

Ceremony to confer the Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany on Professor Frank Baron on Thursday, July 21, 2011 Laudatio by Mr. Onno Hueckmann, Consul General

Dear Professor, honored guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my tremendous privilege today to present to you, Professor Baron, on behalf of the President of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Officer's Cross of the Order of

Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany. This accolade represents one of the most supreme distinctions the Federal Republic of Germany can confer upon individuals, whether German or foreign. The President recognizes the outstanding contribution you, Professor Baron, have made to German culture, German scholarship and the German-American friendship. I can only highlight a few of your outstanding commitments both as a professor of German literature, but also in areas beyond your profession, over the last 50 years.

After studying in Marburg an der Lahn in Germany, you received a Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley. Before and also after resuming your teaching position at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, you returned to Germany several times for research. You have made major contributions in the field of German art, literary and cultural history with numerous books, articles and lectures. Among them are works on Thomas Mann, Rainer Maria Rilke, Herman Hesse, but also your work on the German-Jewish relationship called "Von Ungarn nach Auschwitz". Many of your books and articles have been published both in English and in German.

In addition to your scholarly studies, you have been the director of the Max Kade Center for German-American Studies at the University of Kansas since 1997. Its studies on German-American art and literary history and especially on German exile literature have made an enormous contribution to the field. Not only have you fostered the studies at the center, but you were instrumental in obtaining a site. Partnering up with the Humboldt University in Berlin and other institutions, you have founded the "Humboldt Digital Library Project", to make the great German scholar's work accessible to all researchers everywhere.

Your dedication to the Lawrence - Eutin Sister City partnership deserves special mention. Professor Baron, you were the head of the KU summer school until 2005. Through this project, you brought numerous students of German for study trips to Schleswig-Holstein. With your help, Lawrence, Kansas and Eutin in Germany became sister cities in 1989, and you have helped keep the partnership alive. This year, 70 students of the Lawrence University Orchestra took part in the renowned opera festival "Eutiner Festspiele". For your 20-year commitment to this sister city partnership, as well as to the exchange between artists, scholars and organizations like the Freiwillige Feuerwehr, you were granted honorary membership by the sister city association, "Freunde von Lawrence in Kansas" in 2007. Through this outstanding commitment and dedication to German art, literary and cultural history, as well as to the exchange between Germany and the United States, you have promoted German-American understanding and friendship.

Professor Baron, it is with the utmost admiration and gratitude that I now have the honor on behalf of the President of the Federal Republic of Germany to present to you the Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit. The deed of conferment, which I shall now present, reads as follows:

Congratulations!