

## **German Society of Maryland honors the G. Krug family and its company, G. Krug & Son**

Members and guests of the German Society of Maryland gathered in the Adlersaal of Zion Lutheran Church on November 3rd to honor G. Krug & Son of Baltimore. Recognized as the oldest continuously operating blacksmith's shop in the United States, G. Krug & Son provides its customers with a wide range of hand-forged ironwork that is beautiful, durable and meets the highest level of quality and craftsmanship. The shop is located in an old historic house at 415 W. Saratoga Street that was first listed in the Baltimore Directory under the name of Augustus Schwatka. In 1830 it was sold to Andrew Merker. The Krug family entered the company in 1848 when Gustav Krug emigrated from Germany to Baltimore and began working as an apprentice in Andrew Merker's shop. Krug quickly rose to the position of foreman and acquired a proprietary interest in the company, which was then renamed "A. Merker & Krug."

After Andrew Merker passed away in 1871, Gustav Krug became the sole proprietor of the shop. He established a tradition of serving his customers with fairness and attention to the finest level of quality available in this highly specialized field. For five generations the Krug family members have continued the tradition of their German-American ancestor. "There is hardly a building in Baltimore that doesn't contain something we made," boasts the 81-year-old patriarch of the family, Theodore Krug. He has now turned over the operation of the business to his sons, Peter and Stephen Krug. These fifth-generation members of the family are tenaciously sustaining the unique heritage that has been bequeathed to them. In their shop they not only produce new pieces of handcrafted iron but also proudly restore valuable ironwork that was hand-forged by their ancestors. In recognition of their devotion to preserving the skills of their pioneering German ancestors, the German Society of Maryland honored them at its 2007 Awards Banquet.

Brigitte Fessenden, president of the German Society of Maryland, and Mohamed Esa, chairman of the Awards Banquet committee, were the primary organizers of the gala evening. Other members of the committee were Dandridge "Dan" Brooke, Maureen Helinski, Bärbel Otto, Jim Schaub, and Theodore Potthast, Jr., who

served as the Master of Ceremonies. Musical entertainment was provided by Mike Surratt and his popular German band, The Continentals of Washington, DC.

The evening began with a social hour that gave the guests an opportunity to meet and talk with the honorees and the family members who had accompanied them to the ceremony. Other special guests of the German Society who were in attendance included Kai Schachtebeck, Deputy Head of the Cultural Affairs Department at the German Embassy in Washington, Bern E. Deichmann, President of the German-American Heritage Foundation of the USA, Thomas A. Werner, President of the Deutschamerikanischer Bürgerverein of Maryland, Inc., Kay F. Schneck, Wm. Hay Kommalan, President of the St. Andrew's Society of Baltimore, Deborah H. Kommalan, and Charles H. Hill, President of the St. George's Society of Baltimore.

Prior to the serving of the banquet meal, President Fessenden welcomed the 122 guests and thanked them for their participation in the evening. Bernard Penner greeted the honorees and guests on behalf of Pastor Holger Roggelin of Zion Lutheran Church. Robert Fritzsche, AIA, a member of the German Society Board, led the guests in singing the national anthems of the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States of America. Then Reverend H.J. Siegfried Otto gave an inspirational German invocation.

The dinner hour was enhanced by a slide show that featured congratulatory messages to G. Krug & Son from numerous organizations, including the German-American Heritage Foundation, The Edelweiss Club, the Goethe-Institut Washington, DC, , the Association of German-American Societies of Greater Washington, DC, the German Club & German House of McDaniel College in Westminster, Maryland, and the American Association of Teachers of German, Maryland / DC Metro Chapter. The slide show also included a number of beautifully phrased memorials to deceased German-American forebears that had been prepared by their loving descendants. Each banquet guest received complimentary copies of the biweekly German language newspaper Amerika Woche, the bimonthly magazine German Life, a CD of Swiss rock and pop music, and a paperback entitled 365 Ideas from Germany – The Essential Guide.

The awards ceremony that followed dinner was a very meaningful and joyous event. The mood was set by an eloquent speech delivered by Sarah Brackbill, president of the McDaniel College German Club. Ms. Brackbill graciously thanked the German Society of Maryland for all of its efforts on behalf of high school and college-level students, including the annual scholarships that it gives to college students majoring in German and the generous financial support provided annually for the AATG – Maryland /DC Metro awards to high school students of German. She concluded her speech by heartily congratulating the Krug family for their selection as the German Society's 2007 honorees.

Mohamed Esa then showed a video that had been filmed and edited especially for this occasion. It presented the history of the Krug family and its involvement with the craft of hand-forged wrought iron from 1848 to the present day. The script had been written by Mary Upman and was narrated by Andrea Shalal-Esa. Immediately after the viewing of this video, Theodore, Peter and Steven Krug were invited to the stage by Brigitte Fessenden and Mohamed Esa. The Krugs were presented with proclamations from Governor Martin O'Malley and Mayor Sheila Dixon. These proclamations recognized and honored the achievements of the Krug family and the company, G. Krug & Son.

More information about G. Krug & Son can be found at [www.gkrugandson.com](http://www.gkrugandson.com).

Mary Upman