

Speech to new citizens at Naturalization ceremony – Federal Court Building - Wheeling, West Virginia – November 7, 2014

“Thank you Judge Stamp and welcome to everyone.

First, I would like to congratulate all of you on becoming United States citizens. While there continues to be news in the media about illegal immigration into this country, you all have followed the law and went about becoming citizens the proper and legal way. I’m sure it wasn’t always easy, but you are to be commended for what you have accomplished. All of us in this room share one thing in common and that is all of our families at one time were immigrants and they came to this country seeking a new life.

I am Past President of the George Washington Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution and in order for me to become a member I had to prove that at least one of my ancestors fought in or supported the cause of the American Revolution that took place between 1774 and 1783.

In doing some other research on a different line of my family I came across some information on my great, great grandfather (Joseph Dieringer) who came to this country from Germany in 1854. He became a citizen in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1864. His son, Peter, who is my great grandfather became a citizen here in Wheeling on October 9, 1876. 100 years after the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

After my mother passed away, I was going thru things at her home looking especially for anything that would be of interest to me in doing my family research. In the bottom of an old wooden chest in my mother’s attic was a piece of paper. This was Peter Dieringer’s citizenship certificate.

Of all the papers and things that were special to Peter and his family, I know this was one document that was kept safe and passed on thru the generations when other things were gotten rid of.

I am sure that he was just as proud when he received his citizenship on that October day 138 years ago as you are today and this is something that the years don’t change.

This is the ninth time I have had the privilege of taking part in this ceremony and every year I can feel the excitement and sense of achievement that they have had and truly again today, I can feel it with all of you.

Just this past Tuesday you have been witness to one of the privileges of being a United States citizen. That would be helping to elect members of our government and I would encourage you to go to your voter registration office in the area where you have resided for at least 30 days and register, and when the next election comes around you will be able to exercise your right to vote.

The United States of America is the symbol of Freedom under a constitutional government. The heritage of every citizen is Liberty, Equality and Fraternity that has become the envy of people all over the world. The government of the people, by the people and for the people was the hope and dream for which our ancestors put their lives on the line and even today, modern Patriots continue to defend this country in our armed forces. That dream shall not perish from this earth unless we, the descendant's, let it die. Don't ever forget your own families history, each unique, each different, each special.

Again, I wish you good luck and may God Bless you and America.”