

36TH ANNUAL AWARD AND FUNDRAISING GALA OF THE
GERMAN-AMERICAN HERITAGE FOUNDATION OF THE USA®

Gala Program

Honoring Dr.-Ing. Hans-Jörg Königsmann

2023 Distinguished German American of the Year™



**German-American
Heritage Foundation** of the USA®

**GERMAN-
AMERICAN**★
**HERITAGE
MUSEUM** OF THE USA™



Andy Lapsa, CEO & Co-founder Stoke Space:

"Hans's seminal contributions to our industry are comparable only to those of such luminaries as Kelly Johnson, Max Faget, and Werner von Braun. They cannot be overstated. Despite his well-earned success, Hans is universally lauded for his poise and humility, and we are all fortunate for his continued influence on our field."

Kathy Lueders, SpaceX Starbase General Manager, former NASA Associate Administrator for Space Operations Mission Directorate

"Hans was a vital partner through good and challenging times with the NASA cargo program. Some of my favorite memories involved working with him. There was something about his straightforward German manner that made hard news easier to digest."

Bala Ramamurthy, former SpaceX Director of Flight Safety

"Hans always had high standards of technical rigor and was apt to point out whenever something or someone fell short of the standard set by Porsche, which was all the time."

"Hans was an incredible boss and leader who approached feedback with humor and German precision."

Cover: Falcon 9 rocket and Dragon spacecraft in vertical position at Launch Complex 39A at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida in February of 2017.

Image Credit: SpaceX - Source: www.nasa.gov



Distinguished Guests, Members and Friends,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the German-American Heritage Foundation of the USA, it is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to our **36th Annual Award and Fundraising Gala.**

Every year, since 1987, GAHF has recognized outstanding leadership and achievements by an American of German-speaking ancestry in business, the arts, education, science, politics, and society. Our Distinguished German American of the Year Award is the only national honor of its kind, and recent awardees have been well-known names like entrepreneur Peter Thiel, the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank Paul Volker, U.S. Army General Norman Schwarzkopf, physicist and inventor Dr. Karl Böer who championed the development of solar energy, California Governor Jerry Brown, and many others.

I am delighted to have such a distinguished group of dignitaries and guests here with us tonight. We will hear from a modern-day aerospace luminary: **Dr. Hans-Jörg Königsmann**, the former VP of Build & Flight Reliability at SpaceX. As a personal hire by SpaceX founder Elon Musk whose vision included not only electric vehicles, but also commercial space travel and colonizing Mars, Dr. Königsmann was instrumental in propelling SpaceX from a humble start-up to a global power player through his work on the Falcon program. Falcon rockets are the safest and most reliable rockets in existence, and are regularly launched to transport satellites, supplies and astronauts into space. You may remember Neil Armstrong's famous words as he stepped on the moon: "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." Well, you might (not) be surprised to know that Armstrong was also of German descent. Although Dr. Königsmann has not stepped onto the moon, his work has enabled American astronauts to return to space in American-made rockets.

In addition to Dr. Königsmann, I would like to acknowledge tonight's presence of the new German Ambassador to the United States, His Excellency Andreas Michaelis who is accompanied by his wife Heike, the writer and intellectual Caryn Schenewerk, who was Dr. Königsmann's former SpaceX colleague, and Eric Berger, the author of *Liftoff: Elon Musk and the Desperate Early Days that Launched SpaceX*.

On behalf of everyone at GAHF, we thank you for your continued support, which makes our programs possible, and allows us to carry on our mission of sharing the inspiring saga of generations of Americans of German-speaking ancestry and their contributions to the building and advancement of our great nation. You can get a first-hand experience at our museum right here in Washington, DC. We hope that this evening's celebration of German-American heritage and friendship will stay with you as a fond memory, and we look forward to seeing you again next year!

Yours sincerely,

Donald D. Thureau, President

*Letter
from the
President*

The Award

Since 1987, the Distinguished German-American of the Year™ Award has provided national recognition for outstanding leadership and achievement of an American of German-speaking ancestry in business, the arts, education, science, politics, and society.

Previous Recipients of the Distinguished German-American of the Year™ Award

1987	Mr. Karl Ehmer †, NY	2006	General H. Norman Schwarzkopf †, & Mrs. Brenda Schwarzkopf, FL
1988	The Hon. Ruth E. Denk, NY	2007	Mrs. Margrit B. Krewson †, DC
1989	Mr. Werner Fricker †, PA	2008	Dr. Jesco von Puttkamer †, VA & Mrs. Wilma L. Schmidt †, posthumously, PA
1990	Mr. Eric Braeden, CA	2009	The Hon. William R. Timken, Jr., OH
1991	Mr. Albrecht Maier, NJ	2010	The Hon. Paul A. Volcker, NY
1992	Mr. Heinz C. Prechter †, MI	2011	Mr. Robert B. Zoellick, MD
1993	Dr. George J. Beichl †, PA	2012	Chef Walter Staib, PA
1994	Ms. Doris Meissner, WI	2013	Mr. Bern E. Deichmann †, PA
1995	Mr. William Hetzler, NY	2014	Mr. Helge H. Wehmeier, PA
1996	Mr. Bruno Karnas †, PA	2015	Mr. Doug Oberhelman, IL
1997	Mr. Gerald R. Kainz †, DC	2016	Mr. Philip Frederick Anschutz, CO
1998	Prof. Dr. Otto L. Walter, Esq. †, NY	2017	Mr. Robert M. Hitt III, SC
1999	Mr. C. John Muller †, PA	2018	Mr. Peter Thiel, CA & Germany
2000	Mr. John Patrick Schmitz, Esq., DC	2019	Mr. Erich Ast, PA Mr. Frederick H.W. Hansen, NY Mr. Helmut Krüger, NJ Mr. Hank Stoffel, CA
2001	Mr. Detlef "Ted" Hierl †, NJ	2021	Dr. Karl Wolfgang Böer †, DE
2002	Dr. Don Heinrich Tolzmann, OH	2022	Governor Jerry Brown, CA
2003	Mr. Walter Brand †, CA		
2004	Mr. Albert Wurz †, PA		
2005	Dr. Günter Blobel, MD, PhD †, NY		

Distinguished German-American of the Year™ Award



Dr.-Ing. Hans-Jörg Königsmann

A native of Berlin, Germany, Dr. Hans Königsmann has always been fascinated by flying. Unable to pursue a flying career due to nearsightedness, he enrolled in an aerospace engineering program at the Technical University of Berlin. Upon graduation, he was offered a job at the University of Bremen's Center of Applied Space Technology and Microgravity to work on the BremSat satellite, eventually becoming the project's technical director, while also completing his Ph.D. in aerospace engineering and production. After the project's successful conclusion, Dr. Königsmann accepted a position as Chief Scientist and Flight Systems Manager for suborbital vehicles at Microcosm Inc. in California. He met Elon Musk at a rocket launch in the Mojave Desert, and the two men had an initial short conversation, which led to a 19-year career with the company.

As a member of SpaceX from its inception in 2002, and its fourth technical employee, he built up the avionics, software, and GNC departments and developed the launch readiness process. He also designed the SpaceX risk mitigation process and initiated the risk database, establishing a similar process for system-level changes to the vehicle and ground systems. In his role as VP of Build & Flight Reliability, he served as Launch Chief Engineer for the last three Falcon 1 missions, and for many Falcon 9 flights until his retirement in 2021.

Dr. Königsmann helped shape SpaceX's fundamental philosophy and competitive advantage against established space companies with their rigid structures, outdated technologies, and slow innovation. In 2014, he was awarded the NASA Distinguished Public Service Medal. Today, he serves as a supervisory board member of Bremen-based space and technology company OHB SE, OHB SE, and the Munich-based startup Mynaric. Dr. Königsmann also holds advisory board roles at Stoke Space and VAST.

The Program

6:00 pm

Reception

7:30 pm

Welcoming Remarks

Katja Sipple

Executive Director, GAHF &
Gala Committee Chairwoman

7:35 pm

National Anthems

Isabella Kiedrowski, GAHF

7:40 pm

Formal Gala Dinner

8:45 pm

Speakers & Award Ceremony

- His Excellency Andreas Michaelis
Ambassador of Germany to the
United States
- Eric Berger
- Caryn Schenewerk, JD

Award Presentation

Donald Thureau, President, GAHF

Acknowledgment

Dr.-Ing. Hans-Jörg Königsmann

9:30 pm

Live Music & Dancing

Night & Day Band

11:30 pm

End of Program

Reception - 6:00 pm

Butlered Hors d'Oeuvres

Compressed watermelon and goat cheese, sea salt, micro basil

"Pigs in a Blanket" with mustard

Vegetarian spring rolls with sweet chilli sauce

Wisconsin cheese and potato croquette

Dinner - 7:30 pm

First Course & Salad

Roasted cauliflower soup with Austrian pumpkin seed oil accompanied by an assortment of bread rolls

Ribbon salad of artisan greens, cucumbers, carrots & beet ribbons

Main Course - Selection

Bronzed halibut filet with asparagus, carrots, wild mushrooms, fingerling potatoes & citrus beurre blanc

or

Pan-roasted pork tenderloin with mascarpone mashed potatoes, roasted broccolini & calvados sauce with apples

or

Pan-seared New York strip with potato galette, carrots, caramelized shallots & Cabernet demi-glace

or

Roasted vegetable Napoleon with lemon-scented tomato relish & pesto

Dessert

Almond pear tart with orange-scented Crème Anglaise

Coffee and tea service

Guten Appetit!



MICHAEL R. PENCE

October 7, 2023

I'm delighted to send my warmest greetings to each of you gathered for the German-American Heritage Foundation's 2023 awards gala, and I'm proud to add my voice to yours and a chorus of others in congratulating Dr. Hans-Jörg Königsmann on his recognition as the Foundation's 2023 Distinguished German-American of the Year honoree.

Since its founding in 1977, the German-American Heritage Foundation has played a special role in the life of our Nation, preserving the rich heritage and history of German-Americans and paying homage to those who have pioneered across varied fields and disciplines, from the arts and sciences to engineering and exploration. As the grandson of an Irish immigrant, which has been a source of inspiration since my youth, I'm delighted to learn more about my deep German roots. According to family historians, the Pence family began their American story when Michael Peter Bentz came to Pennsylvania from the old Hanseatic city of Lübeck by 1732, and Michael Peter Bentz's sixth-great-grandson would go on to serve as Vice President of the United States.

American spaceflight has long benefitted from the courage and tenacity of German-Americans, whether they chose America as their new homeland—like rocket scientist Wernher von Braun, who became a naturalized American citizen in El Paso, Texas, in 1950—or were born into a long family line of German-Americans—like Apollo 11 astronaut Buzz Aldrin, whose ancestors became Americans through their settlement on the Rapidan River at Germanna, Virginia, in 1714. And that list of distinguished German-Americans lengthens with the inclusion of Dr. Hans-Jörg Königsmann, whose visionary and innovative work in aerospace engineering has helped propel the United States to further push the bounds of space.

To Dr. Königsmann, I'm proud to join the German-American Heritage Foundation in congratulating you on your well-deserved award, which speaks to your extraordinary contributions in the cause of space and the difference you've made in the life of our Nation. Through your unflagging determination, drive, and devotion to lift mankind to greater heights, you have embodied the values of the award's namesake and inspired Americans young and old to reach for the stars in their own pursuits and achieve the American Dream. Thank you for your leadership and labors in space exploration and congratulations again on your special recognition.

To you and to everyone gathered with the German-American Heritage Foundation for this special 2023 gala, may you have a wonderful celebration and a meaningful and memorable evening.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. Pence', with a long horizontal line extending to the right. The signature is written over the typed name and title.

Michael R. Pence
48th Vice President of the United States



Embassy
of the Federal Republic of Germany
Washington

Message of Greeting from
German Ambassador Andreas Michaelis
on the Occasion of the 2023 Distinguished
German American of the Year Award Presentation



Washington, October 7, 2023

I am thrilled to join the German-American Heritage Foundation in honoring Dr. Hans-Jörg Königsmann, the 2023 Distinguished German American of the Year, whose pioneering work in aerospace and satellite technology has left an indelible mark on the field. This award pays tribute to Dr. Königsmann's vision, dedication, and remarkable personal achievement, along with a strength of character and perseverance that drives innovation.

Dr. Königsmann's journey from his early education in Germany to his pivotal role at SpaceX exemplifies the rich exchange between our two countries. His contributions to the development of the Falcon and Dragon rockets and the Starlink satellite network have not only transformed space travel but have also played a vital role in global connectivity.

Moreover, his dedication to knowledge-sharing, as evidenced by his recent work in Germany, testifies to the spirit of cooperation that strengthens German-American relations. In an era of shared global challenges, it is this collaboration that enables us to tackle challenges such as financial crises, public health threats, climate change, or attacks against our freedom and democracies. German-American cooperation is needed today more than ever.

Dr. Königsmann's contributions as an aerospace engineer have forged lasting transatlantic bridges and deepened our bilateral cooperation in science. German-American relations thrive on the engagement and achievements of people like Dr. Königsmann. Again, my warmest congratulations!

Allow me to take this opportunity also to express my gratitude to the German-American Heritage Foundation for its continuing efforts to deepen the bond of friendship between our two countries.

May you all enjoy a memorable Gala and award ceremony!

With my best wishes,

Hans,

You've always been the most distinguished German in book from our early days at Microcosom through your incredible tenure at SpaceX I'm glad the rest of the world is finally catching up!

Congratulations and here's to many more years of friendship!



All my best,

Joyanne E. Stutzell



Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich
Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich

**Institute of Geophysics
Space Science and Technology**

ETH Zurich
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September 23, 2023

Dear Hans,

I wanted to take a moment to extend my warmest congratulations to you on your outstanding contributions to SpaceX, the United States, and the global aerospace industry. Your dedication, expertise, and tireless efforts have played a pivotal role in the company's remarkable achievements. As SpaceX's fourth employee, you were there from the beginning, and few individuals have had a more profound impact on reimagining space launch.

From your work on small satellites to your pivotal role in building reliable and reusable rockets "factory-style," your contributions have not only pushed the boundaries of space exploration but have also inspired countless individuals worldwide, including myself. Long before I joined NASA as Head of Science and became a customer of SpaceX, you were instrumental in developing the means for scientific missions to reach space, significantly reducing the cost of access to space. This has opened new frontiers for groundbreaking science and empowered companies to utilize space in support of humanity here on Earth.

Your unwavering commitment to excellence has set a high standard for innovation and has made a significant contribution to the advancement of space exploration. Your ability to tackle complex challenges with ingenuity and precision in the fast-paced environment of SpaceX is truly commendable.

As you continue to shape the future of space exploration through your board memberships and your work with the US National Academies, please know that your hard work and success are appreciated and celebrated not only by me but also by many others who recognize the profound impact you have made on the industry.

Sincerely,

Thomas Zurbuchen



September 21, 2023

To the German-American Heritage Foundation,

I write to extend my warm congratulations to Hans Koenigsmann on his receipt of the 2023 Distinguished German American of the Year Award. Koenigsmann is entirely deserving of this award for both his contributions to global spaceflight as well as his legacy as a kind, decent, and caring manager of countless employees at SpaceX.

Koenigsmann was the fourth employee at SpaceX, joining the rocketry startup in 2002 at its inception. Initially, he worked on avionics and other computer systems that helped guide a rocket in flight. Alongside Elon Musk and a handful of other early employees at SpaceX, he built the company's first rockets. SpaceX failed on its first three launch attempts, in 2006, 2007, and 2008, before finally reaching orbit on its fourth, and last-chance attempt in September 2008.

I had the pleasure of getting to know Hans during the process of writing a book about the origins of SpaceX, and these early launches. They were such desperate days, with the engineers working on a small tropical island thousands of miles from the mainland United States in the Pacific Ocean, far beyond even Hawaii. They toiled for days and weeks on end, away from their families, struggling to do something that no private company ever had before. Koenigsmann took thousands of photos, and through his careful documentation helped bring the story of the Falcon 1 rocket to life. One of my favorite anecdotes is that when the second launch attempt failed, the rocket's upper stage splashed into the ocean a few hundred miles to the east of the launch site, near a largely submerged spit of land called Kingman Reef. Later, when they realized this, they could all laugh a little bit—"Kingman" is Koenigsmann in English.

Koenigsmann would stay at SpaceX for nearly two decades, watching the company grow from nothing to become the most dominant space company in the world. SpaceX launches more rockets every year than the rest of the world, from NASA to China to India, combined. The company operates 10 times more satellites than everyone else. Perhaps most impressively, Koenigsmann was a senior leader at the hardest charging space business in the world, led by the mercurial and demanding Musk. And yet everyone I've spoken to loved him for his grace, his fairness, and his decency. These are the greatest of compliments one can give.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "ERB".

Eric Berger

Senior Space Editor, Ars Technica

Author of *Liftoff: Elon Musk and the Desperate Early Days that Launched SpaceX*

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**BEST WISHES FROM
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**TO THE GAHF FOR A SUCCESSFUL ANNUAL GALA
&
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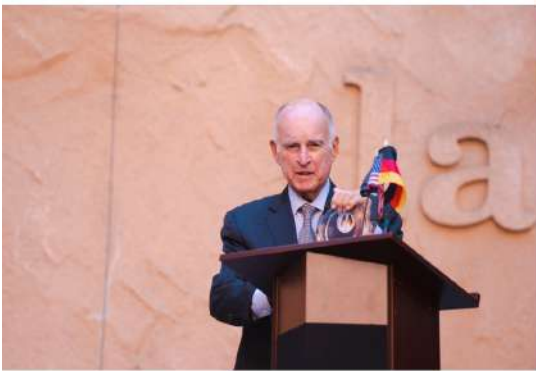
CONGRATULATIONS TO
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ON RECEIVING THE
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How German Ingenuity Inspired America: More Fun, More Beauty, More Freedom

Available Now

It's more than beer and bratwurst. Lynne Breen's beautiful anthology *How German Ingenuity Inspired America: More Fun, More Beauty, More Freedom* is an essential addition to every library that captures the German influence on every aspect of American culture and life. From Christmas trees, Easter eggs, steel cables and Volkswagen, to Aspirin and x-rays—Germans have made life easier, better, and more comfortable in both Germany and the United States.

This beautiful, linen-bound hardcover publication is filled with the biographies and contributions of over 1,000 individuals in different fields ranging from the arts to the natural sciences and everything in between. It also features more than 300 illustrations and photos of famous individuals including Margarethe and Carl Schurz, Henry Kissinger, Amelia Earhart, Albert Einstein, and screen legend Marlene Dietrich, as well as lesser-known historical figures, such as 19th-century sculptor Elisabet Ney, mathematician Emmy Noether, and Bauhaus architect Walter Gropius.

Reviewers have praised the work as “a welcome and elegantly written contribution to the understanding of the invigorating German influence on a vibrant American society” and for its “phenomenal research into the many areas of German life that influenced the development of the American automotive and space industry”.

Published by GAHF in Washington, DC, the book is available online: www.gahmusa.org for \$39.99 plus \$7 for shipping & handling



German-American Heritage Foundation of the USA®

Established in 1977, the German-American Heritage Foundation of the USA® (GAHF) is dedicated to preserving, educating, and promoting the cultural heritage of Americans of German-speaking ancestry.

The foundation serves as the only national membership organization for German Americans. Since 2010, we have been proudly presenting our rich heritage at the first national German-American Heritage Museum in our nation's capital.

We are committed to:

- Sharing a positive image of Americans of German-speaking heritage by focusing on their historical contributions to American society;
- Strengthening the ethnic awareness and diversity of German Americans;
- Promoting the German language and culture; and
- Furthering German-American relations, cooperation, and friendship.

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The German-American Heritage Museum™

The German-American Heritage Museum of the USA™ opened in March 2010, in a building once known as Hockemeyer Hall. Renovations were completed by the GAHF after acquiring the building in 2008. Located on 6th Street NW, in the heart of the old European American section of Washington, the museum sits in what is now a thriving commercial and residential neighborhood. The Heritage Museum's mission is to collect, record, preserve, and exhibit the rich cultural legacy of Americans of German-speaking ancestry, and to make their contributions to American history available to audiences of all ages.

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