

# 55<sup>th</sup> »Picnic«

Once a year in Moschendorf the great meeting of Aus-  
 landburgenlaenderinnen and Auslandburgenlaender is  
 celebrated, organized by the Burgenlaendische Gemeinschaft



From the left: Werner Laky (mayor of Moschendorf), member of Burgenland government Verena Dunst, Waltraud Stubits (»Miss Burgenland New York 1972«), President Prof. Walter Dujmovits, Erika Janny (»Miss Burgenland New York 2015«), Linda Szoldatits (»Miss Burgenland New York 1984«) and Walter Temmel (mayor of Bildein)



## Austria, Europe and the World



Above: Prof. Walter Dujmovits, President of the Burgenlaendische Gemeinschaft, welcomes the numerous arrived Burgenlaender from abroad and from inland.

On the right: Erika Janny, the reigning »Miss Burgenland New York 2015«

The history of the “picnics”, as they call the annual reunion of Burgenlaenders abroad, reflects the history of the Burgenlaendische Gemeinschaft over the past five decades. In the early days the community had organized annual charter flights from the U.S., often bringing more than a thousand people back home to Burgenland, celebrating “the picnic” for the first time in 1961. Not only did the visitors meet with their families and old



friends, but also other emigrants now living in America, Australia, Switzerland, and various other countries.

Celebrating this year’s 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the “picnic”, people again took often long and arduous journeys to Moschendorf so they could gather with their families and friends.

### 40 years a part of Austria

In 1961 Burgenland celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its membership to Austria. Then-president of the Burgenlaendische Gemeinschaft, Toni Lantos, held a memorial service at the town square of Güssing. He delivered his speech at the entrance to the town hall, which is now home to the office of the Burgenlaendische Gemeinschaft. Hundreds of visitors and numerous celebrities from Burgenland and Vienna afterwards gathered at the historic castle of Güssing, celebrating the first “picnic”. This great success encouraged Lantos to make this an annual event. In 1962 and 1963 the reunion was at the park of the castle in Sulz, then Heiligenkreuz in 1964. In 1965 to 1968 the picnic took place in Neustift bei Güssing, 1969 to 1971 in Neusiedl bei Güssing, and 1972 and 1974 again in Heiligenkreuz. Celebrating the “Amerika-Woche” in Stegersbach in 1973, the picnic happened there. From 1975 to 1992 Güssing was the host of the picnic – with the exception of 1981’s “Chicago-Woche” in Markt Allhau.

In 1967 the 4000<sup>th</sup> community-organized charter flight passenger was honored by the Burgenlaendische Gemeinschaft at the picnic, in 1968 the 5000<sup>th</sup> passenger. The picnic on July 20<sup>th</sup>, 1969, was especially exciting because the first landing on the moon



Singing on the ground of the “Freilicht- und Weinmuseum” in Moschendorf



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*Burgenlaender from abroad and from inland in the function room of the "Freilicht- und Weinmuseum Moschendorf"*

happened and the crowd watched it together on TV.

The gatherings often suffered from bad weather, so president Julius Gmoser decided to move the "picnic" to a big tent, eventually upsetting several visitors as "picnics are an open air event". Luckily, Stefan Behm's Kulturverein in Moschendorf just had finished building a wine museum – with a partially roofed big courtyard. So in 1993 the "picnic" was moved to Moschendorf, hosting the event up to today.

Another upheld tradition are the red-white-blue stripes on the posters announcing the picnics, a reminder of the former air mail, once the only means of communication overseas. So this stripe became the identification for the Burgenlaendische Gemeinschaft.

Providing a scenic location for the picnics is the Kulturverein of Moschendorf's „Freilicht- und Weinmuseum“ at the Pinkataler Weinstraße. Years of arduous detail work saw buildings of the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century disassembled and rebuilt at the museum's grounds. They are all fully furnished and hold agricultural utilities, tools and equipment for winemaking.

Apropos Pinka: the migration to America saw it's beginning here on Pinka soil: as early as 1893, Georg Reinisch was the first to risk the journey to America and settled in Nazareth, Pennsylvania. He traveled the ocean several times before finally staying back home in Moschendorf where he passed away.

On August 9<sup>th</sup>, 1903, the "Oberwarther Sonntags-Zeitung" wrote that Moschendorf saw "another 30 persons emigrating, amongst them 10 girls aged 14 to 18 and a boy of 14 years of age". In 1922/23, 59 persons moved



*Burgenlaender from Australia and the USA visiting their home country*



*The Croatian Tamburizza band from Prostrum (Hungary)*

Fotos: BG / Karl Prati



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Photo: BG / Erwin Weinhofer



Diocesan Bishop Aegidius J. Zsifkovics with three »Miss Burgenland New York« (from the left) Waltraud Stubits (1972), Erika Janny (2015) and Linda Szoldatits (1984)

Photo: Diözese Eisenstadt



Diocesan Bishop Aegidius J. Zsifkovics – in our picture with President Prof. Walter Dujmovits und Vicepresident Eduard Nicka – has just got the honorary membership of the Burgenlaendische Gemeinschaft.

away. As of 1939, Moschendorf (with a total population of 745) saw 281 persons emigrate to America. However, 180 of them (42%) in the end came back home again. Also coming back, even if “just” for vacation, are many of their offspring born abroad.

#### The 55<sup>th</sup> „picnic“

The picnic celebrated its 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year – and a lot has changed. High-capacity planes regularly crossing the Atlantic make it more difficult to organize charter flights. Visitors not only come to Burgenland

during the summer, but all the year round. They don't stay that long anymore, and often combine their visit with trips to other regions in Austria or other places in Europe. Still, the “picnic” kept its character as a merry, folkloristic, and often touching event with country-wide official recognition.

July 5<sup>th</sup>, the day of the “picnic”, was one of the hottest days this year. Thanks to the partially-roofed courtyard and open side walls, people would easily cope with the temperature though while merrily sitting together or dancing.

The picnic saw visitors from America, Australia, Germany, Hungary and Switzerland. The worldwide alliance of Austrians living abroad (Auslandsösterreicher-Weltbund) sent their regards by representative Thomas Payer from Hanover, Germany, and Rosa Vrbatovic conveyed regards from the Burgenland community of Australia.

The charming “Miss Burgenland New York”, Erika Janny, was in the focus of the event as every year. Two former “Miss Burgenland” attended as well – Waltraud Stubits (1972) and Linda Borhi-Szoldatits (1984). The picnic saw a large group of visitors from Prostrum, Hungary, as well as camera teams from two TV stations.

Atmospheric were the songs of the Oberwart choir “Chorissimo”, atmospheric was the music of “Die Ewig Junggebliebenen” (“the forever young”) band, and atmospheric the “picnic” concluded in the late afternoon.

On July 7<sup>th</sup>, the “Miss Burgenland Tag” was held. A coach took Erika, her relatives and several representatives of the Burgenlaendische Gemeinschaft on a ride through the beautiful summer landscape of the Burgenland to Eisenstadt. After a short sight-seeing tour through downtown the party was received by diocesan bishop Aegidius J. Zsifkovics who held a mass at the chapel of the bishop's residence.

#### High decoration for head of church in Burgenland

Diocesan bishop Zsifkovics was quite taken by surprise at the end of holding a service, as he was named a honorary member of the worldwide Burgenlaendische Gemeinschaft by the president of the society, Hofrat Walter Dujmovits.

The accolade was given in recognition of bishop Zsifkovics' efforts in matters important to the community and his special bond to the people from Burgenland living all over the world. In October 2013, bishop Zsifkovics had visited several communities in America on the occasion of the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the “1. Burgenlaendischer Krankenunterstützungsverein New York” (“First Burgenlaender Sick Benefit Society New York”).

#### Zsifkovics: “Migrants” are a point of honor and a matter that is near to one's heart for the people of Burgenland

Obviously touched, the bishop from Eisenstadt accepted the honor. In a short statement he reminded us that people once left their homes in Burgenland in hardship. They built up a new existence – hardly possible without



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Photo: bgld. media service

Reception in the house of the regional government in Eisenstadt (from the left) Rudi Drauch, Vicepresident Eduard Nicka, Vicepresident Erwin Weinhofer, "Miss Burgenland New York 2015" Erika Janny, Burgenland governor Hans Niessl, member of Burgenland government Verena Dunst und Prof. Walter Dujmovits, President of Burgenlaendische Gemeinschaft

humane acceptance in the countries they migrated to. „If people in need come to us, approaching them with an open heart is a point of honor for the people of Burgenland“, Zsifkovics said. The diocese of Eisenstadt set a leading example in the current refugee tragedy in Syria and Irak, accommodating 200 refugees.

The group's way then led them to the government building where governor Hans Niessl and member of provincial government Verena Dunst gave them a heartily welcome.

#### Remaining bonded to the home country in the heart

The governor was pleased with the strong bonds of the Burgenlaenders all over the world to their homeland: "They had nothing when they arrived at their new homelands. Diligence, readiness for action and dedication – virtues that led to Burgenland's rise also let them prevail in foreign countries. Burgenland is a country of cooperation, a country of variety and intact village communities. I'm certain that this unity is the reason that the Burgenlaenders – even if they no

longer live in their homeland – will always feel connected to their homeland."

"It is admirable and nice to see", Niessl continues, "that also the younger generation of the Burgenlaenders abroad is interested in the old homeland, their roots. They maintain

a lot of patriotism. I thank them all, all who didn't forget about their Burgenland roots, for still being Burgenlaenders in their hearts." Governor Niessl met with Burgenland communities in the U.S. and Canada twice over the past years and plans another trip in 2016 as head of a government delegation.

#### Wine baptism in Harmisch

The same day mayor Norbert Sulyok of Harmisch invited the local public to a wine baptism. Two bands full of verve played for the audience – one from St. Michael, the other a Croatian Tamburizza band from Prostrum (Hungary). It was a merry event, people singing Croatian, Hungarian and American songs. A red and a white wine were baptised „Erika“ in honor of the acting „Miss Burgenland New York“.

It was a beautiful day which concluded with the famous song „So ein Tag, so wunderschön wie heute“.

<http://www.burgenlaender.com>

Sources: Burgenlaendische Gemeinschaft, bishopric Eisenstadt, Department of regional government Burgenland, "Oesterreich Journal" - archive.

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Photo: BG / Karl Pratl

Red and white wine were baptized »Erika«.