

## Easter German Tradition

By Dennis D. Nims, Fergus Falls, Minnesota

A tradition that has been passed down in our family has been "pipping" with the colored Easter eggs. This would occur about anytime after the Easter egg hunt, sometimes in the morning but usually in the afternoon. It was common for it to occur after the meal and after the dishes were done so everyone could participate. This activity did involve everyone. Every one of course had their own egg. Eggs were colored the day before Easter and included everyone in the family. It was quite an art to make the eggs look as decorative as possible. You could do what ever one wanted to do, as creative or follow the guide of an already formed drawing. As a child I thought that pipping was one of my grandfathers fun things to do. He must have had this tradition with his parents but I do not recall ever seeing them do this. Many years later I did see an article on pipping as a German tradition. I then realized how important that had been for my grandfather, why he would laugh so hard and had so much fun with that game. The more that played the more laughter there seemed to be. The article seemed to give some legitimacy to this activity as a real German tradition. And I realized how many memories that grandfather must have had of pipping from his younger years. Pipping as grandfather taught it, as though there was a skill to this game, was all in how you held the egg. The small end of the egg was held upright. The challenger would then take his small end of egg and hold it above the opponents egg and strike it to see whose egg would crack. If your egg cracked you were pipped and out of the game. And everyone would offer or take on the challenge until there was only one egg that was not pipped left. That person was the "winner" .

Of course there were all kinds of theories on how to hold the egg, where to hold the egg, which fingers gave it the most support and a number of different ways to strike the egg. And the discussions were endless on if there was an advantage to being the striker of the strikee.

And of course there were also theories on how the other person did or did not follow the rules... Now that is a good question. What were the rules? Well, they seemed to change with great frequency. My thought now is that they were just imaginary rules as basically there were no rules, shall we say. One unspoken rule was that all the eggs had to be hard boiled, although grandfather would bring that up once in awhile, just to make you think. What if this one isn't hard boiled? He would say this with a twinkle in his eye. No one ever violated this rule. I think that grandmother had something to do with that rule. After all it was her kitchen, and she knew her kitchen.

So let the fun begin. There are many stories over the years. My sister tells about how grandfather would hold his egg in his big hands so that you could see the tip of the egg but when you went to strike it the challengers egg would never strike because it would be stopped by his thumb and forefinger. He had so much fun with this game and whoever got pipped would bring an uproar of laughter, so much so that it was one of those laughs that fills the whole body,,, and laugh,,,laughed til the tears came..... He really enjoyed children and had a lot of fun.

I just thought that everyone knew the art of pipping but as I got older I learned that it was not very well known. Then I really thought that it was something that my grandfather had dreamed up in his earlier years. He had a lot of things he made up that was fun.... and usually that too brought up the laughter but never like pipping. I

wish I had asked him what his memories were of this in his family before he moved to the U.S.A. and even after that as his parents lived into my teen years.

At any rate the art of pipping has spread as my brother, sister and myself have "taught" it to our children and they to their friends. In fact when my sister has Easter dinner with her friends and family they have dozens of eggs for pipping, just so they get many chances and would not have Easter without it. It seems a simple fascination of fun so basic to life itself and as other people have observed this and have learned the "art" they too have been overcome with hearty laughter. What is there about this pipping tradition?

So if you have not had this tradition in your family give it a try,,,,, at best you can have a good laugh too.

Or for the next two weeks you will have a lot of potato salad and anything else you can do with a hard boiled egg. Now that can be deviled eggs, or peel the eggs and put them in beet juice for pickled eggs and let them sit awhile... wonderful !!!!!!!!!!!!!