



DER BOTSCHAFTER *Issue 3/2022*

UNITED GERMAN AMERICAN SOCIETY OF FLORIDA, Inc.

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CARNIVAL AND ITS HISTORICAL ROOTS IN GERMANY!

It's Carnival season in Germany! In Cologne Germans march through the streets costumed, shouting the word **Alaaf** as they excitedly greeted one another. In Mainz and Düsseldorf, the word **Helau** echos through the city as the Carnival (**Karnival**) season kicked off on 11.11 at 11:11 a.m. The highlights and main festivities, however, will take place in February in the days leading up to Ash Wednesday on March 2nd.

Both the words **Alaaf** and **Helau** are Carnival salutations used by Germans to greet one another during the festivities of the so-called *fifth season*. Different regions use different salutations, and using the wrong one could serve as an embarrassment. Residents of the Rhineland use the word **Alaaf** as their Carnival salutation. This word originated in Cologne and comes from *all af* or *alles ab/weg*. In English, this means everything gone, thereby referring to the clearance of luxury items often found at parties. Cologne residents will often also include the name of their city in their own dialect before the salutation: **Kölle Alaaf!**

In other parts of Germany, usually on the other side of the Rhine River, Carnival is celebrated with the salutation **Helau**. The origin of this word is unclear, but it is believed it comes from *hel auf* or *Hölle auf*, both of which are associated with hell. This being the case, then the definitions have something to do with keeping away the evils associated with hell.

Carnival season takes place in the months before Lent – a religious holiday during which Catholics give up some of their luxuries, such as rich

foods and drink. Historically, Catholics often had to dispose of these luxuries when Lent crept up on them. To avoid being wasteful, religious communities held giant parties beforehand, which gradually evolved into today's Carnival season.

Although people in Germany have been celebrating Carnival since the Middle Ages, few people are aware of the historical roots of the tradition. Before this period in history, people had performed heathen rituals at this time of the year to celebrate the end of winter. During Roman times, people along the Rhine celebrated a festival in spring to honor their wine god, Dionysus. This was a feast with much drinking and laughing, a time during which people had complete freedom to criticize authorities for a few days without fear of repercussions, some of that tradition still living on today. When regions along the Rhine were Christianized, the heathen festival was integrated into the official church calendar and developed into what later became known as Carnival.

Carnival takes place six weeks before Easter, just before the period of fasting or Lent begins. **Fastnacht**, the original name still used in parts of the German-speaking world, reveals these early Christian origins. The 40 days leading up to Easter were intended as a quiet, reflective time. According to the church, people should abstain from heavy eating and drinking during Lent as a way to remember the suffering and death of Jesus Christ.

Before these sobering weeks began, many of the Christians wanted to enjoy themselves and live it up one last time. Eating and drinking, rowdy behavior and indulging in the pleasures of the flesh were all considered a part of

preparing oneself for the fast, a sort of purging the body through partying. This is actually where the name **Carnival** comes from: *carnis* is Latin for 'flesh'.

Although it may seem surprising, the Catholic Church actually tolerated and blessed this wild behavior, regarding it as a compromise for the piety that was expected in the weeks prior to Easter. It is due to this tradition that **Carnival** today is mostly celebrated in the Catholic regions of Germany: Along the Rhine River in the cities of Mainz, Cologne and Düsseldorf.

Since its early beginnings **Carnival**, and its equivalents of **Fastnacht** and **Fasching**, was a period when the world was turned upside down. The normal order of things was reversed: Drunkenness and partying were suddenly acceptable; the figure of the fool or clown was respected; the nobility was openly satirized.

The simple craftsmen and workers rose to the position of prince in their guilds and paraded through the streets in hand-sewn robes showering bystanders with food and wine instead of golden coins. People on the streets hid their real identity behind masks and costumes, some elegant others witty, as in the case of Venetian masquerades. For a few days the topsy-turvy world of **Carnival** was normality.

A variety of customs and traditions are associated with Carnival celebrations in the German-speaking countries of [Germany](#), [Switzerland](#) and [Austria](#). They can vary considerably from country to country, but also from one small

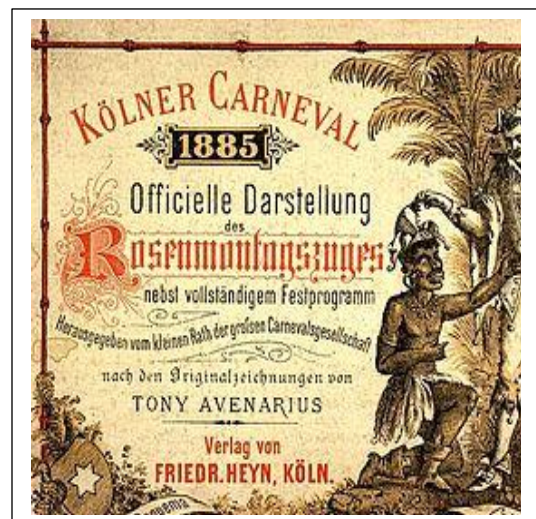
region to another. This is reflected in the various names given to these festivities occurring before Lent. In parts of Austria, eastern and southern Germany, **Carnival** is called *Fasching* or **Fastnacht**.

Annually this *Fifth Season*, commences at 11.11 at 11:11 a.m. and finishes on Ash Wednesday of the following year. The main festivities take place around **Rosenmontag** (Monday before Ash Wednesday). Although the festivities and parties start as early as the beginning of January, the actual carnival week starts on the *Weiberfastnacht* (Thursday) before Ash Wednesday. The big German carnival parades are held on this weekend and especially on **Rosenmontag**, the day before **Faschingsdienstag** (Shrove Tuesday) and sometimes also on *Faschingsdienstag* itself in the suburbs of larger carnival cities.

In German-speaking countries, there are essentially two distinct variations of the **Carnival**: the largest being the **Rhenish** Carnival found in the west of Germany, centered in the cities of Mainz, Cologne, and Düsseldorf. The second is the **Alemannian** found in Switzerland, Western Austria, Alsace and southwestern Germany.

The **Rheinischer Karneval**, mainly in the states of North Rhine-Westphalia and Rhineland-Palatinate, is famous for celebrations such as parades and costume balls. Cologne, Düsseldorf and Mainz are the three **carnival** strongholds in Germany, with the **Cologne Carnival** being the largest and most famous, carnival celebrations are also widespread elsewhere in the Rhineland.

The Rhineland festivities developed especially strongly, since it was a way to express through parody and mockery subversive anti-Prussian and anti-French thoughts in times of occupation. In 1823 the modern carnival commenced in Cologne with the founding of the organizing committee, the *Elferrat* (Council of Eleven) consisting of a president and ten junior members. These club members arrange show events by club members for performance of dance, comedy and songs in costumes.



UGASF CLUB MARCH EVENTS IN FLORIDA

CAPE CORAL...March 12 -

Prinzenball - marking the end of Karnival Season with Peter, Edith and Werner

Mar 18 - Spring Concert - Die Hafenskapelle and The Edelweiss Chorus

Mar 19&20 - Bierfest in Garden 12-7

CENTRAL FLORIDA...

Mar 12 - Trachtenfest with Dan Witucki

Mar 20 - Lumpenball with Janos

Mar 26 - Nacht in Wien - Europa

HOLLYWOOD...Mar 12 St Patrick's

Day Dinner Dance w/Silver Wings 6-11

Mar 26 - Spring Yard Sale & BBQ 10-2

PALM BEACHES...March 11

Dinner/Dancing with Alex Meixner Band
Member \$20 /Guest \$25

March 20 -German Bierfest - Shamrockin' the Haus

With **Richie Hayes Show** straight from the Emerald Isle - Members \$30; Guests \$35.

March 27 - Frühschoppen - free admission
all items a la carte



PINELLAS PARK...March 5

Lumpenball music by Connection

Mar 12 - Spring Dance with Eva Adams

Mar 19 - St. Patrick's Day Dance with Matthias Wagner

Mar 26 - Bockbier Fest with Brad Turk

SARASOTA...March 26 Anniversary

Dinner Dance with Matthias Wagner VFW Hall 5-9 p.m.

SUN CITY CENTER...No event

TAMPA CULTURAL CENTER...

no information

THE VILLAGES...March 17 - Dance

with Ron the Music Man

TREASURE COAST...

March 24 - Picnic @ Rivergate Park

VENICE...March 19 - St. Patrick's Day

Dance with Heart & Soul

WEST CENTRAL FL...Mar 26

Spring Dance @ Knights of Columbus Hall
with Eva Adams

**Just wanted to share a pint of
good cheer and smiles!
Happy St. Paddy's Day!**



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UGASFlorida.org

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