

**Lt. Governor Owen
German American Day Remarks
(As prepared)
German House
Seattle
October 8, 2016**

Thank you for inviting me once again to celebrate German American Day with you. What a marvelous heritage that you all work to uphold here for the Seattle and Greater Puget Sound region, and the state of Washington. I also applaud you for being so involved in the German American community and surely beyond. Washington is a better place because of its diversity and by those who contribute so greatly to the common good.

As I have said before Germany has a special meaning for me as I finished up high school at Frankfurt American. The man my mother had recently married was transferred by the Army so we all moved from Tacoma to Frankfurt with him. As a result I have many fond memories of Germany and that school and have attended numerous class reunions. In fact recently a woman I know who is running for state Senate out in the Olympic Peninsula area just encountered one of them while doorbelling. He had recently moved up from California and asked her if she knew me. A small world it is. My step-father who took me to Germany, Tom Willis, would become a very strong influence in my life and remain married to my mother until her death a few years ago. He is still with us and we remain close – so much that I still call him my dad.

So I have my own ties to Germany just as Washington state does. We can thank the Germans for so much of who we are today. I have in previous speeches to this audience spent time chronicling local German contributions in architecture, business, education and industry with of course historical German Americans like Bill Boeing, Frederick Weyerhaeuser and John Jacob Astor, all with German roots who had enormous early influences on this region.

Whenever we think of Germany many think of Leavenworth, the mountain town in the central Cascades that was dying at the vine until the Chamber of Commerce there, as a matter of self-preservation, decided to redecorate it as though it was a

village in Bavaria. Leavenworth is of course now a hugely popular tourist destination and no longer facing economic peril because of the Bavarian remake.

Since today is about the celebration of German Americans I will spend a little time talking about the German influence on America. It all starts when we are very young.

Our children read – or have read to them - German nursery tales. The story of Hansel and Gretel, for instance, about two children who outwit a witch, was first recorded from lore by the brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. The story was told to them about 1807 by villagers and farmers in the town of Kassel. Another tale told to the brothers Grimm about the same time was Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. So it turns out that this very popular tale was not a creation of Disney, but of Germany, although Walt Disney's mother, Flora Call Disney, was German-American.

Many of the everyday products we use are from Germany. What we call shampoo, for instance, a word of English origin, was developed by German chemists who in the 1890s discovered how to convert harsher detergents into a kinder and gentler goo for hair washing. Along those same lines cologne for men also came from Germany, originating of course from the German town of the same name.

Technically it was formulated by an Italian barber who settled in Cologne in the early 1700s. The barber, Jean-Baptiste Farina, came to Germany to seek his fortune in fragrance. He formulated cologne from an alcohol-based blend of lemon spirits, orange bitters and mint oil. But Germany can still claim it!

One more – sedatives – something I certainly use from time to time to help me sleep as I'm sure many of you do as well. But I'm almost certain that you might hesitate to use the sedatives that were initially made in Germany in the 1860s. They were made from a mixture of – get this – apples and human urine. That's right, and to take this story a little further the classification of barbiturates was derived from the name of a waitress in Munich named Barbara, who provided the first, um, human specimen. No, I'm not making this stuff up, it is all chronicled in a book we have in the office called *Panati's Extraordinary Origins of Everyday Things*. Who knew?

Of course some of the finest cars we drive are of German manufacture. Most of you probably remember or even knew the late Phil Smart, a decorated war veteran, Eagle Scout and philanthropist, who started one of the largest Mercedes Benz dealerships in the nation here.

Mercedes just announced that it intends to go head-to-head with Tesla in the luxury, high-performance electric car market and expects to surpass its sales with its new EQ line. Volkswagen just announced a new line of electric vehicles at the Paris car show. Porsche is developing an exciting new electric called the Mission e. BMW is already in the space with its I series. We are proud that BMW has gone so far as to set up the world's largest carbon fiber factory in the Moses Lake area to cloak its i-series electric vehicles, taking advantage of low power rates there. We would naturally invite other car manufacturers to do the same as it means jobs for Washington.

Speaking of luxury vehicles our good friend Petra Walker, honorary consul for the state of Washington, reminded me that 125 years ago the first luxury cruise ship, the German-built SS Augusta Victoria, sailed to the Orient, believed to be the first sailing of its kind for a so-called floating hotel. The Augusta Victoria was named for the last German empress.

Our own Victoria Clipper, which sails daily to British Columbia's Capital city, is now owned by a German company. The acquisition made early this year will allow the cruise line to add routes from Victoria to the City of Vancouver as well in addition to the trip from Seattle. As I said, our state's ties to Germany are very deep.

Roughly 46 million Americans can claim a measure of German ancestry. Of course some of our finest – or worst – politicians, depending on your perspective, have been Germans or of German descent. We looked up at the lineage of Hillary Rodham Clinton and could find no German ancestry there. But Donald Trump's German ancestry on his father's side has been well documented. Trump's ancestors, the Drumpfs, came from the tiny village of Kallstadt in the idyllic region of Rhineland-Palatinate, known for its production of premium wines. The Donald's

Großvater (German for grandfather, pronounced grrew-ose faa-ta), Friedrich, came to the United States in 1885 in hopes of brightening his economic prospects.

Frederick's ties to the Northwest as a Klondike Gold Rush era entrepreneur are well recorded – he ran a restaurant and hotel in Bennett, British Columbia to capture the business of prospectors traveling north. But prior to that he bought a restaurant in the Pioneer Square district called The Poodle Dog and then a hotel in the then-booming mining town of Monte Cristo up in Snohomish County, cashing out his investments well before the town went bust. And oh, the stories that might be told if those early Trump hotels could only talk, various published reports have inferred. But I won't elaborate on that, as this is a family event and not a political one. There are plenty of those right now – and I am thankful that soon I will not be part of the silliness of all of the politics that go on, especially the party politics. I happen to hate party politics and that is one of the reasons I decided to end my political career.

What I am thankful for – and will continue to be thankful for long after I retire, are the many friends I have made across our great state, including many of you in this room.

There are lots of days to celebrate but what I will celebrate and remember most will be the people that make this state what it is. Thank you for all that you do to keep your great heritage alive and thriving in this state. I will not likely be with you here again, at least in an official capacity, due to my retirement but I will always remember and appreciate all of the good times that we have had here at the German House.

Thank you.