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Title

Retrospective

German-American Day Deutsch-Amerikanischer Tag in Düsseldorf



The Federation celebrated its first German-American Day
October 6 in Düsseldorf.



Professor Dr. von Katte

On the occasion of the awarding the Lucius D. Clay medal to Professor Dr. Meredith McClain by the Federation of German-American Clubs e.V. on October 6, 2001 in Düsseldorf a shortened version of the Laudatio given by Dr. Maria von Katte, was written by Renate Kasperek. Professor Dr. von Katte is the co-founder and Board Member of the Summer School Wust for English Language, Literature, Theater and Music.

Professor Dr. von Katte closed her praise of Meredith McClain with these words:

"It has to do with nothing less than the development of a new world, on which the continuation of our aging civilization will depend. Basically we look today, as we did already centuries ago, hopefully toward the West. In the past twelve years we have attempted to transfer our values to the next generation. To the considerate and unexpected strongly challenged young people who are here among the guests, one would like to say, borrowing from the words of a very wise man: <Consider these values carefully and the good which you keep, use with wisdom.>"

Professor Dr. Maria von Katte therewith rounded out the circle of an historic development between two countries positioned on opposite shores of the Atlantic, whose actively binding link finds expression in the person of the Laudanda

"Meredith, born during the Second World War, experienced in her youth a deep friendship with a family from the then enemy foreign country, she learned her first German from a similarly immigrant woman from Germany and felt herself drawn ever closer to this cultural circle as she grew up: 1963 /64 she studied music in Salzburg, 1966/67 German at the Free University in Berlin. She was cognizant of the divided city with its differing social systems, the one-- standing under the aegis of the security-minded Americans--

democratically crafted system in West-Germany and the communist dominated system in East-Germany, she was cognizant of the German youth in the West with their anti-American, anti-imperialistic, anti-capitalistic ideology.

With the fall of the Wall, autumn of 1989, the cold war in Germany came to an end, the Americans drew their troops down substantially. Meredith McClain didn't hesitate to set herself in action for the interests of Germany, especially in the "new" German states of the East. She actively supported the Wust School for English Language, Literature, Theater and Music in northern Saxony-Anhalt, and belonged to unofficial German-American Friendship Circle, which the school was able to create on a volunteer basis of private initiative.

had to admit that Karl May was a great help in her activities. She began to research his sources and decided to acquaint his readers with the reality of the Llano Estacado: With her "Winnetours" she brought streams of German visitors to Texas, hosted them and introduced them to the land. In the other direction she organized a traveling exhibit about the Llano in Germany, gave lectures on the fantasy world of Karl May and the reality of Texas and its first German settler.

Her vision is the meeting of people, the connecting between them. Her medium is literature and music. Just as she led people to each other through her literary subjects, she transmitted through exchanges of music-groups unforgettable high points in the lives of the participants.



Meredith McClain (middle) after the award of the Lucius D. Clay Medal, in the company of Helena Gzik (left), Vice President of the Association, and Bruni Pütz (right), President.

As Ambassador for her country, she convinced her university in Lubbock, Texas, to base an intensive program for the German language in Wust, with the total conviction that the human interaction in the little village, so far from the activities of large cities, would be more intense and of more lasting value. And in truth, many of these original students were attracted later back to Wust as teaching assistants. Through teaching, they also learned. She described to her students her homeland, the Llano Estacado, and

Since the fall of the Berlin wall Meredith McClain has written an important chapter in the history of friendship between Germany and America. She has facilitated the meetings of people, especially of young people, allowed knowledge and realizations to grow and -- through emotional insight-- brought them to impressive results. She gave them the chance to offer each other their hand in lasting friendship in a world growing icy cold."