

Sehr geehrter Herr Botschafter,  
lieber Stefan!

Es ist eine große und besondere Ehre für mich, hier im Freundeskreis aus Ihren Händen einen Orden in Empfang zu nehmen, den Ihr Bundespräsident mir verliehen hat.

Ich wäre Ihnen sehr dankbar, wenn Sie dem Bundespräsidenten meinen herzlichen Dank für meine Auszeichnung mit dem Bundesverdienstkreuz übermitteln würden.

Selbstverständlich danke ich auch Ihnen, Herr Botschafter, und Ihrer Gattin für Ihre Freundschaft und das Treffen hier in Ihrer schönen Residenz.

I expressed my thanks to Ambassador Stefan Krawielicki in German for this amazing German recognition.

Tena Kota, Tena Kota Katoa to you my family and friends.

In the past many people were present at official functions because of public positions. This time Stefan and I decided to invite family and friends. Each one of you is either family or you are here because I consider you a friend.

A few weeks ago, Stefan and his wife Isabelle called on me with an incredible message. He told me it was in recognition of my work for Anne Frank. It has been an amazing journey and it has now been in about 40 venues, and I have made my opening speech 35 times.

In the past I thanked everybody who had supported me over the years, many are here today. Today I want to thank three people for making me try to do the right thing to the community, to support the community.

Firstly, my parents for teaching me humanity and social responsibility. My late wife Ria had the same philosophy and for 60 years gave me incredible support. I am also fortunate to have the companionship of Véronique who has a similar approach to humanity.

The War years have had a great influence on me.

I experienced five years of German occupation. That was the Germany of Hitler and I received a Cross for being a courier in the Resistance.

Now I have received the Cross of Merit from the German Government. How did this happen?

I despised Hitler but have the greatest admiration for what Germany has achieved in the post war period. The economy recovered the Wirtschaftswunder, an Economic miracle, and the 16 years that Angela Merkel has been chancellor have been an example to the whole of Europe showing leadership with social responsibility. This culminated in 2015 when Germany admitted 442,000 asylum seekers.

I have also had wonderful cooperation from the German Government for this Anne Frank project. I have worked with four German Ambassadors in Wellington and two in Canberra when I was running the Anne Frank exhibition in Australia. The financial support received from the German Government is also very much appreciated.

That is why I have pride in receiving the honour of the Germany of today. That is why I will wear with pride the honour in a prominent position amongst my other honours.

My grandson Jacob - lieutenant Jacob Klap - was present when the Ambassador called on me. He will be the custodian of my medals after I have gone. He told me that it is a New Zealand tradition to wear your family's medals on the right shoulder on Anzac Day, a wonderful thought.

I am indebted to Ambassador Stefan and his wife Isabelle for putting on this wonderful reception and I am most appreciative to the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany for bestowing this honour on me

I would now like to toast our hosts for their hospitality. Please charge your glasses to Ambassador Stefan and to Isabelle.

Nga mihi nui.