

**Austrian American Day
German House
Seattle
September 28, 2014 (as prepared)**

Servüs! Willkommen zu Österreichisch-Amerikanischen Tag! Vielleicht Sie wissen, dass ich an Frankfurt-American High School meinen Abschluss gemacht hat. Aber weil das vor langer Zeit war, ist mein Deutsch a bissl eingerostet, und so jetzt werde ich auf Englisch reden.

It is always a pleasure whenever I can join a community to help celebrate an exceptional heritage, as with tonight's celebration of Austrian-American Day.

Austrians were among our nation's first settlers, arriving here in 1734 in search of religious freedom and settling in the colony of Georgia. An Austrian from this group, Johann Adam Treutlen, went on to become the first governor of the state of Georgia.

Since that time millions of Austrians have settled in America and thousands here in the state of Washington and many of our finest citizens can trace their lineage to that of Austrian descent.

Austrian and German influence here is pervasive. A favorite restaurant and bakery near our Capitol building in Olympia is Wagner's, which has served tasty European pastries for many years.

We all like a little coffee to go with our pastries and in fact Austria has Starbucks beat by about three centuries in that the first coffeehouse in Austria and maybe in all of Europe opened in Vienna in 1683. This was after the Battle of Vienna, using supplies from the spoils obtained after defeating the Turks.

After eating pastries you might need to take a little walk to work off the calories. Many of our citizens like walking so much that they regularly participate in events organized by the Evergreen Volkssport Association.

Making a trip to Leavenworth for Oktoberfest or for the town's annual Christmas Lighting Festival is on nearly everyone's list of special things to do. Although Leavenworth is technically known as a Bavarian village, it could be a twin to many towns in Austria too. I saw some pictures of the Austrian resort town of Kitzbühel that look a little like Leavenworth, particularly in winter.

Austrians have contributed greatly to the arts, music, sciences, literature, architecture and sociology of our nation and our region. The architectural firm of Carl Alfred Breitung and Theobald Buchinger provided Seattle with several buildings reflecting their German and Austrian heritage in the early part of the 1900s. Seattle's German and Roman Catholic communities were their primary patrons. The Flatiron Building in the Pioneer Square area, also known as the Triangle Hotel, is an example of Breitung's architecture and is on the city's historical register (as is the German House!).

Expert skiers from Austria were some of the earliest ski instructors on our local slopes back in the 1930s. This would be a good time to pay our respects to 1948 Olympic medalist Franz Gabl, a native of Arlberg and longtime resident of Whatcom County who died in January at the age of 92.

I read that Mr. Gabl's ski career had to be put on hold during World War II when he was conscripted into the German Army as a machine gunner. His story of survival is pretty amazing.

Franz Gabl was injured five times. He was captured by the Russian army, escaped to a POW camp and survived a 600-mile trek back to his hometown.

There was no logical reason that he made it out of there, his daughter, Sarah, recounted in a *Bellingham Herald* article.

He went on to win the silver medal in the 1948 Winter Olympics in St. Moritz, Switzerland, became a ski instructor in both Canada and the U.S. and moved to Bellingham in 1963. A decade later he was the founding chair of the annual multi-sport Ski to Sea event that attracts hundreds of team competitors each year to this day. What an incredible contribution to our state!

Bellingham, where Franz spent much of his life, is one of my favorite areas due to its high quality of life and multitude of recreational opportunities. It's also home to Western Washington University, which is one of several of our state schools that sends students to study abroad in Austria each year.

I know if I were a college student I might find Austria a very attractive place to study. My newest staff member, Jennifer Way, who is here with us today, did her study abroad in Switzerland while a student at Western. One of Jennifer's closest friends, also a Western graduate, is on a Fulbright Scholarship to Austria and is excited to be teaching in Vienna this fall. WWU, by the way, has a direct exchange program with the University of Graz by where students pay the same tuition as they would in Washington. The University of Washington has a similar partnership with the University of Vienna.

I mention education and culture, but trade with Austria is important too. As small as Austria is, the nation remains an important export destination for Washington state products. Austria ranks as 61st on our state's list of top export markets accounting for a total of about \$45 million annually.

Austrian Air flies Boeing aircraft exclusively in its long-haul fleet. The company has five Boeing 777-200s and six Boeing 767-300s in their extended range fleet, all made right here in our state.

Claire Rood, president of the Austrian American Council for Washington, asked me to spend some time talking about our precious water resources today. The topic can be a very complicated one but I will give it a try.

Many of you enjoy outdoor recreation. My own love of the outdoors has been a lifelong pursuit, particularly as it relates to fishing in the bountiful and mostly pristine waters of our incredible state. You look around and see water everywhere in plentiful supply, from Lake Washington to Puget Sound to the Pacific Ocean and our seemingly never-ending network of lakes and rivers, especially the mighty Columbia. Plus we are well-known for our mountain snow packs and heavy rainfall, especially to the west of the Cascades. So given all of that, how could we ever be running low on water or even fighting over this renewable resource?

The problem with water is that everyone needs it, everyone wants it and at the end of the day there isn't always enough to go around. In the days of our forefathers, water supplies were not a problem. Now water availability can no longer be taken as a certainty.

The average household uses about 300 gallons of water a day. I think we used a lot more than that when all of my six kids were home. Multiply that by the 2.3 million households in Washington and you get about 690 million gallons a day, or more than 2/3 of a billion gallons for residential use alone. Add in the factory, office, hospital, sewage treatment, fish hatchery and farm use and that number multiplies exponentially.

Here in the great state of Washington we rely on hydropower turned into energy more than just about any other state. A full 72 percent of our state's electricity is generated from dams as opposed to the national average of just seven percent. So a lot of water needs to spill over those dams to make all of that electricity. And, given the demands of supplying enough water for fish migration and irrigation, managing all of those needs can be a tricky proposition.

No wonder why our water supply is under stress! Just who gets all of our water and when is a source of constant debate. Is the highest and best use of water for our salmon runs? Is it for irrigating crops and pastureland? Or is it to ensure an adequate supply for new housing developments in rural areas? Water rights and usage is the subject of many a policy debate. I heard a lot of this during my time on the Senate natural resources, and agriculture and energy and utilities committees in the 80s and 90s and I am sure many of the same debates are still raging on at the state level just as they are nationally.

Meanwhile, the average temperatures are rising globally, which is resulting in the rapid recession of our mountain glaciers which also of course impacts supply. Coupled with our growing populations and increased demands these water use debates are not going away.

I do not pretend to be an expert on these issues and, frankly, I don't think anyone has the true answer. There are experts on all sides. We all care about ensuring that we have a clean water supply but even the standard for that is under the microscope.

A multi-party task force established by Governor Inslee deliberated over new clean water quality standards for our state as required under federal law and was the basis for the governor's proposal.

One of the measurements for clean water is based on fish consumption. The governor has proposed a standard based on us all eating about six ounces of fish a day but the tribes would like it to be higher than that. Taking odds with a higher standard are companies like Boeing and others in the manufacturing business because they feel tighter restrictions would hurt job growth and the economy.

It will be interesting to see how the debate over clean water standards all plays out in months ahead.

To help address our water issues, the experts suggest we should:

- A. Reduce the causes of climate change and drought that are causing our glaciers to recede.
- B. Protect and preserve groundwater through the stronger regulation of permit-exempt wells.
- C. Encourage and support the reclamation and reuse of wastewater and;
- D. Develop new water supplies.

So while we have a lot of significant issues to deal with in our state and nation, such as transportation grid lock and how do we fund education and still make sure that all of the important needs of our citizens are met, we cannot discount the challenge we face in sharing and managing our precious water resources. So I would urge you stay aware of what is happening on this important issue and be sure to share your thoughts and opinions with the policy makers and people elected and selected to represent you. I must also say that I am very impressed with your desire to be kept up the critical issues you face as citizens of this great state.

I will close by wishing everyone the very best Austrian American Day ever. I would also like to express my desire that Austrians in America will stay close to their heritage while continuing to make outstanding contributions to community and state.

May you have a great celebration! Danke vielmal.