

Das Blatt

The American Goethe Society's Electronic Newsletter

Barbara W. Alsip, Editor

2007

May

The AGS Goethe Prize Award Ceremony

On Thursday, May 10, AGS awarded its first Goethe Prize at the Goethe-Institut. Contestants had been asked to write a different version of an existing Grimm fairy tale. Participating students, their parents and teachers were present for the occasion. Deputy Head of Cultural Affairs at the German Embassy, Kai Schachtebeck, emphasized to the attentive audience the relevance of studying German and of study abroad in today's economic and political world. He then presented the pioneering teachers, Carolyn Ostermann-Healey, Ellen Boldt (both at Robinson Secondary School in Fairfax County), and Haley Crittenden Gordon (at Lee High School in Fairfax County) with one-year gift subscriptions to the magazine *Deutschland*. Eileen O'Brien accepted the gift for Mrs. Crittenden for whom she is substituting during a medical leave. AGS President Irmgard Wagner presented Ms. O'Brien with Goethe's collected poetry for her energy, enthusiasm, and managerial skill in organizing a field trip for award-winning students in less than three days.

Sylvia Blume, Program Coordinator at the Goethe-Institut, presented the students with the "key to the Goethe-Institut": complimentary tickets to Goethe-Institut events.

Parents and teachers watched with pride as the three winners in the Goethe Prize contest accepted their documents and checks. Dennis Shiraev received the first prize of \$1000 for "Von dem Mäuschen, Vögelchen und der Bratwurst" (Of little Mouse, Little Bird, and Bratwurst). Honorable mention of \$200 each went to Katherine Heinzen for "Rotkäppchen" (Little Red Riding Hood) and Vijay Rathinasamy "Die Bremer Stadtmusikanten" (The Bremen Town Musicians).

Finally, the three teachers were presented with a surprise donation from an anonymous AGS member: gorgeous bouquets of pastel-colored roses. (For photos please go to our Web site, www.americangoethesociety.org.)

AGS Business Meeting

The annual business meeting of the Society convened at 6 pm on Thursday, May 10, at the Goethe-Institut.

The President's Report

Looking back over the past year, President Irmgard Wagner expressed her thanks to Sylvia Blume, Norma Broadwater, and Thomas Rupprecht of the Goethe-Institut -- to Trautlieb Hülz of the German Embassy for her vigorous support and encouragement, particularly at the Classical Oktoberfest and for the Goethe Prize -- to the members of the Executive Committee: Sharon Higgins, Publicity, for her marvelous flyers, Goethe Prize documents, and presentation folders; Pehr Pehrsson, Treasurer, for his able takeover from John Loth; Ted Mock, Auditor and Counsel, for his unstinting wise advice -- to Erika Joyce, Hostess at AGS events since September -- to Sherie Day, Poetry Luncheon organizer -- and to John Loth, Treasurer through 2006, for too many things to enumerate. President Wagner then highlighted the following:

Membership stands at approximately 110. We have seen continued growth, with 10 new members joining at the Oktoberfest and 5-6 others in the course of the year. Attrition amounted to about the same number (5-6) due to members moving out of the area or passing away. Our latest deaths were Professor Victor Terras and Karl Berend. (See *In Memoriam* later in this newsletter.)

Events. We have continued our programs of book conversations, lectures, poetry

luncheons, and drama readings, with a gratifying growth in attendance at book conversations and lectures. The Classical Oktoberfest on the *Märchen* theme was again a splendid success. Oktoberfest 2007 will take place the last weekend in October (Oct 26-27), with a Friday evening dinner reception at the German Embassy and an all-Saturday program at the Goethe-Institut. It will commemorate the 175th birth anniversary of Wilhelm Busch (of *Max und Moritz* fame) with the theme: "Texte und Bilder" (Texts and Images).

The Goethe Prize. Last year we put in place a new outreach program to encourage the study of German language and literary culture in area high schools. Thanks to the generous donations from members and to a surplus accumulated over two years, we presented a total of \$1400 in prize money to award winners. Donations received with membership dues for 2007 allow us to plan for a second year of the Goethe Prize contest. The President extended her sincere thanks to AGS members for their generosity in supporting the Goethe Prize.

Treasurer's Report. Treasurer Pehr Pehrsson assured members that the Society's finances were in excellent shape.

Kant Lecture

Our annual philosophy lecture followed the award ceremony on May 10. Immanuel Kant's views on human freedom drew a capacity crowd: every seat in the auditorium was filled. Professor Irmgard Scherer (Loyola College of Maryland) presented a stimulating and thoughtful lecture on the millennial debate over free will versus determinism. From Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius to Darwin and the 20th century's advances in brain research, the idea of free will has been put under severe questioning. Kant's writings on ethics and morals provided a focus for this issue and still form the center of the debate today. Professor Scherer's lucid and concise presentation of the thorny issue encouraged eager audience participation in the discussion period.

Lively conversation on Kantian ethics continued during the social hour following the lecture. Everyone enjoyed the refreshments provided by AGS members for

this special evening. Erika Joyce, Sharon Higgins, and Deborah Stevenson had created, baked and otherwise supplied a splendid table full of diverse goodies. *Waldmeisterbowle*, too, was back after a two-year pause, now that the sweet woodruff in the President's garden had finally matured to a full harvest of blooms. (See photos at www.americangoethesociety.org.)

Farewell to Trautlieb Hülz

As Trautlieb Hülz takes leave of Washington to return to Germany and a well-deserved retirement, we look back with high appreciation on her steadfast and most beneficial help in the American Goethe Society's successful development since its new beginning three years ago. On a Sunday in May 2004 she sacrificed her holiday to attend our reconstitution at the home of Gabriele and Helmut Sieg. Her strong support that day of our new programs and especially of "going English" was decisive in winning over the assembly and making our rebirth possible.

On her initiative she and I then met twice a year for "working" lunches, where matters of concern and interest to the Goethe Society could be discussed in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. On one such occasion I introduced Frau Hülz to the now defunct Würzburg Haus and promptly got lost in Rockville's road labyrinth, so that I delivered her back to her desk "mit Verspätung." After this, we stayed closer to the Embassy and many happy lunches followed at Listrani's on MacArthur Boulevard.

Without her enthusiasm and talent for festivities our Classical Oktoberfest could not have become the far-out favorite event that it is now. She enlisted the support of Frau Thuleweit at Embassy House to create the unique Friday dinners in authentic Oktoberfest style that opened our annual celebrations of German literature. And every year, through Faustfest, Schillerfest, and Märchenfest, she was there to welcome the guests and to share in the evening's joyful companionship.

As we embarked on our new outreach venture of the Goethe Prize last year, she lent her strong support from the outset. She arranged for participating teachers to receive a year's subscription to the magazine *Deutschland* and herself prepared the presentation package for the Award Ceremony.

As we prepare for life after Frau Hülz I feel confident of continued support from the German Embassy for our efforts, since Frau Hülz has once again lent her strong help in smoothing the transition to her successors in the Cultural Department.

Looking back over the three years I had the privilege of knowing and working with Frau Hülz, I want to express my very personal gratitude for Trautlieb Hülz's *schöne Menschlichkeit und hilfreiche Freundschaft*.

We extend our very best wishes to Trautlieb Hülz for an enjoyable future, with lots of leisure for new experiences and the rich joys of private life.

Irmgard
Wagner

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In Memoriam

VIKTOR TERRAS (1921 - 2006)

Victor Terras was born January 21, 1921, in Põltsamaa, Estonia, and attended school in Tallinn. He graduated from the Gymnasium Gustavo Adolphi and next went to the University in Tartu, where he studied Slavics, Germanics, Indo-European Linguistics, and Classics and received his degree in five semesters. When the war broke out, he worked as an interpreter for the German Feldkommandantur and later as an office clerk. In 1944, he was drafted in the German army. Suffering from pneumonia and shrapnel wounds, he was evacuated and finally ended up in Regensburg. In 1945, he surrendered to the Americans and became a prisoner of war for a short time. He next served with the CIC as an interpreter and subsequently got a job with the International Refugee Organization. At a Catholic Welfare

Conference in Ludwigsburg, he met Rita, who became his wife.

The couple immigrated to the United States in February 1952. Victor took various jobs until he was accepted at the University of Chicago for graduate studies. Because of the urgent need for Russian instructors in the United States, he did not complete the PhD, but was hired as an instructor of Russian by the University of Illinois; he became a full professor there within four years. In the meantime, Rita gained her PhD in German. Victor next taught at the University of Wisconsin for four years and then moved to Brown University, where he spent the rest of his career.

The author of some 11 books, including *A History of Russian Literature*, he also published articles, book reviews, essays, and translations. He was the Brown University Henry Ledyard Goddard University Professor Emeritus and professor emeritus of Slavic languages and comparative literature. He also spent a year in Washington, DC, at the George Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

Although debilitated by Parkinson's disease in his later years, he remained, along with his wife Rita, a staunch supporter of the American Goethe Society and participated in many activities, including book conversations, Saturday lunches, and the Classical Oktoberfest. He died in Washington, DC, on December 17, 2006.

KARL H.B. BEREND (1920-2007)

Karl Berend was born in Berlin, Germany, on February 6, 1920. In 1924, his father Alfred died, and young Karl was placed in an orphanage where he remained until the age of 18. At that time, he learned that his father was a naturalized U.S. citizen; therefore, he too had American citizenship. Determined to come to the United States, he found work on a ship and entered the United States in 1938.

He spent several years working factory jobs and learning English. Mr. Berend served in the U.S. Army from 1942-1946. In 1943, he

married Natalie Coster Berend. A resident of the Mount Vernon area of Alexandria for 53 years, he was a charter member of the Washington Farm United Methodist Church.

Mr. Berend received a degree in Business Management from the University of Baltimore in 1949. He then worked as a statistician for the U.S. Air Force until he retired in 1979. He last worked at Andrews Air Force Base as a cost analyst.

Mr. Berend was known by his family and friends as an outspoken advocate of world peace. After his retirement, he was an active member of many organizations, including the American Goethe Society, the World Affairs Council, and the German-American National Congress (DANK), where he served as a regional president in the early 1990s. Mr. Berend was most proud of his efforts in garnering support for the recognition of German-American Day in early October and for his efforts relative to the construction of the German-American Friendship Garden on the mall in Washington DC. He died in February 2007.

Embassy Open House

On Saturday, 12 May, the German Embassy held an open house to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the European Union, whose presidency is currently held by Germany. Germany had initiated the idea of showcasing the diversity and unity of Europe, and 22 of the EU countries participated in this first ever open house. Some 32,000 Washingtonians and tourists took up the invitation to visit "Europe in Washington" on shuttle buses starting from Metro stations. A throng of 5,000 streamed through the information stands in the German Chancery auditorium; lined up for a lunch of Bratwurst and beer on the terrace of Embassy House; and toured the Ambassador's Residence.

AGS was invited to participate in the event as one of the local mediators of German language and culture. Sharon Higgins had created a most attractive presentation of our offerings for our table in the auditorium. From 9:30 am to 4 pm, Sharon together with Irmgard Wagner informed visitors about our purposes and events - and tried to dispel the misconception that we

were the Goethe-Institut! We found a good deal of interest in our activities, above all in the Classical Oktoberfest. We greatly appreciated this opportunity of presenting AGS to a wide audience and hope for a repeat of the Embassy open house next year. (View photo on our Web site, www.americangoethesociety.org.)

AGS Events, June -December 2007

Special Event

Tuesday, 19 June: To accompany the National Gallery's exhibit on Modernism in Europe, AGS is collaborating with the Goethe-Institut and the German Historical Institute. The program, "Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis*," discusses the book as film with commentaries and discussion. President Irmgard Wagner is in this film as one of the commentators, and she will lead the discussion on June 19. Detailed announcement will be sent to members.

Drama Readings (Wednesdays)

23 May, 20 June, 17 July (Tuesday): Friedrich Dürrenmatt. *Die Physiker*. (Details are on the Web.)Tyson-Pimmit Regional Library, 7 to 8:45 pm. Social hour to follow at nearby restaurant.

For information, directions, and text, contact John Loth <jloth@cox.net> or 703-242-8840.

12 September: Text to be determined.

10 October: Text to be determined.

Lunch mit Lyrik (Saturdays at 12:30 pm)

30 June: Café Europa, Bethesda. Theme: "Poetry on the Move - Journey, travel, wanderlust."

25 August: Old Europe. Goethe's Birthday. Theme: "The useful Goethe." (Goethe as quoted in context.)

8 December: Café Mozart. Theme: "Holiday poetry."

RSVP at

<sheriehday@prodigy.net> or 301-231-8575, for all luncheons.

Book Conversations (Thursdays at the Goethe-Institut, 6:45pm)

27 September: "Tribute to Shakespeare": Gottfried Keller's novella, *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* (*A Village Romeo and Juliet*).

29 November: Daniel Kehlmann, *Die Vermessung der Welt (Measuring the World)*.

Wagner at iwagner@gmu.edu or visit our Web site: www.americangoethesociety.org.

2007 Classical Oktoberfest 26-27

October at the German Embassy and the Goethe-Institut. This year's theme commemorates the 175th birth anniversary of Wilhelm Busch: *Texte und Bilder (Text and Images)*. Keynote speaker will be Professor Amelia Rutledge (George Mason University), who was one of the panelists at our Cornelia Funke Book Conversation last December.

Of Interest in the Metro Area

German Treasures at the National Gallery of Art

Two current exhibits of graphic art in the West Building present some fascinating items for our interest. "Personal Treasures" and "Fabulous Journeys and Places" show famous woodcuts by Albrecht Dürer and Martin Schongauer, a stunning self-portrait of Käthe Kollwitz and a tiny sepia drawing by Caspar David Friedrich: Two people gaze at moonlight amid tombstones and a chapel. Two glass cases contain the unique *Nürnberg Chronik* of 1493, opened to a world map without America; and a truly fabulous 16th-century book on the first English exploration of our continent, before 1607. We see, with German text: "Wie die aus Virginian tantzen": Indians in fantastic garb circling around three maidens, finely drawn and in beautiful colors.

On 10 June, the exhibition "Foto: Modernity in Central Europe, 1918 – 1945," will open, with works by German artists Hannah Höch, Franz Roh, Trude Fleischmann, and Lotte Jacobi. The Goethe-Institut and the German Historical Institute have organized a series of events to accompany this show. AGS is collaborating with the Goethe-Institut on a film/discussion evening Tuesday, 19 June, featuring Franz Kafka's story *Die Verwandlung/ Metamorphosis*.

For information about the American Goethe Society, please contact Irmgard