



# DANK Chapter 71 German Heritage Society of Erie Mitteilungsblatt



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## Anniversary Celebration

On Wednesday, April 19<sup>th</sup>, 16 members gathered in the Diamond room at the Erie Männerchor Club, not only to celebrate our 26<sup>th</sup> year but to also honor a local organization for the work they are doing -the Veterans Miracle Center Erie as we enter into our 27<sup>th</sup> year. It was good to see member Frank Swiderski who traveled in from Ashtabula for the meeting. Prior to the dinner we discussed the fact that we now have only 9 members left of our original founding group. As our members have aged, we need to attract more members to keep our heritage alive. After all had assembled, Frank Swiderski led with a German dinner blessing before starting up to the buffet. Everyone agreed that Chef Michelle did a fantastic job of preparing a dinner with the main entrees of Rouladen, Spätzle, and Stuffed Chicken Breast. Having been well satisfied, our guest speaker for the evening was introduced - Mr. John Kowalczyk of the Veterans Miracle Center Erie. First he thanked all those present for their service to our country, and then explained the VMCE – their goals and how his organization is helping the Veterans in Erie County. The VMCE provides veterans assistance in the form of basic life necessities such as clothing, hygiene products, housewares and more to homeless, at risk or low income men and women. To qualify for VMCE services, veterans must provide proof of their status and have a demonstrated need. The products provided are new, and are provided at no cost to them. They also work with various veterans organizations to assist the veteran in need.



At the conclusion of his presentation, a check in the amount of \$500 was presented to him on behalf of the Chapter and the German Heritage Festival Association. He was quite surprised at the amount, but it was the least we could do to help our Veterans. We recognize that many Americans of German heritage have and continue to serve in our armed forces. We also know the toll that each war has had on these men...in WWII they called it 'shell-shock', today it is called PTSD. No matter the name, it had/has a devastating effect on not only the soldiers but their families as well. This is only a small token of our appreciation to those men and women.



Jason Jaquith, Glenn Blodgett, Tom Kliber, Frank Swiderski



Carol Snippet, Margarete Potocki, John & Melissa Lesniewski



*In Memoriam...*



**Robert C. "Bob" Brabender**  
January 1927 – April 2017



Robert C. "Bob" Brabender, age 90, died on April 16, 2017 (Easter Sunday) just four months following the death of his wife, Carolyn, on Christmas Day 2016. Bob and Carolyn were married for over sixty-four (64) years.

Bob is survived by his and Carolyn's six children: sons, Mark, Kirk, David, and Robert Jr; two daughters, Mary Cray and Patricia Viglione; twelve grandchildren, and 15 great grandchildren.

Bob was proud beyond words to be a teacher. It was not merely his job, it was his vocation. His pursuits went beyond family, education, and sports. He gave much back to the Erie community - elected as a City Assessor and a multi-term Erie City Councilman, Throughout the years, he was at various times appointed to local government authorities, including the Erie Civic Center Authority and the Erie Western Pennsylvania Port Authority. Never one to lead from the rear, he was always at the forefront advocating for issues about which he felt strongly. In short, Robert "Bob" Brabender's life was a life well-lived.

A Charter member, Bob joined DANK Chapter Erie in 1991.

*A memorial gift was sent to the DANK Education Fund in Bob's memory to honor his years of teaching.*

*In Memoriam...*



**Carole A. Wunner**  
September 1935 – April 2017



Carole A. (Weigle) Wunner, age 81, of Erie, passed away on April 20, 2017. She was a daughter of the late Edward and Hazel Weigle.

Graduating as valedictorian of her class at Wilson College Carole later earned a master's degree from Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, working first as a roving reporter for the Erie Times Publishing and then in corporate communications for Saint Vincent Health Center, where she remained for thirty years.

Carole and her husband Siegfried were Founding Members of DANK Erie in 1990. She was an active member and volunteer of the Cathedral of St. Paul. Carole was a member of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), and a past president of the AAUW's Erie branch; and Phi Beta Kappa Most recently she enjoyed reading with students at Emerson Gridley School. In her free time she loved to play bridge and read.

Survivors include her husband of 55 years, Siegfried Wunner; a daughter, Susanne (Bradford) Fitch, and two grandchildren, Benjamin and Josephine Fitch.

*A memorial gift was sent to the scholarship fund of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) in Carole's memory.*



*"Happiness is being remembered"*

*Elizabeth Pfeiffer*

Occasionally we learn of members who have been under-the-weather for various reasons. Some members are no longer up and about and we think of them as well. Please keep them in your thoughts and prayers and perhaps send a card or give them a call to let them know they are thought about.

Tom Kliber  
 Susan Roehrl  
 Gretel & Emil Daeschner  
 Phil Susann



*Glückwünsche zum Geburtstag*

*May you enjoy many birthdays to come...*

May 1	Robert T.	Schlaudecker
May 11	Carol	Susann
May 17	Kathleen	Bechler
May 17	John	Yanoshik
May 24	Steve	Seib, Sr.
May 27	Christopher	Shearer
May 29	Allene M.	Kraus
Jun 5	Roland	Zuschlag
Jun 16	Else	Bayer
Jun 24	Melissa	Lesniewski
Jun 28	Charlotte	Chase



## Anniversary Greetings to

Phil & Carol Susann who celebrate 46 years on June 12<sup>th</sup>  
 Emil & Gretel Daeschner who celebrate 74 years on June 22<sup>nd</sup>

## Veranstungskalender & Calendar of Events



**Mittag** ➤ **21 Juni 2017 7:00 PM** General Meeting & Program Guest speaker: Tom Hutzelman, Erie Society for Genealogy Research and DANK member. "Finding Your German Relatives". Learning your family origins can be the start of an intriguing look into the past. Guests are always welcome to attend.

**Juli 19<sup>th</sup> – Sommer Picnic at the Huttel's.**

**Aug 16<sup>th</sup> 7:00 PM– Volunteer sign up and mtg at the Männerchor Club**



Throughout Germany's regions religious and celebratory traditions and festivals mark the arrival of the last day of the *Eastertide* celebrations, which was not Easter Monday but is **Pfingsten**, Pentecost, derived from the Greek *pentekoste* fiftieth day. Another *moveable feast* and a major Christian festival, **Pfingsten Montag** takes place fifty days after Jesus rose from the dead which can be in May or at the latest on June 13th, to commemorate the day when, as Jesus had foretold, the Holy Spirit gave the *gift of tongues* to his disciples, and brought about the birth of the Christian church.

As a religious and public holiday thousands of Germany's Christians attend the special services and walk in procession to church, often wearing their traditional regional dress, in other areas it is horsemen carrying banners and crosses and led by priests who make the annual ride. While at the same time there are local secular and pre-Christian customs and traditions, many connected to farming and planting, spring fun fairs are held all over the country, and it is also the *revision break* for many students before their summer exams.



Not all have to study though, and the night between Pentecost and Pentecost Monday is *Unruhnacht*, 'unrest night', or *Bosheitsnacht*, 'wickedness night', when, similar to *Walpurgisnacht*, any young people who do not have to 'hit the books' are often out and about making mischief, doing what in pagan times was believed evil spirits did during this night, come out into the open and steal any moveable objects that had not been safely put away.

At the same time in some regions the more romantically minded young men nail branches from a birch tree, a symbol of the fertile spring and summer seasons, to the walls of homes belonging to the young woman they hope, perhaps even secretly, to marry. A fertility rite that can be traced back thousands of years.

Many of the festival's customs are centred around trees, greenery and the fertility of nature, including *Pfingstbaumpflanzen*, Pentecost tree planting, the covering of a birch tree with ribbons like an old fashioned maypole. While the Pentecost wreath, Oelder *Pfingstenkranz*, is a three metre high pyramid made from evergreen branches used as the central point for dancing and the singing of centuries old songs, which dates from the days Woton was worshipped as, amongst other things, the god of harvest and farm animals.



If Pentecost occurred in May livestock, that had spent the winter and spring in barns and fields close to the villages, would be taken out to pasture for the first time that year, often to fields high in the mountains. Leading the herd the strongest animal, *der Pfingstochse*, the Pentecost Ox, would be decorated with flowers, greenery, ribbons and bells, a tradition that can still be seen in some rural areas, especially in southern Germany, and gives rise to the saying *geputzt wie ein Pfingstochse*, 'dressed up like a Pentecost ox, when someone is 'dressed up to the nines'. A June Pfingsten with the animals already in their summer pastures would not mean no Pfingstochse that year, one would still be found, decorated and displayed.

One week after Pentecost Sunday is *Trinity Sunday*, the beginning of the longest season of the church year which lasts until the first Sunday of Advent, and Corpus Christi takes place on *the following Thursday*. Known as **Fronleichnam** it is another religious and public holiday in catholic regions of Germany, and based upon the old German word for Lord, *fro*, it

means 'the body of the Lord'.

Especially in the smaller towns and villages there are open air masses and processions, which are often led by children who have received their first communion some weeks previously, that commemorate the Christian sacrament of holy communion and where the Holy Eucharist, wafers blessed by a priest, is carried in *das Allerheiligste*, 'the Holiest of Holies', an elaborately decorated transparent box, through streets garlanded with birch tree branches and flowers.

Once again together with the religious celebrations there are other festivals and traditions, one of which is the parade of ships on the Rhine alongside Cologne. Held every year since 1435, the legend behind the *Muelheimer Gottestracht* is that a thief tried to escape by crossing the river with a boat but an unknown force, believed to be God punishing him, stopped the vessel from moving.



It is the beginning of summer and Corpus Christi, Fronleichnam, brings an end to the series of religious celebrations and holidays that began almost 70 days previously on Palm Sunday, with processions, services and the blessing of the pussy willow or hazel branches that had been carried through the streets. Substitutes for the palm which is difficult to find in early springtime Germany.

*Fronleichnam procession* photographer Andreas Gaelle 2007, *Oelder Pfingstenkranz* photographer Meik Libor 2007, *Lithographed Postcard from 1902, Muelheimer Gottestracht*, all courtesy de.Wikipedia

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**Oma's Kitchen** – There is nothing better than a simple potato salad to accompany a summer meal or to carry to a picnic. My thanks to Francine McKenna Klein for sharing her recipe with me!



### German Potato Salad

4 slices bacon	1 tsp. salt
1 small onion, chopped	3 cups cooked potatoes, chopped
1/4 cup vinegar	ground black pepper
2 tbsp. water	parsley
3 tbsp. sugar	

1. Place the potatoes into a pot, and fill with enough water to cover. Bring to a boil, and cook for about 10 minutes, or until easily pierced with a fork. Drain, and set aside to cool.
2. Place the bacon in a large deep skillet over medium-high heat. Fry until browned and crisp, turning as needed. Remove from the pan and set aside.
3. Add onion to the bacon fat, and cook over medium heat until browned. Add the vinegar, water, sugar, salt and pepper to the pan. Bring to a boil, then add the potatoes and parsley. Crumble in half of the bacon.
4. Heat through, then transfer to a serving dish. Crumble the remaining bacon over the top, and serve warm. This German Potato Salad can be served warm or chilled, but you taste the bacon a bit more when it's chilled.

*April showers brought May flowers and now June is busting out all over!*

# Keeping Up Traditions In Germany



German customs and traditions take a very important place in everyday life. Traditions mean integration. People in Germany and other countries create their own customs and rituals in their strong drive to build community around themselves, such as celebrating certain occasions, cooking definite dishes for some holidays, wearing certain clothes on different occasions, setting up fan clubs, organizing sports sections, etc.

Customs and traditions provide assurance and an answer to the question “What am I going to do at that occasion?” They provide a framework, a set of signs and symbols, rules and roles, and appropriate dress. The greatest events in the passage of life—birth and death, christening and wedding— all have their traditional customs. Following them means respect for our predecessors who passed them over to us.

However, the rapid scientific-technological development in Germany in the 19th and especially 20th century greatly contributed to the transition from a predominantly rural-agricultural to an urban-industrial, even post-industrial, society. This has resulted in a loss of the initial meaning of many German customs and traditions that went without saying still couple of centuries ago. Nowadays there is a dangerous tendency that if they are even maintained in the folklore, less and less people will remember the true meaning and importance such customs and traditions had in earlier times.

Especially people of the younger generation tend to estrange themselves from their age-old traditional heritage and its true meaning. This happens often because of the association with the term “tradition” that bears a connotation of something fossilized and obsolete, and the tendency of customs and traditions over time to turn into meaningless and rigid prescriptions. This is not necessarily bad. Why, it is a natural process when many customs get given up as no longer relevant, and are only referred to in history. After all, Bad Kötzing Whit Ride there must also be room for cultural renewal and the up rise of new customs and traditions that correspond to the hopes and joys of today’s world.



German culture abounds in specific customs and traditions. People from all over the world are interested in this aspect of culture.

*Editor’s note: Most often people are interested in German Easter traditions, German Wedding Traditions, Christmas traditions in Germany, but there is so much more that is not publicized as widely which we will try to bring to you periodically.*

## There Are 4 Common Types of German Surnames. Which One Is Yours?

German, a surname is called the “Nachname” or “Familiename.” The family name gradually started being used during the Middle Ages. Prior to that, people generally used only a given name. As the population increased, though, that population needed a way to differentiate between all those new people. Now, those surnames can help you trace your family tree on [Ancestry](#).

The first Germans to use surnames were the nobility and wealthy land owners. After that, merchants and general townspeople started using surnames, with rural people adopting the practice last. It was two or three hundred years before it was commonplace to use last names, though most people were using them by the late Middle Ages.

German surnames generally started out as one of four different types.

**1. Occupational.** This is the most common form of German family name and can often be identified by its ending, such as **-er** (as in Geiger, one who played the violin), **-hauer** (hewer or cutter, such as Baumhauer, a tree cutter), **-macher** (one who makes, as in Fenstermacher — one who makes windows), and **-man/-mann** (as in Kaufman, one who sells, or a merchant).

Some other examples of family names from occupations include:

Bauer (farmer)	Schmidt (smith)
Becker (baker)	Schneider (tailor)
Fleischer or Metzger (butcher)	Schulze (constable)
Klingemann (weapons smith)	Topfer/Toepfer (potter)
Maurer (mason)	Wagner (carter/cartwright)
Meier (farm administrator)	Weber (weaver)
Muller (miller)	

**2. Patronymic.** Often, a person was distinguished by a reference to his or her father, which eventually turned into what we now know as a last name. A man named Simon whose father was named Ahrend might have become Simon Ahrends (Simon, son of Ahrend). Johann Petersohn was Johann, son of Peter. Patronymics most often come from the northern areas of Germany.

Because some early German records were written in Latin, last names were sometimes written with the Latin ending “-i” (sometimes spelled “-y”), as in Martin Berendi, who would have been Martin, son of a man named Berend.

At first, patronymic names would change with each generation, as they were just describing one person by that person’s father’s name. This continued until laws required adopting a permanent surname that passed down hereditarily. People were sometimes reluctant to comply with these laws, and sometimes several decrees were passed. In the Schleswig-Holstein area of northern Germany, for instance, such laws were passed in 1771, 1820, and 1822.

**3. Descriptive.** Many German surnames are descriptive names based on a physical characteristic, such as Brun/Braun (brown hair or a swarthy complexion), Krause (curly-haired), Klein (small), Gross (big), Schwarzkopf (black headed), and Hertz (big-hearted). Older, non-Christian names are often of this type.

**4. Geographical.** These names derive from where a person lived or came from. They may stem from the name of a city or village or the location of someone’s home, such as Kissinger from Kissingen and Schwarzenegger from Schwarzenegg. Someone named Berger may have who lived on a mountain.

Since about 1600, only aristocratic families were allowed to use the “von” prefix in Germany. So if someone was baron of a village, his family name would be “von” and the village name. In older names, though, “von” sometimes merely indicated that a person was from an area: Lukas von Albrecht may have been Lukas from Albrecht. German immigrants to North America who used the “von” prefix almost never had used it previously in their native country.

A geographical name could also be one that derives from a landmark (Busch was named after a certain bush, or Springborn after a spring or well), or a family might have been named after an inn or farm.

Some German surnames had local dialectal characteristics. For instance, in south German, Austrian and Swiss, diminutive endings included -l, -el, -erl, -le, and -li. Some examples are Kleibel, Schauble and Nageli.

—Leslie Lang



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**Address correction requested**

**FIRST CLASS MAIL**



*Our DANK community is incomplete without "U". Become involved.*

*Mark this date on your calendar... Wednesday July 19<sup>th</sup>, gathering 5:00 PM, Supper 6:30 PM*



It's time to make our plans for our annual picnic. Unfortunately, we have not held one for several years, but... Fred and Beverly Huttel have graciously reached out to offer their services to host our picnic. As our membership has 'aged' there are no children involved and we no longer need a place for them to 'spread their wings' and just be children.

The picnic will be held at their home at 1719 Brookside Drive just a few blocks past the airport on West 12<sup>th</sup> Street. We will be able to enjoy the cooler air away from the city as we sit in a shaded yard with 10 x 20 tents to cover us from any unforeseen elements. We can enjoy each other's company, play a few games if we like. There will be some door prizes as well.

The Chapter will provide the meats, rolls and some beverages. We ask that you bring a dish to share and your own serving and eating utensils. Of course it is always b.y.o.b. Reservations are needed to plan on the meats etc. We hope you plan to attend.

