at 5:30 PM. Call 814.456.9599 for more information. We look forward to welcoming many new faces who come to learn more about our German Heritage organization.

Visit us on Face Book at **DANK - 71 German Heritage Society of Erie.** and follow our German Festival FB page at **German Heritage Fest 2017 Erie, PA.**



Special Greetings



Jan 1	Jacki	Seib, Sr.
Jan 3	Tim	Lesniewski
Jan 10	James	von Loewe
Jan 28	Bryan D.	Bechler
Feb 1	Margaret J	Carter
Feb 5	Gregory	Wilkes
Feb 11	Melissa	Shearer
Feb 14	Thomas	Kliber



Erie Männerchor Gesangverein – our DANK German Chorus

MUSIC MATTERS!



Our small Männerchor Gesangverein is struggling to stay active and not ready to give up yet! Current members are: Mace Bowersox, Margaret Carter, Paul Martinson, Bev Pochatko, Margaret Potocki, Carol Snippert, Marge Santabene, directed by Kathy Swanson. We enjoy singing and learning the meaning behind the words that are taught phonetically by Margaret Potocki. They provide a 45 minute program of English and German songs at senior retirement and assisted living centers. It's always such a pleasure when we get a resident or two singing a song with us, or when we are finished they take our hands and thank us for singing songs they remembered. It's such a great feeling and I wish more could understand why it's important to do these programs and keep our music alive.

Recently we were honored to sing for Chris Caldwell's funeral. She had requested we sing "Kein Schönerland" and "Der Ehre Gottes in der Natur" for the Service at Lakewood United Methodist Church. Chris had sung with our group up to two years ago.

The group will resume practice for the upcoming spring season on Tuesday February 28 starting at 5:00 P.M. until 6:30 P.M. Why so early? There were a few reasons that came into play – Some felt it that it would free up the evening; it would mean that perhaps those working in the downtown area would find it more convenient than going home and then making the trip back; it would be beneficial for those who have difficulty driving after dark; and winter weather conditions also played into the decision. Those who wish could have dinner afterwards at the club.

Our current membership requirement is that you are a member of DANK or the Erie Männerchor Club and pay a one-time fee of \$25 after the 4th practice. If you or anyone you know would like to come and see how we work, give Carol Snippert (455-7009) or Bev (456-9599) a call for information and we will have a practice folder ready for you.



Six more weeks of Winter!

Happy Valentine's Day



There are 10 good reasons why you should sing!

- Singing releases endorphins which make you feel instantly happier.
- You also release oxytocin a natural stress reliever and with less stress you sleep better
- Singing reduces the risk of heart disease
- Your posture improves and you look more confident
- When singing with a group your feelings of safety and confidence increases
- Provides a good workout – your lungs improve your circulation, develops healthier breathing patterns, and you tone your abdominal muscles
- Singing has been proven to boost your immune system
- It's really good for your brain and will enhance your mental awareness, concentration, and memory
- Singing is an all-natural way to help treat dementia, lung cancer, depression, and chronic pain
- In general, you will probably live longer



For country folks, the winter season has always been time of little work. The few animals they had were fed quickly and the weather was quite uncomfortable, and therefore people longed for spring to arrive. The season of long winter evenings is also the season for storytelling, and in those days, many a spooky story was told. Through the Muller characters the spooky story of the four seasons comes to life.

The longed-for spring season is portrayed by the Halbweisse. They show light and youth. The powerful summer is represented by the Melcher and its sophisticated but rare edition the Spiegeltuxer. The Zaggler symbolizes autumn and the wild Zottler symbolizes the winter months. The scary Hexe precedes the characters and by doing so makes room for them. Other characters that may accompany the Mullers are times, such as the Bär (Bear) and the Klötzler (Woodman). Together these figures make up the dancing tradition of the Mullers. This particular form of Muller dancing is from the Tyrolean mountain village of Rum, Austria near the city of Innsbruck. This dance is only performed during the Fasching or Mardi Gras season and may only be performed from Three Kings Day, (January 6th) until midnight on Fat Tuesday, the night before Ash Wednesday.

All the figures wear hand-carved wooden masks and each have their own style of costume featuring embroidered pants, lederhosen and colored burlap. Each figure also wears a different head dress featuring silk flowers, beads, turkey and peacock feathers and animal pelts.

All steps, movements, and sounds typical to the traditional masks, are similar in character to the courtship displays of game animals. The Muller uses them to attract attention and to impress. It starts with the smacking noises the Muller makes with his lips. The very rhythmic steps are particularly remarkable, which, at times, have almost ecstatic characteristics. By using these movements, the masked Muller tries to draw attention to his costume, in particular to his head dress.

The Mullerschlag (Muller tap) is an inextricable part of the Mullers' performance, which originally was to bring fertility but nowadays only has the meaning of a greeting or good wish. In many cases it is interpreted as an honor, and many a person is offended, if he/she does not receive a 'Schlag'.

Naturally, music is an important part of Fasching and it should definitely be played using an accordion or "button box". The music currently used by the Mullers is known as the "Muller Waltz."

All the figures wear hand-carved wooden masks, many of which are carved and painted by our local woodcarver Bryan Berenson www.btbsculptor.com. In Tyrol, Bryan apprenticed and is now certified as a wood and stone sculptor. Bryan's experience and talent help to keep the tradition of the Mullers thriving here in America. Each of the figures has their own style of costume.



The Bär embodies Spring. It is said that the Bär is so excited for Spring that he runs around wanting to play with onlookers.

His fun is only hampered by the Driver of Winter, (or better known to friends of The Milwaukee Mullers) the Bär Trainer, whose sole job is to keep the Bär from hurting anyone. The Bär trainer usually yells to the Bär with his roar of "Sambaaaah Bär!" while pulling on his chain.



The Halbwiesse symbolizes the much longed-for season of Spring.

His mask and head dress symbolize those of the Melcher, but instead of a 'lederhose', he wears long, white, embroidered pants. The pants are embroidered with small, round, colorful, embroidered patches, with colorful edging and tiny bells.

The Halbwiesse holds a willow switch in his hands. He uses this to catch the spectators and give them a 'Mullerschlag' (Muller tap) which is explained on the Muller Tradition page.

The Halbwiesse is the most agile character of them all. He hops up and down on both legs, or bounces from one leg to the other. He also jumps over his willow switch like a jump rope.

The Hexe is a witch who generally precedes the other characters to make room for them. She wears a terrifying mask with a large nose, a braid of fake hair and a long scarf. She is dressed in an old 'Dirndl', or folklore costume, and felt shoes. A padding is sewn into the back of the garment, to for a hunchback. She carries a gnarled stick, or an old broom in her hand. A purse also belongs to the accessories of a Hexe.



The Hexe walks like an old, frail women, with a hunched back and feet bent in. On occasion the Hexen may feel it appropriate to perform a Hexentanz (witches dance) in front of all the other characters.



It's the Klötzlers job to make a scene and make room for the Muller's to enter. The unmistakable look of the Klötzler is what draws the attention of the spectators.

His garment is fitted with wooden slats that create noise as he bounces around. Very often there are two different types of wood to create the Klötzler (Dark Walnut and Beech).

What makes the Klötzler especially noteworthy is that his robe itself weighs about 22 pounds.

The Melcher symbolizes the season of Summer and is known for his beautiful, youthful face with mustache. He is dressed very light, as it is proper for summer. The costume consists of a white tracht shirt with rolled up sleeves, short 'lederhosen', embroidered suspenders and a matching scarf, knit calf supports, coarse, low cut shoes and a embroidered satchel.



The head dress of the Melcher is small. It consists of a black hat to which the mask is attached. A piece of golden string is placed around the hat and protrudes slightly over the rim. The front of the hat is decorated with colorful silk flowers and beads.

The Melcher and his modified version the Spiegeltuxer are the only characters allowed to 'Schuhplattler' during the Muller performance. Following the entrance of all Muller characters the Melchers form a circle and perform their 'Schuhplattler'.



The sophisticated, but very rare version of the Melcher is the Spiegeltuxer.

The Spiegeltuxer's garment consists of 'lederhosen' and a tracht shirt. Over the tracht shirt a velvet vest is worn which features the golden Tirolean eagle. Over the vest a 'Tuxerjanker' is worn with a shoulder wrap over the right shoulder.

The most striking feature of the Spiegeltuxer attire is the head dress. Instead of a hat he wears a huge structure, adorned with rooster feathers on the outside. Attached to the front is a mirror which is said to blind the forces of evil. This mirror is framed by strings of glass pearls,

colorful silk flowers and small colored beads. The backside of the head dress features colorful ribbons and metal coat of arms.



The Zaggler symbolizes the season of Autumn and like the Zottler, wears a 'Schrägputz', but by far not as elaborate. Instead of peacock feathers the Zottler wears rooster feathers. White chicken feathers support the back side. The head dress is finished off by a piece of cloth of the same material as the garment.

The garment consists of a blue suit and trimmed all over with colorful balls of wool and small bells. All edges of the garment are lined with a colorful red, yellow, blue, and green fringe.

The mask of the Zaggler is masculine, but very friendly, which is befitting for fall. Like the Zottler, the Zaggler wears a satchel around his waist.

The Zottler character symbolizes the season of Winter and is known for having a terrifying mask. With the exception of the Tuxer, he sports the largest head dress of all Mullers. It consists of a 'Larve' (mask) and a hat adorned with peacock feathers. These peacock feathers are attached to the left side of the hat, at a right angle to the mask. This form of mask is known as a 'Schrägputz'. So called glass beards are arranged in a half circle on the front of the hat. The beards are further decorated with multi-colored silk flowers and small, colored beads. A fox fur is attached to the top of the hat, which covers the entire hat.



The suit of the Zottler consists of red, green, yellow, and blue threads that have been pulled from a Rupfensack (burlap sack). Around the waist, the Zottler wears a Gurt – a belt embroidered with quills.

The Zottler is especially known for performing the 'Frosch' move.

The Muller Fasching Verein of Milwaukee is proud of what it has accomplished over the years. "We are not only the first club of its kind in North America, but we have successfully brought the customs of the Rumer Muller across the Atlantic where this unique type of dancing can be shared with a whole new audience. We would like to thank our friends the Rumer Muller for their support in our efforts to educate the people of the United States in their great customs. "

If in all the hustle and bustle of the holiday season you forgot to renew your membership, it's not too late!



It's also a good time to time to introduce family members and friends to DANK. \$40 (\$ 50 with spouse), College students are \$10. Children 18 years and younger are free. They will enjoy membership in the largest German cultural organization; receive six bimonthly issues of the German American Journal Magazine; and join in our cial activities. Applications available at our meetings, or on-line at www.DANK.org

Your renewal notice is enclosed. Please update and return with payment to:

DANK RENEWAL 750 East 10th St. Erie, PA 16503



DANK Chapter 71
 German Heritage Society of Erie
 750 East 10th Street
 Erie, PA 16503-1414

TIME SENSITIVE



Meeting – Wed. the 15th

Solving the Puzzle



Puzzles? What type of puzzle?
 Crossword? Word Search? Suduko? or
 just plain picture puzzles?

Actually we need to solve the problems facing not only our Chapter, but that of preserving our heritage. We need your input! We are looking at various ways to improve attendance at our meetings and social functions; providing programs of interest; plan special events such as locally historical tours; bus trips, and social events. We are overdue for our election of officers! Without your input, we cannot grow or sustain as a community.

Please plan to attend our meeting on Wed. Feb 15th. Can I count on your support?

Jeff Chase
 Chapter President
 Jchase8@gmail.com



- Feb 15 -7 pm Solving Puzzles
- March 1 – Ash Wednesday
- March 15 - Meeting
- April 19 - Meeting
- May 17 - Meeting
- June 21 Chapter Meeting
- July Family Picnic
- Aug 16 - Meeting and volunteer sign-up
- Sept. 2-3 German Heritage Festival
- Sept. 20 - Meeting
- Oct 13-15 National Convention in Chicago IL
- Oct 18 - Meeting
- Nov 15 - Meeting
- Dec 3rd Christmas Celebration