

EARLY BIRD 12 – 18 January 2012

USAG SCHWEINFURT

You can still always count on the Cavalry – New Year’s Reception of the U.S. Army: Runey conjures German-American friendship. (Jan. 12)

Mayor Seifert of Niederwerrn who has attended many New Year’s receptions of the U.S. Army knows what’s going on – he knows the protocol, the place and the buffet: “Now we are making conversation here, then you will hear a bell, then we shake hands with the Commander. Then everyone picks-up a glass, nobody listens to the piano player, then there is a short speech. And then Americans speak with Americans and Germans speak with Germans. However, this time there was a surprise even for him. After Garrison Commander Lt. Col. Michael D. Runey addressed the mayors and representatives of local authorities and organizations and U.S. Army officers, he gave his speech. Mayor Seifert of Niederwerrn said at completion of the speech: “This was a long speech for a change.”

And it was a very warm speech. That Americans, especially in the military are patriotic is nothing special but that they also show local patriotism is special. Once, there even was once a Garrison Commander who wrote, composed and sang a song about Schweinfurt.

In September 2014 the Americans will leave the region. The announcement has changed everything except the friendship which ties the Americans with the Germans and mainly with Schweinfurt, “a great place to live and serve.” Therefore a toast was made to Schweinfurt: “Great county, blooming city and a strong German-American community.”

When talking with Americans who enjoy exploring what’s outside of the kasernes, it soon becomes clear what some of the best things in Germany are, aside from Heidelberg - the small villages and the phenomenal Christmas markets. They will be one of the best memories when the Americans leave Schweinfurt, according to Runey. The same with the Schweinfurt Volksfest, the Honky Tonk festival, the Christmas circus and the Rowdy River Raft Race organized by the Rotary Club. However, Lt. Col. Runey has to admit that the Army needs to invest more into the power of its rowers. Also the joint training with the Bundeswehr in Hammelburg is one of the things that have impressed the Americans even though the pronunciation of the word “Schützenschnur” can be difficult for non-Germans. For Runey very important are the encounters on school level and sport level. Although the Army is leaving, there will still be Soldiers coming to Schweinfurt. Not as many as before said Runey.

Two units are presently in Afghanistan. Captain Jake Bradfield and First Sergeant Richard Fletcher of 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry help their fellow Soldiers to reintegrate when they return from their deployment and they watch out for their families who stayed in Germany. The two are the only Cavalry Soldiers at the reception. They stand out because they are wearing their Stetsons with their uniforms. They look very fancy – and the two know that. While passing by an American lady remarked: “The boys go nowhere without their hats.”

Schweinfurter Anzeiger - New Year's reception of the U.S. Army already characterized by the upcoming drawdown– touch of melancholy resonates (Jan. 12)

The New Year's reception of the U.S. Army had a touch of melancholy as the upcoming closure of the garrison was ever-present. One could feel special warmth when Garrison Commander Lt. Col. Michael D. Runey welcomed his guests. Most of the mayors of surrounding communities paused to express their personal thanks for the members of the U.S. Army who became fellow citizens. Not only did the mayors regret the drawdown, but so too did the representatives of district and state governments, as well as County Commissioner Harald Leitherer and Lord Mayor Sebastian Remele. But also representatives of city and county administration, auxiliary services, police and fire department attended the reception to toast to the year 2013.

According to custom there are many toasts. In his speech Lt. Col. Runey praised the excellent German-American relations and the bonds of friendship. He demonstrated this with many examples. It was almost like reading an image brochure of the city, because that's what Americans like the best. Runey stated that he will always remember the Volksfest and the Honky Tonk festival. There you could truly experience what you knew about the Germans only by hearsay. The Silvana indoor and outdoor pools attracted hundreds of Americans. The Ice dome and the Willy-Sachs-Stadium were also often visited by U.S. Soldiers. The Mighty Dogs even have their own American fan club and over the years there were several American Soldiers strengthening the team, which made Runey especially proud. The same applies to the Ball Bearings who brought football, an innermost American sport to Schweinfurt. Therefore the friendship will not end with the closure of the Schweinfurt garrison, emphasized Runey.

However, the number one priority is still maintaining and fighting for freedom in the world. Since the threat of the same has declined in Europe the USA must concentrate on other focal points. The fact that the U.S. Army has remained in Schweinfurt even 25 years after the end of the cold war shows that it was a difficult decision for the USA. The USAG Schweinfurt has also proven as an ideal place for training reinforcement troops. In Schweinfurt the connection roads between the two casernes and the training area were always free to use for which Runey also expressed special thanks.

SAFETY/SECURITY

Cars spin out of control on icy roads (Jan. 18)

Drivers in Lower Franconia have a lot of problems on the snow-covered roads. Numerous accidents have occurred since Wednesday. Mainly on curves and on steep roads, drivers started spinning and crashed into other vehicles, traffic signs or light poles. There were even more accidents in Middle Franconia. The police reported 94 accidents with 9 people sustaining minor injuries. In such weather conditions not only the roads are dangerous but the side-walks as well. While the roads are kept free from ice and snow using salt, in many communities salt cannot be used for side-walks in order to protect the environment. Therefore pedestrians also have to be cautious.

Imaginary kidnapping (Jan. 15)

On Monday morning two nine-year old girls caused large scale police operations in Schweinfurt. On their way to school, a twelve-year old boy had told them about bad men who were on the road in dark vans, explained Police Commissioner Michael Zimmer on Monday evening. Shortly thereafter, the girls saw a dark-grey moving van and imagined having witnessed the kidnapping of a child. They reported the imagined incident to the principal who informed the police. Several police patrols and a police helicopter were called in. The police officers investigated and found the van and the twelve-year old boy. Still, according to the police, the children reacted correctly by reporting to the principal that they had seen something suspicious going on.

Icy roads – two people sustained critical injuries in a head-on collision (Jan. 15)

Two inexperienced drivers sustained critical injuries in a head on collision on State Road 2271 between Kolitzheim and Unterspiesheim late Monday afternoon. According to initial findings by the police department of Gerolzhofen, an 18-year old living in the county of Schweinfurt was travelling in his Opel on State Road 2271 in direction Kolitzheim at approximately 5:15 p.m. At the same time a 20-year old woman also residing in the county of Schweinfurt was travelling in her Polo in the opposite direction. Because of still unknown reasons one of the drivers got off the road and onto the oncoming traffic lane where the two cars collided head-on. Due to the impact both cars were totally destroyed and car parts, even the motor block of one vehicle, were scattered all over the road. The two young people were jammed in their cars and had to be rescued by fire fighters from Kolitzheim, Gerolzhofen, Unterspieshiem and Stammheim. After first aid was administered they were admitted to near-by hospitals in critical condition. The State Road was completely blocked-off for a few hours. The police are looking for witnesses, who should report to the police by calling 09382/9400.

Rowdies destroyed monument for American Soldiers and Veterans (Jan. 16)

The monument in honor of all American Soldiers who have served in Schweinfurt, which was dedicated on American Veterans Day in November of 2012, has been destroyed. The offender(s) beheaded the eagle, the center of the monument sculptured by local artists Steff Bauer and Sören Ernst. The artist Steff Bauer who is presently abroad, showed how horrified she was about the crime in an e-mail she wrote. Mary Ritzmann, President of the Ladies Auxiliary, of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, who initiated the project, showed her deep disappointment. For the association Veterans of Foreign Wars a long-time wish had come true with erection of the monument, which is the first of its kind in Germany which is located outside of a military installation. The monument stands for all American Soldiers who have served in Schweinfurt during the past 60 years. Mary Ritzmann and the last Commander of the United States Army Garrison Schweinfurt, LTC Michael D. Runey, spoke of it as a symbol of peace in a city where German-American friendship is lived. Therefore, they were so shocked when hearing of this senseless act of violence, which makes one sad, stated Mary Ritzmann. The American woman who is married to a Schweinfurt citizen hopes that the monument can be repaired once the artist returns from her trip in March. Bauer expressed her opinion in an e-mail with clear words: “Are there only idiots out there?” She is asking herself how an artist can go on if he/she cannot set-up his/her art works in public places anymore. The U.S. Army has been informed and is also very disappointed. A complaint to the police has been filed. Any leads should be reported to the police at 09721-2020.

LEADERS/POLITICS

Red Cross new equipment vehicle, now equipped for large disasters (Jan. 16)

The new equipment vehicle weighing 11.5 tons, with 220 P.S. and costing €160,000 was officially turned-over to the Bavarian Red Cross on Monday evening in Würzburg. In his remarks District Chairman of the Bavarian Red Cross, Peter Wesselowsky stated, "The year is starting off well." Of 83 vehicles of this type, which will be put into service in the coming months and years in Bavaria, the new vehicle is the sixth one in Bavaria and the first one in Lower Franconia. Officially it belongs to the County of Würzburg but of course it will be available for the city of Würzburg as well until the city will get its own vehicle within the next two years. The Gw-San 25 is equipped for large scale operations, such as train or bus accidents but also for large events such as the "Residenz run" and enables the Red Cross personnel to render first aid to 25 persons at one time. The team consists of 10 paramedics and one emergency physician. With a heated tent, a generator, illumination, oxygen, an hydraulic ramp and own drinking water supply a treatment facility can be set-up quickly, where injured persons can be treated and stabilized until they can be transported to nearby hospitals. Five defibrillators are also part of the equipment. The equipment vehicle was first used last week during an accident involving acids.

Profits from electricity and gas cover for losses from city bus transportation and Silvana indoor- outdoor pools (Jan. 15)

The city utility works subsidize losses from city bus transportation and indoor- outdoor pools with the profits made from electricity and gas. This was the case again for 2012. The profits from electricity were €3.5 million, the profits from gas €4.4 million and water €1.2 million and another €260,000 from harbor operations. The four profit making operations earned approximately €9.3 million.

Dial 4 40 77 to pay for parking ticket (Jan. 15)

Paying for parking tickets by cell phone will be possible in Schweinfurt starting Friday, Jan. 18, 2013. A partner of the city and operator of the payment system is company Mobile City GmbH. This company is working with 60 cities in Germany, Austria and France and is one of the leading companies in the field of mobile payment for services within the municipal branch. Mobile City GmbH explains how it works: To pay for your parking ticket by cell phone all you have to do is send a SMS to the number 4 40 77. In the SMS you only have to type in the parking zone number – which can be found on the parking ticket machine or on the parking sign, your license plate number and how many minutes you want to park with a period in front of the number, for example .25 (for 25 minutes). Then the customer will receive confirmation, informing him/her of the beginning of the parking time and the end of the parking time as well as how much it will cost. The bill will be included in the cell-phone bill of the customer's provider. Customers using a pre-paid cell phone the parking fees will be deducted from their credit balance. Registration or a contract is not required for paying for parking tickets per SMS.

Royal Reign – Fasching fans storm town hall (Jan. 14)

On Friday afternoon, Marc Peter I and Katja III took over the reign of the city of Schweinfurt. Accompanied by their guards and the "Council of Eleven" the Fasching Prince and Princess of Schweinfurt marched into the town hall. Horst Dinkel, President of the Fasching Club ESKAGE,

demanded that Lord Mayor Sebastian Remele make room for the royal couple and their entourage until Ash Wednesday. The royal couple forced Mayor Klaus Rehberger, representing Lord Mayor Remele, to hand over the keys to the town hall. When Rehberger asked: "What do I have to do to stop this revolt?" He had no chance, was overruled and finally surrendered. (NOTE: This is just a tradition in Schweinfurt)

ECONOMY

Air Berlin cuts 900 jobs (Jan. 16)

Germany's second largest airline – Air Berlin will cut 900 jobs by the end of 2014. With reduction in personnel, reducing travelling routes and selling aero planes, Chairman Wolfgang Prock-Schauer wants to save €400 million to bring the airline back into a profit-making zone. At the present time Air Berlin has approximately 9,300 employees. One week after change in top management the air line confirmed the announced restructuring program.

SPORT

The Mighty Dogs continue series of victories (Jan. 18)

The Mighty Dogs achieved three victories in a row against the Deggendorf Fire 5:4, the EV Regensburg 3:4 and the Freiburg Wolves 4:0. This weekend they are planning on continuing their victories when playing against the EC Peiting on Friday in Schweinfurt and the EV Füssen on Sunday (in Füssen). If the team continues to make points they still have a chance to play in the play-offs end of February.

The Mighty Dogs win 3:4 victory against Regensburg (Jan. 14)

Igor Filobok was the man of the day even though he drove his coach, his team mates and his fans almost insane for not taking great chances especially in the final third but then he scored two goals and brought a sensational victory against Regensburg. On Sunday the Mighty Dogs won against Freiburg 4:0 – the third victory in a row.