



# FERDINAND NEWS

OCTOBER 24, 2024

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TOPICS



## INSIDE

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### End of the road for Lady Rangers



Pictured clockwise from upper left: A group shot of those who gathered at Tom and Patti's Goefrichs' home to discuss the German language and how it has been retained in southern Indiana. Seated from left: Irene Eckert, Dr. Giles Hoyt, and John Bieker.

Standing: Tom Goefrich, Roger Dilger, Patti Goepfrich, Dr. Alfred Wildfeuer, Francis Egler, Mike Lindauer, Glenn Neukam, Marie Neukam and Dr. Sebastian Franz.

John Bieker shares an intricately drawn family tree created with help from both his American and German family.

Dr. Wildfeuer, a linguistics professor at Universität Augsburg University in Germany, spent most of one day in the Genealogy Room at the Ferdinand Branch Library in an effort to learn even more about the Germans who, it is said fluttered like snowflakes to Dubois County in the mid-nineteenth century.

He, along with Dr. Sebastian Franz spent a week in the area doing research and meeting with those who still speak the tongue of their ancestors. By the end of the first day the two were Fred and Sebastian to all they met.

— Photos by Kathy Tretter

## A lesson in language

### In Germany they say: "Alles hat ein Ende, nur die Wurst hat zwei." Literal translation: Everything has an end, only the sausage has two. Meaning: All good things must come to an end, except for sausage.

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What's in a word?  
Or more specifically, what's in the way a word is pronounced?

Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers sang about it in the 1937 musical *Shall We Dance?*

You like potato and I like potatoe  
You like tomato and I like tomatoe;

Potato, potatoe, tomato, tomatoe!  
Let's call the whole thing off!

The hoofers were singing about dialect — or how words are pronounced in different parts of the country, which doesn't necessarily mean you should call the whole thing off (a topic for a completely different article).

But how do you say potato in German?

Now that's a horse of a different color, or more accurately, a word that is not just pronounced differently but a whole different word altogether depending on the regional dialect.

This language disparity was driven home recently when two Germans walked into a bar.

No, this isn't the start of a bad joke — these were two German linguistics professors who flew over from the homeland to study the Deutsch dialects still spoken in Dubois County — Dr. Sebastian Franz and Dr. Alfred Wildfeuer from the Universität Augsburg University.

And yes, they walked into a bar, Fleig's in Ferdinand to be precise. But in the days both before and after, they gathered with locals who still speak the language brought over by their ancestors to listen, question and learn. Their first stop was at Tom and Patti Goepfrich's

home in Jasper. Patti, by the way, was the recent recipient of the 2024 Hoosier German-American of the Year award — a massive honor previously given to the likes of Senator Richard Lugar and Kurt Vonnegut. She knows all things German, except the language.

Present at that gathering were Glenn and Marie Neukam from Haysville, Irene Eckerle from Jasper (Patti's mother and a German speaker), Dr. Giles Hoyt, professor emeritus from IUPUI, John Bieker from St. Anthony, Mike Lindauer and Francis Egler from Ferdinand, Roger Dilger from Mariah Hill and the two linguists.

Talk about a living history lesson, not to mention immersion in the German language!

Unfortunately, this writer does not speak it despite having studied the language in high school. However, high school German would be of little benefit because what students learn, including German students in their schools, is referred to as "High German", the standard German used to communicate across German-speaking countries. This is according to the late IU Professor Eberhard Reichmann, who delineated four categories

when referring to Dubois County lingo, including Low German (often equated with bad German), Jasper Deutsch /Deutsch, a German-American dialect basically incorporating the various dialects but actually a dialect all its own, and Haysville Franconian, spoken in the Haysville area because that part of Dubois County was settled by people who emigrated from Franconia.

According to the two professors, there are many regional dialects spoken in the 16 German states and again, dialect isn't a matter of just pronunciation. Which made the conversation a bit difficult around the Goepfrichs' dining room table.

Sebastian had no trouble understanding the Neukams because he is Franconian. He was lost when Lindauer started rattling off a few phrases. So where in English you may like potato and I may like potatoe, in German you may like die kartoffel and she may like der erdapfel while Pat Koch, who joined for that second session at Fleig's, grew up eating die beerenfrucht, roughly translating to a berry in the ground — but all meaning potato.

Someone at the Goepfrichs asked what Hoosiers use when speaking German for the word "cemetery." That was a stumper. After consideration, someone suggested Gott acre (pronounced ache) which translates to God's acre. Another regional version is der Gottesacker. And hey, all three of these next words also mean cemetery: der friedhof, der totenacker and der gräberfeld.

Dr. Hoyt pointed out that much of the German influence in the United States originated in Bavaria, from the blue and white flags, to the dirmdls and lederhosen donned during Strassenfest — but Bavaria is just one region in Germany. Traditions and decor in the north are quite different. So, too, as the earlier examples point out, is the language.

Sebastian explained that schools in Germany are now teaching the regional dialects, something that had gone by the wayside in years past. Along with Patti Goepfrich, Pat Koch and Roger Dilger, Glenn and Anja Steltenpohl joined the party at Fleig's. Anja is a German native who met and married Glenn while he was serving in the Army in Germany. They both were able

to share even more disparities in the language, making for a lively conversation (if totally nonsensical for non-German speakers). Both Herr Franz and Dr. Wildfeuer spent hours the following day in the genealogy room at the Ferdinand library, perusing the many volumes and first hand accounts from those who left their homeland and relocated to southern Indiana. It's a bit hard to imagine in this day and age of fast travel what it must have been like for those who left hearth and home to journey to a new land where they didn't know the language.

Before they could depart they had to come up with food and supplies for the journey — basically bringing all their possessions.

But that wasn't all. Many years ago the late Lillian Doane put together a list of what all emigres had to bring with them on board the ship for everyone over five years of age.

The list included 50 lbs. of hard tack, five lbs. of rice and the same amount of flour, four lbs. of butter, 14 lbs. of ham, two lbs. of salt, one hectoliter of potatoes and one liter of vinegar.

(Continued on page 4)

## Trick or Treat hours

The Town of Ferdinand's Trick or Treating hours are scheduled for Thursday, October 31 from 5 to 7 p.m. Participating homes should turn on their porch lights to welcome trick or treaters.

The City of Huntingburg's trick-or-treat hours are set for Thursday, October 31 from 6 – 8

p.m. If you are welcoming trick-or-treaters, please have your porch light on during scheduled hours. For more information, please contact Andrea Brown, Safety/Risk Management Director, at 683-2211 or by email at [abrown@huntingburg-in.gov](mailto:abrown@huntingburg-in.gov).

Trick or Treating hours for

the Town of Birdseye have been set for 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. As with neighboring communities, those who wish to dispense treats should leave the porch light on to invite ghosts, ghouls and geishas to collect some treats.

Halloween on the Green, adjacent to the Cabbie O'Neal gym

in Jasper will be held on Sunday, October 27, from 6 to 7 p.m. In case of rain the event will be moved to the Parklands Pavilion. Regular trick-or-treating in Jasper will be from 6-8 p.m. Thursday, October 31. Remember, kids — only knock on doors of homes with porch lights on!

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### WEATHER



THURSDAY  
Sunny  
High: 70°  
Low: 43°



FRIDAY  
Sunny  
High: 80°  
Low: 50°



SATURDAY  
Partly Sunny  
High: 68°  
Low: 47°



SUNDAY  
Sunny  
High: 63°  
Low: 38°

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