

German-Bohemian Heritage Society Newsletter

The Heimatbrief

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Celebrating the GBHS 15th Anniversary

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**Membership Dues Due Jan 1
GBHS 15th Anniversary
Celebration: Spring 2000**

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Front cover screened photo of the German-Bohemian Immigrant Monument located in German Park, New Ulm, Minnesota.

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' 1999 German-Bohemian Heritage Society

A Story of Three Kings

translated by Karen Hobbs

There was a certain atmosphere of unrest during Latin in class 3B of the gymnasium. Some of the pupils were hardly paying attention. The teacher, Herr Scharnagl, was certain that was so when he got a completely wrong answer from Franzl, who was his best Latin pupil. Even Franzl was not paying close attention; instead he hid his hands under his desk and busied himself writing a note to pass to his friend Peter, who sat on the other side of the classroom. "Greetings!" it said, "important meeting at the regular spot by the church during recess. Pass this on to Hans and Michl."

"I would not have expected such an answer from you; note that "to be near" is appropinquare and not cantare. What were you thinking about?" asked the teacher.

An where was Franzl? He was certainly not concerned about Latin. He sat down again and with the most innocent face in the world he gave the boy who sat next to him the folded note and whispered, "pass this on to Peter!"

The little bit of paper reached its destination unnoticed by the teacher. Peter read it, nodded to Franz who was looking over at him, and passed it on to the other two.

The hour seemed endless. An now the teacher started a new chapter! Franzl was beginning to think that maybe the school steward was late getting back from services for St. Nikolaus day and had forgotten to ring the bell or didn't know it was already time for recess. Just then the bell rang. What wonderful music it was for ears tormented by Latin.

"Too bad," said the teacher, "now I can't get into this chapter. We will have to continue this tomorrow."

There was a rattling and scraping as the pupils got up. Franzl sat near the door and could not get out fast enough, looking back to see if his friends were coming. They almost knocked him down as they came around the corner. The four of them rattled down the wooden stairs, crossed the courtyard in front of the church offices and went to the church door.

"We'll go inside," said Michael, "or a couple of classmates might want to join us and we don't need any more."

They agreed that was a good idea, opened the heavy church door and went into the vestibule. They looked inside and saw Barbara, an elderly woman wrapped in a blanket in front of whom stood an old basket with a board on it. Candles of all sizes were spread across the board. She had a fringed woolen scarf tied around her head in such a way that it revealed only a very small part of her face. Rosary beads slipped through her fingers and her lips moved without a sound.

The four boys sneaked past her into the church.

"She didn't see us at all," said Peter when he noticed that her eyes were closed.

But the candle-woman, Barbara, had actually taken note of their presence. She thought that they must be fine young Latin pupils who chose not to romp and play in the church plaza during recess like the others. She thought they might have a difficult school task and had come to pray to the fourteen holy helpers of those in need.

Barbara was familiar with the needs and worries of the schoolboys because she had already prayed many a rosary to heaven that one or more of them had asked for. Some of those prayers were answered better than others.

But these particular "fine boys" merely made a quick genuflection that was barely a curtsy and ducked into a back corner of the church where the old confessionals stood and it was quite dark. "So it will be our secret that we will go "Three Kings singing" tomorrow," said Franzl, "you wouldn't believe how much we can earn. Reidl Schorsch went with his friends last year and told me about it. We need to ask our mothers for sheets -- I am sure they will let us have them since it is for a holy cause. We'll have to make our own crowns out of gold paper and we can get that at Becker's Stationary Shop. That is all we'll need. Peter, you can be the Moorish king because you are so good at rolling your eyes way back so only the whites show. Michl and I will dress as the other two kings."

Hans was insulted. "An what about me?" he said, "Am I supposed to be the camel? I don't see a role for me so why did you ask me to come?"

He made a move as if to leave but Franzl caught him by the arm. "Hans, don't upset yourself like a stupid girl! You are the most important person. You get to carry the staff with the star of Bethlehem and the container for the money."

"Okay, that's something else. Of course you need me," replied Hans. But recess is nearly over and Herr Mayerl has already told us to be quiet. We better leave here."

Herr Mayerl was the church steward and he had just set up the large tin tubs of "Three Kings water" for solemn consecration the next day.

The four classmates made another perfunctory genuflection towards the front of the church, moved toward the door. As they hurried past old Barbara she looked up and said to them, "In God's name, boys!"

They ran back to the school and made it to their next hour's mathematics class just as it began. Those 60 minutes -- actually only 50 minutes -- finally drew to an end and were the last class of the day. "Tomorrow is a free day," proclaimed the teacher, "there is no school until Monday after the feast of the Three Kings."

His eyes smiled as if he were thinking back to his own schooldays when his words were greeted with a loud cheer. Anyone who has gone through eight years of schooling knows that words like those sound as if they come from the mouths of angels rather than from a bearded old teacher. The classmates crowded together, pushing and shoving, grabbing jackets from their hooks and trampling caps that fell to the floor underfoot in their eagerness to escape to a couple of days of freedom. Some of the boys parked their schoolbags against the walls of the parsonage and began to throw snowballs. They took careful aim because the teachers were mixed with the other homeward-bound high school students. They were very happy to have no school for two days.

The four boys from class 3B would have liked to join in the fun but it was almost noon and the stationery store closed promptly. But the salesgirl was willing to let them in. It was not long before they left again with rolls of gold paper underarm. At the city hall their paths separated.

"So, tomorrow evening we'll meet promptly at 7:00 o'clock on the church steps by the second saint's statue with our costumes on. Hopefully it won't snow," said Hans, "and we won't get too wet."

He was always very concerned about his health.

"If you are going to be a sissy, then don't go with us and we will get someone else to carry the star. We only have to mention it to Ernst Schmid."

"I didn't mean I wouldn't go with you. I was just making a comment."

"Okay then. Servus, until tomorrow evening!"

The next evening was a Sunday. Heaven had granted Hans' wish and kept the snow from falling. Around 6:45 o'clock Hans was already on the church steps. One had to admit that punctuality was his strong point. He looked very nice wrapped in a white sheet that was caught on the shoulder with a gold ribbon. Since he was not a king he did not wear a gold crown. Instead he carried a long rod on which was fastened a large gleaming red paper star. He had the collection can under his arm. It was an empty coffee can that he had covered with paper on which was written "Vergelt's Gott." (A sort of "thank you" for donations meant to bring good luck.)

The three others arrived. Michl and Franzl looked splendid but they all grudgingly agreed that Peter's costume was the best. His rolled his eyes, his face was jet black, his golden crown glittered and he wore his sheet draped like a "vesper robe." Franzl wore his aunt Leni's big fur collar around his waist but he had had to promise to bring it back undamaged. Michl's grandmother let her grandson make a wide belt of a theater shawl she had carefully preserved since last using it several years ago.

"So where do we start," said Hans after they had admired each other sufficiently.

"Not in the city center, a littler farther out I would think!

There will be other groups of Three Kings going about and for the time being we are the only ones here."

That made sense to everyone. They went first into the parish house where the Dean made the remark that their coffee can was empty and immediately dropped in a coin. Now it jingled appropriately so the boys went on their way. Next door, Anna Reidl, a pious woman, dug deep into her pocket. In addition she gave each boy a wonderful red apple that she polished with the sleeve of her woolen jacket.

"We have to go see the organist for sure," said Michl, "and we should sing our Three Kings Song in harmony because Herr Pleyer knows real talent!"

They stood in the little yard of the house and sang their song. When they asked if he wanted to hear a fourth verse the good choir director declined. "That is good enough. You boys sang beautifully."

Afterwards he thought to himself that having those four cadets in the church choir was out of the question.

The little group moved along going from house to house until they all agreed there were very few they had not visited and they should go to the Theaterplatz where they still had a number of acquaintances. They went down the Kirchengasse and crossed the Market Platz. It was very quiet there. The big Christmas Tree standing there was covered with snow. Even "Wastl," the old statue that adorned the fountain, had on a white cap that almost looked like a crown along with an ermine mantle of snow around his shoulders. One of the "Three Kings" pointed out the moon just then appearing over the high roofs of the old patrician houses and the big star that shone nearby, resembling the ancient star of Bethlehem. They arrived at the end of the Bindergasse and there they ran into competition.

"What are you doing here?" said the boy carrying the star.

He was tall and straight as a tree. "This is our territory and we are the only Three Kings here. Get out of here now!"

For emphasis he waved the stick with the star on it. Franzl was acquainted with the four of them and knew better to get involved in a spat with them. They were from the upper classes at school.

"Ja, we'll leave," he said loud enough that there could be no misunderstanding. "we are only schoolmates who didn't know any better. We don't even know what the Three Kings are called in Latin."

They turned around to leave just in time. The other students, forgetting about their royal dignity as kings, had already lifted up their white skirts and were ready to give chase. At that moment an elderly woman stepped out of the house at Bindergasse number 2 and rescued the boys from Latin class. "Aren't you ashamed of yourselves," she yelled at them. "Boys who act the Three Kings ought to be saints, not brawlers! Break it up at once or I will tell your teacher!"

She probably could have frightened all eight of them with the threat to tell their teachers but just then the tall star-porter stepped on a bit of his costume and fell down. By the time he got up the others had run across the Market Platz and down Bahnhofstrasse to Franzl's house. "We should all come in with you because we still have to count our money," said Peter as they stood at the open door.

There was a restaurant on the ground floor of Franzl's house. Glasses tinkled amid the dull babble of conversation and the pleasant aroma of bratwurst and kraut filled the air. "But take care," said Franzl, "the housekeeper complains about dirty shoes and then my mother will scold!"

But this time Franzl's mother did not scold anyone. She was quite worried because it was already almost 10:00 o'clock. She had been out front of the house again and again to see if the boys were coming. "Come on in," she said with relief in her voice, "go right into the kitchen!"

The four took off their white robes and laid them on the canopy above the stove, they set aside the crowns (which had become quite tattered) and then went about counting their money. The amount exceeded all their expectations. It totaled 11 Kronen and 50 Heller. They had never thought to have so much. Michael was the best calculator in the class. "It doesn't

come out to exact equal shares," he said.

Franzl's mother was watching and without a word she put another 50 Heller into the collection of coins making the total exactly 12 Kronen -- a full three Kronen for each boy.

What does three Kronen buy? Everything that "Zuckernanni" has in her candy stall; a shrill bell for a bicycle; puzzles, games, decals and sneezing powder at the Rurayski toy shop! Each boy had his own plans for the money.

"Can your mother change all this small money into three one-Krone pieces? It will be hard to spend so many 10-Heller coins in one place," Peter whispered to Franz.

Unfortunately Peter's mother did not have the right coins so they decided to leave the entire amount in trustworthy hands overnight. "Tomorrow we will go to 7:00 o'clock mass. We'll stop by and pick you up, Franzl, so you can bring the money and we'll see if there is anywhere that we can change it so it will be easier to spend. If that's okay, then that's what we'll do. Now we had better get home otherwise our father's will be angry with us." said Michael.

They packed up their white robes and Franzl's mother made them into neat bundles to carry underarm. They looked like ordinary boys once more except for Peter whose black face -- now with a few streaks from the warmth of the kitchen -- still looked a little like the Moorish king.

"Good night and go straight home," said mother.

She lit their way down the somewhat steep stairs, then went back into the kitchen and wiped up the floor with a cloth. Whole streams of water had flowed off the schoolboys' boots. She smiled quietly and gave Franzl his slippers that were warming by the oven and some hot tea with a hearty shot of rum in it.

"So, now get to bed so you don't get sick!"

Franzl slept very well that night. He dreamed he was King Balthasar. Not stumbling about on foot in the Market Platz but sitting on a camel that he urged on with a stick he held in his hand. The camel looked like the tall, enraged highschooler they had encountered that night.

Such a night passes quickly. It was still dark outside when a soft voice woke Franzl. He was still tired after having passed the entire night riding a camel and he dozed off again. "Franzl, it's already 6:30," said mother, "you'll want to go to Holy Mass and your friends will be here soon. In fact, I think they are coming now."

Franz flew out of bed and into the kitchen, brushed his teeth, and had barely gulped down his breakfast when a whistle sounded from under the window. The others really were already there.

"Your prayerbooka!" called mother when he was half down the stairs and brought him back up a step or two. Then she wrapped a scarf around his neck. As he stepped out the door his friends rushed around him, asking if he had the money.

"Of course!" he said and showed them the purse, "but there are no businesses open today!"

"Ja, I know," said Michl, "Barbara may be the only one who can help us! She has most likely changed her week's receipts into bigger coins and will surely do us this favor."

They sang as they crossed the Market Platz and walked to the church. The snow on the ground was very white and showed only a few footprints of people who had gone the same direction. It was not yet daylight in the small town and a dim light shown through the windows of God's house and into the surrounding darkness.

"Peter, you should be the one to ask Barbara. You are the best talker. Agreed?" said Hans as Franzl pressed the purse into his friend's hand.

They opened the heavy iron-bound church doors. And there sat the old woman, holding the beads of her rosary between her fingers and praying as she always did. Peter touched her arm lightly which made candle-Barbara glare at him with tired eyes. She asked him what he wanted.

One must be polite when one wants something and should call someone by their full name. "I don't want to buy anything, Frau Rosner," he said, "I would like to ask you for something. Yesterday the four of us went about singing as the Three Kings and we now have a lot of small change. Could you possibly change it to Kronen for us?"

The old woman pushed her thick wool scarf back off her ears so she could hear better and she asked, "How much do you want to change, boys?"

"Oh please, if you could change 12 Kronen!"

"I am sorry, children, but that won't work. In an entire week I never take in as much as 12 Kronen!"

She dug into the bottom of her basket and brought out a little tin cigarette box in which she kept her money. All it contained was eight Kronen and 50 Heller.

"That is all I have," she said, "if it were possible I would do it but it is not!"

The boys understood she was right. "We can't do it," said Hans.

Old Barbara stowed her cash box in the basket again, clutched the thick wrap close around her shoulders, took up her rosary and began praying at the point where she had been interrupted. The four boys went farther into the church. The water in the holy water fonts was frozen over and they scratched it to break through the crust of ice and dip their fingers in it. Just then the people -- there were only a few at the early Mass -- stood up to hear the Gospel. They took their places in the pews directly in front of the manger. It was very cold under the high ceiling of the old church. The four of them were not up to pious devotion today. Changing their money was a problem that had not worked out.

Peter found his eyes wandering back to the manger over and over again. The Three Kings they had personally represented yesterday stood there today with their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh for the infant, Jesus. Peter thought about how happy the Holy Family must have been to receive such treasures. They were so poor otherwise! If Jesus had come into the modern world would

the Three Kings have been there likewise with rich gifts? His entire purse would fit in the lap of the Holy Virgin. As he looked at her another face suddenly replaced that of Holy Mary. It was not one of heavenly beauty or the loveliness of the Mother of God but the old, care-worn face of Barbara! Wasn't she very poor, too? She had never had as much as 12 Kronen at a time. And what did Christ say? During his hours of religious instruction, Herr B hm, his teacher often repeated, "What you do for the least of my brethren, you have done for me!"

Suddenly the money in his coat pocket seemed to be on fire. Just as the priest said, "Ite missa est" and his comrades wanted to leave he told them he had a plan. They went outside as quickly as possible where they asked him where he thought they could change the money. "Let's move out of the door a little and into the vestibule," said Peter.

They moved through the open door of a side altar where they could talk to each other better. "Pay attention," said Peter, "I have decided I won't buy any candy from Nanni. It only upsets my stomach. You can do what you want but I am going to give my three Kronen to candle-Barbara. She is at least as poor as the child Jesus was."

An embarrassed silence followed. Michael thought about the bell for his bicycle but on second thought it would only attract the attention of the policeman. Franzl thought how many decal Indians he could get and Hans thought about sticky hot "Makroni" would make his gloves. Peter rolled his eyes, but they were not the merry eyes of yesterday's Moorish king any longer, today they gave a challenge. "Well, have you thought it over and what do you think? You are cowardly dogs if you won't go along with me," he sputtered.

No one wanted to be a coward. Franz nodded agreement. "You're right, Peter," said Michael, "we should give our money to Barbara," and he turned to Hans to ask if he had made up his mind.

"Maybe we can get someone else to help you decide."

The implied threat was enough. "Well, yes, I have already decided, I just was beginning to get cold feet."

Peter's face lit up when he finally knew he could count on his friends. "Now we can give it to her right away. Hans, you carry

the purse."

Now they moved through the church door in a solemn procession worthy of kings in long robes and with crowns on their heads. The organ played within and they heard the beautiful hymn, "A Child is Born to Us in Bethlehem." Hans laid the purse in front of the old woman and said, "Barbara, we don't need this money, there is nowhere to get it changed today and we want to give it to you!"

"But, boys, it is so much; I can't take it"

She picked up the purse and held it out to Hans to make him take it back. Then Peter came forward. "Barbara," he said, "we really want you to have this and it would make us very happy if you would take it."

The thick, warm fingers of his boyish hand closed around the trembling hands of the old woman. There were tears of delight in her eyes as she looked over the four, one after the other. "Vergelt's Gott, Buben," she murmured.

"We only have to return the purse because it belongs to my grandfather, said Franz. "He usually puts his tobacco in it. Or do you want to snuff tobacco, too, Barbara?"

The spell that made everyone almost mute with emotion was broken. At least it seemed so to Franz. Besides, none of the boys particularly wanted to stay there to see Barbara's tears. As they made their way home they were so light at heart that they felt as if they really were the Three Holy Kings.

The star-porter wondered if the rest of the schoolyear would go well for them all because old Barbara had promised to offer four rosaries for them and they had great faith in the prayers of that good woman.

Based on translation of:
Die humanistischen K nige
As told by Gabriela-Maria Pilz.
From Wies fr her war im Egerland
Narratives collected by Achim Raak.

Book Review:

German-Bohemians - The Quiet Immigrants

by Gerald J. Berghold editor of the "Burgenland Bunch"

One of the perquisites I enjoy as editor of the newsletter is the occasional gift package of books and/or other publications sent by members. It's always Christmas when that happens and a newsletter article often results. Recently member Robert J. Paulson sent me a copy of the book "**German-Bohemians-The Quiet Immigrants**" (St. Olaf College Press, Northfield Minnesota, 1995) which he and Lavern J. Rippley co-authored for the German-Bohemian Heritage Society, New Ulm, Minnesota.

The "German-Bohemians" is the type of ethnic work I'd like to see produced for the Burgenland. Complete in every detail from history and origins in Europe to descendants today. Maps, lists of immigrant families, migration data, folklore, world of work, music, related national events, it's all there. While it doesn't pertain to the Burgenland (the Bohemian region is to the north west of today's Austria, in what was Czechoslovakia-now Czech Republic and Slovakia, a region which was part of the

Austro/Hungarian Empire pre 1918) it abounds in similar family names, customs, culture, migration history and the fact that like the Burgenlanders, the German-Bohemians were also migrant border settlers. The US immigrants from there settled mostly in Brown and Nicollet Counties, Minnesota. If you have family ties to that region, you must read this book.

Of particular interest to me is mention (and a photo) of Father Alexander Berghold, a Catholic missionary priest from Styria in the late 1800's. He established various congregations in the New Ulm area and is currently being remembered by the erection of a memorial by his former parish. Father Berghold, priest, poet and author was born near Graz, Austria and eventually returned there where he died following WWI. While not as yet linked to my Lutheran Berghold families, it's fairly certain that his ancestors and mine were connected pre 1600's and split probably during the counter Reformation.

Along with Fritz K nigshofer, Albert Schuch and James Seifert of New Ulm, MN, we've been researching the life of this most remarkable (albeit relatively obscure) man and have uncovered a wealth of information.

The data and photos available in this book are remarkable for the completeness of coverage. The maps and lists of Bohemian villages (German and Slav names) printed on the end papers provide the first clues that this is not your average superficial ethnic work. Very few are this detailed. Lists of Bohemian names appearing in the various townships are thorough. A 12 page list of immigrants, date and place of birth, year immigrated, year naturalized, current residence and occupation follows. The Contents include: Origins, Settling in Brown County, Departing the Homeland, Establishing the New Homeland, New Ulm-Magnet for Immigrants, Turners and German Speaking Bohemians, Folklore and Transfers, World of Work, Economic and Sociological Perspectives, Music of the German-Bohemian, German Bohemians and National Events. On site research and help from present day Bohemian researchers lends additional credence to the data. A perfect example of my long held belief that only in depth study of a manageable (micro vs macro) ethnic region will result in a worthwhile addition to family history sources. This can well serve as model for similar ethnic books. Binding, paper and printing are first class.

La Vern Rippley, is the author and translator of many ethnic books and publications. He received his Ph. D. from Ohio State following studies at the Univ. of Munich. He has been a professor at St. Olaf College since 1967.

Robert Paulson, a music teacher, studied at the College of St. Thomas and has taught in St. Paul area schools for over 30 years. He is the founder of the German-Bohemian Heritage Society, has done pioneering genealogical and historical research on the German-Bohemians in America and has led several genealogical tours to Bohemia. He has also co-authored "Border People: The Bohemian (German-Bohemians in America).

Rauhn cht

December 25 to January 6

In ancient times according to the lore of our forefathers, there were many spirits and mythical beings whom roamed the countryside during the twelve nights of "Rauhn cht." On the twelfth night the "Wilde Jagd" was the worst of them.

The goddess "Berchta" visited spinning rooms during this period. She threatened all those who were spinning or even with a little flax in their laps with severe punishments. Because of this ancient tradition, spinning would stop during the period of "Rauhn cht." In some baking bread also brought punishment.

According to ancient folklore the dreams dreamed during "Rauhn cht" would come true. In addition it was necessary to pay close attention to the weather. Each of the twelve days predicted how the weather would be for the corresponding month of the coming year.

December 26: St. Stephen's Day

St. Stephen, the first martyr, is the patron saint of horses. In past centuries, young men in the vicinity of Staab rode through the fields. In Auherzen and Nrschan they used to ride through the village pond. The ride was meant to protect the health and well-being of horses.

In some old church dramas, certain grain is dedicated to St. Stephen before planting them in the spring. The consecrated grain is kept in a small double pot with a single handle that holds about 1/4 liter per side. (Such a pot was in the folklore collection of the Pilsen museum.) One side contains barley, the other oats. This blessed grain is mixed with the other grain during sowing. When a machine does the sowing, then the blessed grain is the first to be used. (Auherzen)

In Dorf Tuschkau, if the sun shone on St. Stephen's day it meant that the barley crop would turn out well.

December 29, Holy Innocents

In past centuries, on the feast of Holy Innocents, it was customary for men and boys to strike those of the opposite sex. This ritual whipping was called "grouna." (Grounen -- in this case the word probably has the obsolete meaning, to flourish, or indicates devotion.) The men and boys were supposed to use twigs and switches cut on St. Barbara's day and left to sprout near the stove but many just used whatever stick or switch was close at hand. Sprouted sticks were said to rejuvenate those who were struck by them. It was necessary to say certain words during "Grouna." Typical was: "Grou(n, grou, um an sch in Peitschalouh(n!" or, "Grou(n, grou(n, Una Liwa Frau haot aa grount!" (Aujezd, Kosolup) The victim would give the person striking her a little gift to make him stop. Adults played at "Grounen" in the local tavern or inn while the little ones did it at home.

The custom disappeared at the end of the nineteenth century except in the Tachau and Bischofteinitz districts where it continued into the present century.

Pain Without Boundaries and Boundaries With Pain

by Frank Koerner (Franz Koerner)

It can be fascinating to reflect on the details of childhood recollections. Incidents of major family importance are sometimes vague, whereas other seemingly innocuous events are remembered in great detail. Were my father alive and heard this story, he might not remember it at all. Or, he might recall it, but perhaps as an infringement on a weekend's free time. He probably wouldn't grasp why I remember the recounted incident and attach so much significance to it. I recall it because it evolved out of a simple conversation. My father and I didn't often converse. The event captures the confusion I had about him, his homeland, why he spoke German, but wasn't a German, and why his mother language was different from the language of his native country. Further, it isn't a cute remembrance because of the acute physical pain associated with the day. Perhaps that's another reason I remember its details so acutely.

It is 1948. About a week ago, my eighth birthday occurred. On any other hot, summer Saturday such as today, I would be off doing kid-type things .stalking through close-by woods, nibbling watercress growing in a nearby bubbling brook, roaming through open fields, climbing somebody's private cherry tree and feasting on its illicit bounty. However, not today. I have a major toothache. I've reached this state of affairs because I've been about as diligent as most eight year olds about dental hygiene. Zero. Occasionally, I'd had tooth pain before, but the decay had always been in first growth teeth. The removal of

baby teeth is generally not a big deal. I don't remember the extractions as particularly pleasurable, but the associated agony was short-lived. On those occasions, I eagerly put the extracted tooth under my pillow and collected my bounty from the Tooth Fairy. I'd always regarded these experiences as an easy way to con my parents (or older sisters) out of some hard cash. However, *this is different*. It is my first toothache in a permanent molar and the throbbing pain is unrelenting and excruciating.

I started to whine in the morning. By early afternoon, my increasing oral discomfort had transformed itself into my parents increasing aural discomfort. They concluded it was time to visit the town dentist. He had limited office hours on Saturday afternoons, but perhaps he could squeeze me in. Since we didn't own a car or a telephone, my father and I walked uptown, as we called it, to the dentist's office only to discover he was on vacation. Below the dental office was the town's confectionery store, the over-indulgence of whose wares probably contributed to my current problem. The proprietor of the shop knew of a New York City dentist who had a dental office in the basement of his suburban New Jersey home. He lived in Allendale, an adjoining town. The confectioner telephoned to see if Dr. Lampa was home. He was. Sure, he'd examine my tooth. Thanks, we'd be there as fast as our feet could carry us. This was northern New Jersey, not Montana. We'd walk to Allendale, only about 3 miles distant.

It is this approximately 45 minute walk that is so embedded in my memory. Although I was in pain during the whole trek, my father and I were alone during that walk. It was a bonding experience. There were just a few times in my life where we'd been completely alone. My toothache served as a momentary focal point in our lives. We talked man to man. As we slowly trudged to my dental appointment, we walked past the railroad siding that jutted out from the railroad yards and dead-ended onto the main thoroughfare. There was a passenger train sitting on the siding. All was silent as we passed. A desolate railroad yard on Saturday afternoon on a sultry day in August defines quiet. The void of the parked train's silence stimulated my father's reminiscences about his Benke, Moravia hometown and its remoteness from the nearest railroad station.

By 1948, his hometown and homeland had disappeared. I did not know what that meant. When Pa was growing up, everybody in Benke spoke German as a mother language. There were only a few exceptions. The schoolmaster was one of them. Pa's teacher, Herr Dvorak, was a bilingual Czech. He taught the town's children in German. Mr. Dvorak lived in one half of the small schoolhouse. The other half accommodated all of Benke's students in one room.

Surrounding the hamlet were fields and forests and hills. Sometimes when Pa needed to catch a train in northerly Rabersdorf or upon his return from there, he had circumvented using the only road east out of Benke. He cut many miles off the route that went to Rabersdorf through Liebesdorf by cutting across those fields, forests, and hills. However, if the ground was wet or rain fell while he was underway, he'd get soaked and muddy. Also, the farmers were not particularly fond of people tramping through their crops.

If one went in the westerly direction on the road out of Benke, the next village encountered was Lomigsdorf. It is where the postal office was located. Although it was less than 2 miles from Benke on what was known as Benke's back way, the people of that town were not German speaking. All the people in Lomigsdorf spoke Czech. Benke lay directly on the so-called *Sprachgrenze*, the language border of Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland.

It was a mind-boggling notion that I couldn't fully comprehend. We lived in Waldwick. Pa and I were walking to Allendale. If this were Sudetenland, within that incredibly short distance, the language of the land would have changed. The people spoke a different language in adjoining villages within the same country! Foreign tongues weren't alien to me. In Waldwick, there was a rather large contingent of Italians. There were Armenians, Dutch, and Swedes. My own parents spoke German, as did several others. A typically American, cultural potpourri, but there was no doubt that the language of our land was English. With every step, I viewed the Allendale dentist with more and more trepidation. Yet, I knew that when we got there, the Tooth Monster would speak English. I couldn't conceive that he would speak anything else. Despite major, unforgotten discomfort, I savor the remembrance of this walk together with my father. It was a seldom in a lifetime experience.

We eventually got to Dr. Lampa's house and he began work on my molar. He worked on that tooth for many appointments over several weeks thereafter with an extremely low powered drill that would occasionally stall. It was an awfully protracted, memorable experience. However, he did such a good job on the problem tooth that, many decades later, I can still write that it's rightfully mine.

Ironically, I now live in San Diego in a similar language situation. San Diego sits on the international US-Mexican border. South of San Diego and directly on the border is the very next city of Tijuana, Mexico. Tijuana is a short 15 minute auto drive away from my doorstep. I'm living on a Sprachgrenze. English here, Spanish there. However, the situation isn't quite

analogous. These cities are in different countries, but Benke and Lomigsdorf were in what in the US would be considered the *same county*. Later, I broached this (for me) extremely interesting topic with friends and playmates. There wasn't a future diplomat among them. None was remotely interested.

I've often thought about my astonishment concerning the fact of language and borders in the ensuing years. The issue still fascinates me. Why? The historical language boundary in Czechoslovakia carried with it all sorts of racial undertones. The Czech government of the time considered the ethnic Germans (Sudetens) as the root of its internal political and economic turmoil. The government solved its perceived problem by expelling all the Sudetens. It was an instance of what would come to be known as ethnic cleansing. There were 3,500,000 Sudeten deportees. All were birthright Czech citizens. They had as much right to live in Czechoslovakia as did the Czechs and Slovaks. The deportation caused my father's homeland to disappear.

In 1948, as my father discussed the Sprachgrenze with me, the issue was already moot. The language border was destroyed in 1946 by the deportation. I recently made a first time visit to Benke. There are many forlorn, run-down buildings in Benke. The buildings epitomize and perfectly symbolize why so-called ethnic cleansing will always be a total governmental failure *regardless of the people who attempt to carry it out*..be they Germans, Czechs, Russians, Jews, Arabs, or .Serbians. No government can manipulate the natural ebb and flow of its citizens on such a large scale. People may be forcibly constrained by internal politics for a while, but eventually they vote with their feet.

The selfless human nature of good outlasts the selfish human nature of evil that establishes totalitarian governments. Even a non-totalitarian system cannot stem a natural population flow. Our own American government has been trying to stem the tide of Latin Americans into the USA for decades and has spent billions of dollars in the attempt. Governments are incapable of deciding where people should live .economics always determine that decision. Even a so-called controlled Communist society cannot randomly refill a town with people. If it tries and the resettled people cannot relate to the region, the people eventually leave.

It takes decades and generations of families, an interwoven heritage, interrelated life functions, and a sense of community to develop a working societal infrastructure. Only then can the society's unique needs be specified and requirements be satisfied by its own members. The interdependence of its people is always how any society keeps the economic ball rolling. Benke was emptied of inhabitants within 24 hours in 1946 and it became a ghost town literally overnight. It has essentially remained a ghost town for over 50 years. In 1946, there were 211 people in Benke, 15 of whom were Czechs. Presently, there are only 36 residents. Most houses have stood vacant for half a century. To what end?

It was the misguided political leadership of Eduard Benes, a Czech leader-in-exile of the 1940s, who originally proposed the deportation of the Sudeten Germans. After the Second World War when that notion was implemented, the equilibrium between the Czechs and the Sudetens that had existed for centuries was instantly and fatally disrupted. The coexistence of the two cultures had not been one of constant open hostility such as exists modernly between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs or between the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the Protestants in Northern Ireland.

It had been more like the modern Canadian and French-Canadian relationship; that is, one of two definitely separate peoples, each proud of their respective heritages, and generally keeping to themselves. It had also been a relationship strained at times, but with no constant, open warfare between the two cultures. Benes' theory, once implemented, upset the apple cart of history. It was no longer tolerable to have ethnic Germans around. Weak social theories always need a scapegoat. Once the deportation was accomplished, the theory went, the Czechs would live happily ever after.

The abandoned homes all throughout the Sudetenland symbolize the futility of that theoretical nonsense. Benes is long since deceased and his Sudeten deportation remedy has been proven to be completely bogus. Benke today, although not quite a ghost town, is definitely not bustling with the activity of Czech families either. The abandoned homes sit empty and decaying, serving no family's needs (Sudeten *or* Czech), and are devoid of purpose. This scenario is repeated over and over in the hundreds of former Sudeten German villages. I wager the present Czech government would be ecstatic if the Sudeten owner(s) or their successors would come back, rehabilitate the homes and begin paying taxes.

The Sudeten expulsion demonstrates the Czech government's historical failure. The failure's effects continue today. A solution based in animosity and racial hatred generally comes back to harm the perpetrator. Czechoslovakia has itself disappeared. It now consists of the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic. Business and industry are actively seeking German investments. The heavy industry giant in Bohemia, Skoda, is 70% owned by Volkswagen. The present Czech

government eagerly wants to join the West as a partner in the European Union. A major player in the EU is the once again reunited German nation. The unresolved matter of the victimized Sudetens is still an open issue for many in Germany. Ah, the irony of it all.

The Yiddish language has a term that perfectly characterizes what is now transpiring in Sudetenland. The word is one that symbolizes an unmitigated gall and a consummate brazenness to pursue a goal in the face of all embarrassments. The word is chutzpah. In view of what has occurred in Sudetenland within the past 50 plus years, the Jews would classify the requests of the modern Czech government for financial aid from German sources as a classic case of ..Herculean-sized ..chutzpah. The events of the last half century in Sudetenland have been so very, very tragic. And now ..the Czechs want German economic help? The whole story is incredible !!!

Fifty years ago, it was not a wisdom tooth on which Dr. Lampa worked, but his handiwork led indirectly to a certain wisdom.

Editors Note: Frank Kroener is particularly proud of this article because it is the first one he has written that has appeared in its original German language form in the weekly newspaper Sudetendeutsche Zeitung (Munich, Germany; October 8, 1999 edition). The Sudetendeutsche Zeitung has national German and international distribution. The Chief Editor Herr Gernot Wildt has given Frank an open-ended invitation to submit periodic articles for publication. Frank also has an open ended invitation to submit articles to this publication. I would like to personally thank him for sharing his extraordinary writing skills with us.

The Feast of St. Barbara December 4

On St. Barbara's Eve young girls throughout the Mies district go into the garden the first thing in the morning and break off a little branch from a cherry tree while making a silent wish. The branch is placed in water and put near the oven. Pretty blossoms on the branch by Christmas promise that the wish will be granted.

Girls who hope to marry go out in the evening on December 3 and take three branches from a cherry tree and place them in the warmth of the oven. If the branches flowered by Christmas it meant there would be a wedding during the coming year.

In Tschernoschin, in the evening before St. Barbara's Day, the young girls broke off as many branches as they had suitors and then they tied a different colored piece of wool yarn around each. Each one signified a different admirer. The branch on which there were the most beautiful blossoms at Christmas showed which young man the girl should prefer.

If there were two, or even three marriageable daughters in a household, on the evening of December 3 each one broke off a branch from a cherry tree and tied a bit of wool yarn around it. All of the branches were placed in the same vase. The girl whose branch had the prettiest blossoms by Christmas would be the first to marry. (Dorf Tuschkau)

During the early morning of St. Barbara's day every person in a household would cut a branch from a cherry tree while making a wish. Colored yarn identified the owner of each branch. Lots of flowers on the branches meant the owner's wish would be fulfilled. (Elbotten bei Mies, Hniemitz, Rochlowa)

In Sittna and Swina when the cherry branches were placed in water each had a written wish attached to it and how well the wish would be fulfilled was signified by how beautifully each branch bloomed.

St. Nikolaus Day

December 6

In the evening on December 5, St. Nikolaus went about the land. He wore a long white gown thrown over his other clothing, a bishop's cap and a beard made of flax. He carried a bishop's staff in his hand.

Nikolaus visited all the houses where there were little children. He announced his arrival by ringing a little bell. He asked about the conduct of the little ones, if they had said their prayers and he praised or scolded them accordingly. Finally he gave them a couple of apples because they were usually good and some nuts so that they would improve.

In recent years Krampus would accompany the bishop. He is a frightful figure from the high mountains who has a red tongue that hangs out of his mouth and the horns of a devil. He threatens bad boys with a rod.

Nikolaus (in northern Egerland, Niklas) also had a double known as Zemba (Zember) or Zembara who wore a monster disguise that included an inside out fur skin tied with straw bands. He visited the children just like Nikolaus. He stood there sharpening the blade of a scythe or a knife and asked the children about their conduct. He gave a couple apples or some nuts to the good ones.

Workers dressed as Zemba also went into the Hutschen- or Rockenstuben (evening gatherings of neighbors in one house) to cause mischief.

In the greater part of Egerland the names of Nikolaus and Zemba had the same meaning. In the vicinity of Pfraumberg, Zemba appeared as a companion of the bishop and he was called "black Zembara" while the bishop was called, "white Zembara."

Zember (da Semba) is the male manifestation of the goddess, Berchta. After the Germans embraced Christianity the Germanic divinities became devils and witches. Berchta was then presented with an iron beak. In the Oberpfalz she was named "Eisenbercht" (iron Berchta), in Oberfrankens it was "Eisenberte." Gradually the name became Spercht, Specht or Sperte. Zemba was used as a name for this mythical being only in Egerland. It may be derived from Sperte or from Eisenberte.

Enjoyment of certain foods belonged to the cult of Berchta. Those who abstained from eating them faced a threat that the goddess would cut their stomachs open.

*From Brauchtum und Volksglaube im Kreis Mies
Collected and edited by Karl Storch*

THE COMING DAY OF GENEALOGY

Taken from the Rootsweb Electronic Mailing List. Used with permission

by Jeff Scism, <scismgenie@juno.com>, Flockmaster International BlackSheep Society of Genealogists <<http://homepages.rootsweb.com/~blksheep/>>

Knowing where we are from is the first step on the road to where we will be. The search for personal history and its relationship to our personal lives makes history come alive. The lesson of genealogy isn't simply a knowledge of what happened in the past, but also what we know about our present. Now and in the future the history documented and saved for future reference will be the known events of our contemporary past. Our views from the end of the 20th century will be classical perspective at the end of the 21st century.

To put the concept in perspective, think about your family research and the documentation you find about your 19th century ancestors. How does that information impact on the data you are saving about the lives of the members of your current family? To research the past and store that information for easy future retrieval will be the legacy of today's genealogist/historian. A greater legacy will be the way we store information about ourselves. Making the research of our family's past a priority now but failing to document our own involvement in current history is shortchanging the future.

Think about your ancestors of the year 1900, or 1800, or any year in the past. How many of us can say we "know" these ancestors? How many of us have "living" documents of these ancestors? Wills, marriage certificates, and short newspaper notes are a poor "story" of a life spent. How many diary and journal writers were there in our collective past? What was our ancestor's view of events of his/her day? Knowing the regional history of an ancestor, and "milestone" events, can give an indication of where and why, but to have the story in his or her own words is a priceless insight into the person's life. Now, how many of us have an ancestor's actual autobiography written in his or her own hand?

Right now you are a family historian studying the lives of all who came before you. Are you documenting your own life in a "hard" form for the genealogists of the future, so that in the year 2100 your great great grandchildren will be able to say they know you? Documenting your life the way you would want your ancestors to be documented is the first step to being the person your descendants will know from the past, and a journal of your thoughts on current events will be a marker and a reference valuable to many, not just your descendants.

Make the year 2000 the year that genealogy unites past and present for the future. Document yourself.

Editors note; some topics that you may want to write about will be coming in the next issue of the Heimatbrief.

Address Changes

The addresses of many people in the rural areas of our country has recently changed. The changes were mandated due to the difficulty of police, fire, and rescue services finding rural addresses. If your address has recently changed please contact us with your updated information.

Homeland Tour 2001

There is a strong rumor circulating that the GBHS is planning a European tour in May or June of 2001. The tour would include the Heimatkriestreffen (homeland county reunion) in Furth im Wald, Germany. Watch for an official announcement in the near future.

GBHS 15th Anniversary Celebration

The GBHS Social Activities Committee has begun work on planning a 15th anniversary celebration for the Spring of 2000. A gala dinner and social evening are sure to be a part of the program along with speakers, music, and Gem tlichkeit.

Newsletter Deadline

The next issue of the Heimatbrief will be published in March, 2000. Deadline for articles is January 20, 2000.

History For Sale

German-Bohemians - The Quiet Immigrants

by La Vern Rippley & Robert Paulson

A must have book for researchers . Over ten years in the making. Fully researched. Nine chapters describing our German-Bohemian ancestors life in the homeland, the journey to America and life in their new-found homes. Customs, traditions, music, heritage and more. Over 150 photographs.

Hard cover, 279 pages. \$25.90

One Hundred Tales from Sudetenland

Translated and Edited by Karen Hobbs

One hundred folk tales (fairy tales) translated from the original German text *Hundert Sagen aus den Sudetenl ndern* by Josef Rotter, 1952. A wonderful insight into the stories our ancestors told for generations. Ghosts, goblins, magic, witches, giants, dragons, and more. The only published collection of German-Bohemian folklore in English.

Soft cover, 197 pages. \$14.00

Duetsch-B hmische K che

A German-Bohemian Cookbook. Dozens of authentic German and German-Bohemian recipes.

Ring bound, soft cover, 88 pages of recipes. \$9.00

The Whoopee John Wilfahrt Dance Band, His Bohemian-German Roots

by LaVern J. Rippley. \$6.00

German-Bohemian Immigrant Monument Book - A souvenir booklet of the monument dedication by the GBHS. \$5.00

Music

German-Bohemian Heritage Singers, Preserving the Heritage cassette tape. A wonderful array of German and German-Bohemian dialect songs \$9.00

Preserving the Heritage II cassette tape. An encore performance features even more toe tapping and heart warming songs in the German and German-Bohemian flavor. Add it to your collection today. . \$10.00

All prices (U.S. Funds Only Please) include sales tax and postage . If you wish to order any of these items, send a check payable to GBHS and mail it with your request to: GBHS, P.O. Box 822, New Ulm, MN, 56073-0822

Fall Meeting: A Porcelain Experience

by Louis Lindmeyer

The well attended GBHS Fall Meeting held October 23 was a big hit with members in attendance. Dr. James Henderson of Milwaukee, presented an enlightening and very interesting history of Bohemian porcelain.

Mr. Henderson began his talk with the early history of porcelain and the German alchemist, Johann Friedrich B ttger (1682-1719), who developed hard paste porcelain in Europe in 1708. Two years later the first porcelain factory was built in Meissen. The Vienna factory was established in 1718. In 1792 the first Bohemian factory was established in Horni Slavkov (Schlaggenwald).

The production of porcelain in western Bohemia was delayed for nearly seventy-five years due to stringent controls exercised

by the Imperial-Royal Manufactory in Vienna. The Habsburg monarchy thought that only the state-owned factory could compete with the major factories in Germany.

During the early 1800 s, the monarchy encouraged local citizens in western Bohemia to construct porcelain factories. Due to the lack of expertise, it was difficult to get these business started. In the beginning, small private undertakings by local people were unsuccessful, but with German assistance the factories developed. The first stoneware factory was established between 1789 and 1793. Later, factories were established in eight towns for 1792-1815.

As porcelain production expanded throughout Europe in the late 1800 s, the area around Karlovy Vary became the center of china export primarily to the United States as well as other European countries. Nearby kaolin, feldspar, and coal deposits made for the easy acquisition of raw materials. Just as Bohemian porcelain manufacturing reached a pinnacle, the controlling Habsburg monarchy was declining.

Because of WWI, by 1916 little or no European manufactured porcelain was reaching North America, and when the war ended a severe depression began. Local porcelain factories were forced to consolidate or go out of business - a trend which continued through the end of WWII and the rise of communism. Today, the Habsburg legacy is found in antique shops scattered across America.

Along with Mr. Henderson s talk he gave a slide presentation showing samples of beautiful hand painted and sometime elaborately decorated Bohemian porcelain and discussed their current values.

Dr. Henderson also has written a book titled Bohemian Decorated Porcelain . The 8 1/2 x 11 , 192 page hard cover book has a complete history of Bohemian porcelain as well as hundreds of color photos showing examples of Bohemian porcelain and listing their current values. This highly recommended book sells for \$39.95.

The GBHS would like to thank Dr. Henderson and his wife Marge for a wonderful Bohemian porcelain experience.

If you would like to order a book or ask Dr. Henderson a question concerning Bohemian porcelain you may contact him and the address below.

Send requests to:

Dr. James D. Henderson
7350 North Longview Avenue
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53209
Email: jamesh@mcw.edu
Website: www.execpc.com/~jamesh

Four Board of Directors Re-elected

Four GBHS Board of Directors were re-elected to their posts at the October 23, GBHS Fall Meeting. Those re-elected to three year terms were; Paul Kretsch, Patrick Kretsch, Patrick Eckstein, Donald Zwach.

Christmas Shopping Made Easy

Christmas is a truly delightful time of year. Christmas carols, lights, trees, and holiday get-togethers with friends and relatives brighten up our lives and our faith.

One drudgery of the holiday season for some is the shopping experience . Walking through crowded stores not having a

clue as to what to buy for uncle Bob, grandpa Joe or even your children or grandchildren - and then standing in long lines buying them something that they don't really want or need. It sometimes makes Christmas a hectic chore and we can't wait until its over.

How about shopping with us! Visit our History For Sale column in this newsletter. You will find books and cassettes in that perfect price range of \$5 to \$25. Something new this year is the book **One Hundred Tales from Sudetenland**. A book that contains folk or fairy tales handed down for centuries by our ancestors.

New Member Rate

A Great Christmas Idea!

In an effort to increase membership the GBHS board of directors has decided to offer a one time new member GBHS membership for \$6.00 for the year 2000.

It is hoped that parents and grandparents will purchase memberships for their children and grandchildren and thereby introduce young people to our organization. Many organizations such as ours lack young members. We hope this special rate will help remedy this situation.

Of course, this special rate is not limited to persons of any particular age. Any person of any age is eligible, but remember that this special price is for new members only - not for current member renewers.

A separate insert in this newsletter has all the details and a space for membership applications.

Memorials In memory of

Mary Heck

from Monica & Randy Wenninger

Veronica Becker Saldecki

from Patricia A. Stoneberg, Chuck Becker,
Kay & Judy Hall, Joan Stimpert Apitz

Cathryn Kastanek

from Peggy & Ray Tauer

Harry Schmidt

from Donald Domeier

Earl Kruger, Rudolph & Rosemarie Kiefner

from Delores Kruger & daughters, Mariann Tremel

Emma Dietl

from Donald Domeier

The Board of Directors of the German-Bohemian Heritage Society wishes to thank each and every one of you for your

support for this past year and we hope that you will continue to support the GBHS in the future.

Have a very Merry Christmas and safe and happy New Year!

German-Bohemian Heritage Society Non-Profit Org.
P.O. Box 822 U.S. Postage Paid
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Join Us

**Membership Form For The German-Bohemian Heritage Society
Family Membership \$10.00 per Year in the U.S. or \$15.00 Foreign
(Family membership includes those living in the same household)**

Name _____ Phone# _____

Address _____ Email Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please list surnames you are researching including geographical locations. (Optional)

