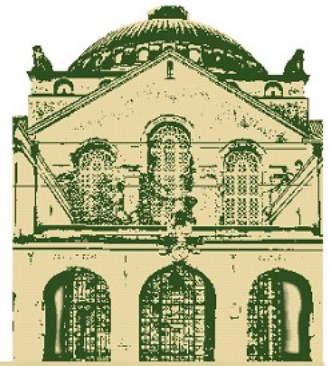


CONNECTIONS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE DESCENDANTS OF
THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF AUGSBURG



December 2020

Volume 3, Number 2



How has our heritage influenced your view of the world?

We asked you: How have our families' experiences shaped our opinions and attitudes about the world in which we live? With so much happening in the world today, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the rise in anti-Semitism, the social unrest in the United States, Brexit, and the resurgence of hate groups throughout Europe, North America, and elsewhere, do you find your parents' and grandparents' words echoing in your ears? Do you believe that you are a more engaged citizen as a result of this history? We are pleased to share your responses.

"The Times, They Are A-Changin'"

By Michael Bernheim, son of Erhard Bernheim. Michael lives in Augsburg.

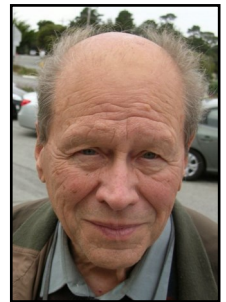
My father Erhard, born in 1923 in Augsburg and having survived in Germany as a half-Jewish youth, clung to the belief that, with the defeat of Nazi-Germany, the threat was over and the problem solved. At least, this was the message we children understood to have received. He did inform us of our Jewish descent, including the facts that his grandmother had perished in a concentration camp and that he himself had had to toil in a labor camp. And it was clear to us that the American troops visible in every-day life in Augsburg were our liberators and friends. But he never really talked about the hardship he had had to sustain. He never mentioned the many Nazis who still or again held influential positions in the administration, jurisdiction, and economy, including in his own company. And he never expressed concern about newly emerging right-wing threats. So, to quote the editors' call for articles, I did not "find my parents' words echoing in my ears," at least not directly and immediately during my childhood and my teenage years.

One of the reasons was probably the desire of a victim to lead a normal life. My father believed in the ability of the allied politicians and the "new" Europeans like German Chancellor Adenauer or French Foreign Minister Schuman to build a better Germany. And it must not be forgotten that over the decades, the main public concerns in West Germany, and probably also in other

Continued on Page 4

A Tribute to Gernot Römer

As many of you know, Mr. Gernot Römer, now 91 years of age, has researched and written extensively about the history of the Jewish community in Augsburg/Swabia. The former editor of the Augsburg daily paper *Augsburger Allgemeine*, he dedicated himself to documenting the contributions made by the Jewish community in Swabia to the region's cultural, economic, and political life. Through research, publications, television documentaries, and exhibitions, he educated the German people about the past, while honoring those who perished.



Gernot Römer

Photo Credit: Richard Mayer

In 2000, in recognition of his work, he was among the first recipients of the Obermayer German Jewish History Award (see <https://widenthecircle.org/profiles/gernot-romer>).

For many of us, Gernot Römer may well have been the first person outside of our immediate family who ever inquired about our family's story. As a result, many of us are indebted to him for re-awakening interest in our families' stories (sometimes even within our own family). Through preserving these family histories, he is truly a keeper of our ancestry and we are very much indebted to him.

We are pleased to present the tributes beginning on page 9 as expressions of our collective gratitude to Gernot Römer for all that he means to our community.

DJCA's Tribute to Gernot Römer begins on Page 9

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Diane Castiglione
Bettina Kaplan

Editor

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Logo Artist

Loren Jaffe

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- Build Community
- Preserve History
- Conduct Outreach
- Support the Jewish Museum
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*Jüdisches Museum Augsburg/
Schwaben (JMAS)*

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A Message from our Co-Chairpersons

Written by Bettina Kaplan

As 2020 comes to an end, we can
probably agree it has been full of struggles
but also, hopefully, silver linings. Certainly, it
has forced us to reevaluate how we view our
world. Our newsletter's theme is so fitting. In
thinking about this past year, how can we not
reflect on our ancestors as they were no
strangers to difficult periods? We, as perhaps many of you, have compared the
present situation to what our ancestors had to endure in their lives. Why is it that we
reflect on our ancestors in challenging moments?

As we were thinking about this, Bettina was reminded of reading a farewell tribute
her great grandmother, Grete, made the night before her cousin Albert and his wife
emigrated from Augsburg to join their daughters in Palestine in 1939. [Note: Grete
Arnold née Landauer (1888-1941) and Albert Dann (1868- 1960) were grandchildren
of one of the early leaders of Reform Judaism, Rabbi Leopold Stein (1810-1882).]

Grete's tribute: *"With love and regret - grandfather Stein wrote for my mother, his
beloved Bettinchen, when she left Frankfurt, her former home, - I believe there is
nothing healthier in the world than to live in an atmosphere of love and
sincere benevolence among people who we feel and know to belong to us and to
have a warm heart for us." You will continue to live in such an atmosphere
because this is part of your being, of your nature. You have inherited what was best
in your grandfather, his trust in God."*

Grete, not a religious person, chose to take inspiration and wisdom from her
grandfather (whom she only knew through family stories) and made it her own. She
reached into her familial "toolbox" to express hope, encouragement, and love.

Through the highs and lows, we have our personal "toolboxes" which in mysterious
ways are packed with familial goodies to assist us. When circumstances out of our
control arrive at our doorstep, we find strength in the wisdom of our ancestors. They
show us that, even during difficult and uncertain times, we can still maintain
connections with our past, fostering peace and stability for our present. We hope that
our newsletter brings insight to our shared history and shines a light towards brighter
days ahead. ❧

From the Editor

In this issue of **Connections** we pay tribute to our friend,
Gernot Römer, whose contributions to preserving the memory of
the members of the Jewish community of Augsburg are
immeasurable. How fortunate we are that we can share these
tributes with Mr. Römer!

Thanks to everyone who contributed to this issue! The
theme of *how our heritage influenced our views of the world* is
particularly important. Our ancestry and background have
deeply influenced the descendants of the Jewish Community of
Augsburg as is evidenced by the generous gifts being made to the synagogue
renovation, by the commitment to the DJCA, and by the very way we live our lives.
We surmise that you are dealing with the pandemic and wishing to be together with
family during the holidays, but that will sadly have to wait.

We hope that you enjoy the stories in our **Family Spotlight**, that you get to know
the latest museum staff member to be highlighted, and that you try the food featured
in our **Recipe Corner**.

**We invite you to contribute to our June issue whose theme is *The Value of
Sharing Family Memories and Stories*.** How do each of you keep the memory of
your ancestors alive and pass them on to the younger generations? Please see Page
15 for more information about the upcoming theme.

I am currently taking a social justice class through my synagogue and I learned that
Deuteronomy 22:3 commands: *"lo tukchal le'hitaleim"* - "you must not remain
indifferent." This should be a moral and ethical imperative for all of us. It is extremely
important as we see the United States as a country divided and a world in which
hatred, prejudice, and antisemitism continue to rise. How poignant that this concept
was captured so long ago, yet remains something to live by today!

We look forward to hearing from you. It's your input that makes **Connections** so
special and important. **Thank you for not staying silent. Happy Holidays!** ❧



L-R: Diane Castiglione and Bettina Kaplan



Deborah Sturm Rausch

Letter from JMAS Director Staudinger

Dear Descendants of the Jewish Community of Augsburg - Dear Friends of the Jewish Museum,

Despite the corona virus pandemic, the Jewish Museum has continued its work. We were very happy to be able to reopen our two locations on May 18. We already opened our first exhibition since closing. In accordance with our focus on feminism this year, the art exhibition *"The Invisible Woman"* was shown in the former Kriegshaber synagogue through September 13.

Whether in a separate room or in the women's gallery, Jewish women in the synagogue were in the background, and are still - in part - invisible to the male community during prayer. The place assigned to women in the synagogue says as much about their religious status in the Jewish community as it does about ideas on the "role of women" in history and the present. Nine artists took up historical themes as well as current feminist issues in their works and dealt with various aspects of the hidden presence of women and the rebellion against it.

The permanent exhibition has also seen some changes. On July 2, we opened a special exhibit on the topic of "Our Values." The aging green display cases which highlighted Jewish festivals and tradition were transformed into a colorful design that shows different values from a Jewish perspective: community, family, charity, equality and justice.

Whether politics refers to common values that are supposed to hold society together, or solidarity and the value of life is discussed in the context of the pandemic, common values are often invoked when it is actually a matter of excluding someone from the community.

In this exhibit, we show objects from everyday Jewish life in Augsburg and Swabia that have, for the most part, never been shown before and we tell stories about their owners and their values. These stories show that while these basic values endure, their expression has always changed and continues to evolve today.

Family does not always mean blood relations only, but can be extended or replaced by other persons, especially in exile. Community can be expressed both in lederhosen and through the possession of religious writings - and one can also be excluded from communities. Justice is held in the highest regard in society, but when it comes to restitution, double standards are often applied. The exhibit thus invites us to reflect on the values we actually share and how much they are worth to us. This special exhibit will be part of the exhibition until April 11, 2021. We also plan to make it available as an online exhibition.

The preparations for our next big exhibition are in full swing. "Shalom Sisters! Jewish Feminist Positions" will be shown from January 13 to August 29, 2021 in various locations in Augsburg and in public spaces. In 2021, Germany will celebrate 1700 years of Jewish life and the Jewish Museum will show its feminine perspective and celebrate Jewish feminism, from orthodox to liberal.

Unfortunately, we had to again temporarily close the Museum due to the pandemic. Stay tuned, take a look at our homepage, and please subscribe to our English newsletter. Stay healthy. We will keep you informed.

Yours,
Barbara Staudinger



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MEET THE STAFF

We are pleased to profile a different staff member of the Jewish Museum in each issue. The local interviews are conducted by Michael

Bernheim, a descendant of the Bernheim family who lives (again) in Augsburg.

Meet Frank Schillinger

Introduction: My name is Frank Schillinger. I was born and raised in a small town in the Black Forest. At Augsburg University, I studied modern and recent history, political sciences and national economy. In 2005 I did an internship at the Jewish Museum Augsburg Swabia (JMAS). Afterwards I completed training as a museum guide and gave my first guided tours in 2007. Since 2011, I have been employed by the museum and in 2018, I was appointed head of the Museum Education Department.



What is your role at the museum? My responsibility is to develop concepts for conveying the messages of the museum and to implement these concepts. This means designing manuals for the different exhibitions to be used by the guides and training the guides. It means, in addition, training everybody else who has visitor contact, for example, the receptionists, and also training and giving advice to school teachers who are important ambassadors.

What do you like best about your work? My job is multifaceted. I enjoy getting our message across to all kinds of people independent of their age and educational or cultural background. In addition, I find digital presentation fascinating and increasingly important.

How did you get interested in German Jewish history?

My first encounter with Jewish culture in Germany was when I took a course in regional Swabian-Bavarian history at university. This made me apply for an internship at JMAS which proved the first step in my career.

What do you feel is the most important aspect of the work being done by the Museum and the DJCA?

The cooperation between the museum and descendants is a valuable opportunity for making the presence of Jewish life known. I want people in the Augsburg region to become curious about it.

What do you like to do when you are not at work?

My favorite pastime is playing music. I play guitar in two very different bands, one a rock band and the other a folk duo. Besides that, I enjoy hiking and biking.

What is your favorite food? I love pasta in every shape and form. It just tastes great.

What is your favorite travel destination? The Baltic Sea.

What superpower would you like to have? Sometimes, I wish I had the ability to read people's minds. But only if I could switch this power on and off. ☸

NATO countries, were the Cold War, the fact that Germany was split in three parts with a border going right through it, and later, in addition, left-wing terrorism. For the vast majority of the West Germans, the main threat came from the left, and understandably so: the blockade of West Berlin by the Soviets in 1948, the violent suppression of blue-collar workers' protests in East Germany in 1953, the elimination of liberal movements in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968 by Warsaw Pact armed forces, the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961, the Cuba crisis in 1962 (when my parents had a bunker built in our basement), the exposure of the personal assistant of Chancellor Brandt as an East German spy in 1974, and dozens of political murders committed by the left-extremist Baader-Meinhof gang in the 70s. That's what I grew up with. At the same time, the European Union was taking shape. Gradually, borders were less important. Then the Iron Curtain tumbled down, something we had never even dreamed of. Poland became a NATO member state! Countries were lining up for joining the European Union and the Euro eventually replaced 19 national currencies.

Later, it was a shock for me when I suddenly realized that walls and borders were being put up again in European countries. Nationalistic parties were getting more votes. In 2013, the new right-wing party AfD was founded in Germany, at first belittled as yet another group of "those weirdos". But they gained support from a large number of "normal" people. That was the second shock. It became tolerable again to make anti-Semitic statements. That's when I woke up and saw that the "Nachkriegszeit" (post-war period) was finally over. The situation was seriously aggravated when, in 2015, Chancellor Angela Merkel agreed to let one million refugees enter Germany. The population was split in two camps. The leading conservative (but hitherto not nationalistic) party in Bavaria made an attempt to take away voters from the AfD with populist slogans. That's when all my warning lights came on. My political and societal stance changed considerably. Of course, all kinds of people were repelled by these new right-wing tendencies. But my heritage made it definitely clear to me where I belonged. In 2017, while walking through Augsburg, I was almost run over by a young cyclist who – illegally – rode on the sidewalk. I told him to move to the street, and he yelled back at me: "Shut up, Jew!" I had to conclude that "Jew" had become a swearword – again. Independent of this incident, I cannot exclude that, meanwhile, I have made it on the black list of some right-wing organization.

The 2017 Synagogue anniversary, the family reunion, my siblings, the DJCA, and last, but not least, the analysis and description of the fate of my family have helped me a lot to find again my position and my direction.

Very recently, in a completely different context, I read that you should lead your life like you were a stranger wherever you are. The more I think about it, the more truth I find in this. It definitely keeps you vigilant. For people of Jewish descent, this has probably always been the case, anyway. ❧

It Could Happen Here Too!

By Rick Landman, son of Henry and Lisa Landman, lives in New York City, and, along with his cousin Laureen Avery, started a website for the second generation which is still online for archival purposes at: <http://www.infotruer.com/Augindex.html>.

I heard my father say quite often as I grew up in New York City, "It could happen here too!" Both sides of my family lived through the rise of Nazism, turning proud German Jews into illegal foreign aliens who had to flee to survive. Of course, this influenced my politics and desire to repair the world.

My mother's father Martin (from Uffenheim/Nuremberg) served the Kaiser in World War I, but later kicked Julius Streicher in the *tuchas* (rear end in Yiddish) and had to flee Germany on the day that Dachau opened in March 1933. Streicher put him on the internment list to be picked up by the Brownshirts (members of an early Nazi militia founded by Hitler in Munich in 1921). Later, he would return to Germany in 1946 and bring Judiaca (including three Torahs and a Purim Megillah) back to New York.

My father, Henry, would return to his hometown of Augsburg many times, both as a United States soldier a few days before the official liberation and later to attend a shul service at the end of the war. Then, he kept in touch with the German Jewish Augsburg refugees (with two reunions) and with the Mischlings (the term used in Nazi Germany to denote persons deemed to have both Aryan and Jewish ancestry) that survived that era. He also returned for the renovation ceremony of the synagogue, various Kristallnacht speeches, and memorials for the Jewish victims of Augsburg and for the Sportsplatz.

My life is one of continuation of the struggle for civil rights. I started the Gay Liberation Front at my college in 1970 and have been involved in our LGBTQ+ synagogue in NYC since 1973. I volunteer as an attorney for my synagogue's Asylum Clinic helping LGBTQ+ asylum seekers for several years now. Pre-Covid I volunteered every Thursday at our local soup kitchen and volunteered as an attorney in Housing Court for 13 years. I also was involved in Democratic politics since the mid 1970s and served on my local community board in Lower Manhattan for decades. I also was my father's social secretary and assisted in the logistics of the two reunions for the Augsburgers in the Catskills during the 1980s.

I am working on getting my memoir published which includes my experiences of being a son of two refugees and I continue to donate documents and artifacts to various Holocaust related museums. I also plan on creating a permanent exhibit in Germany of some of the Judaica rescued by my Opa. One of the Torahs is back in Munich at Congregation Beth Shalom. But the things most important right now are to keep my mom alive and happy during this pandemic, and to stay in touch with Augsburgers which keeps my memories of my dad alive. ❧



Martin Oettinger, Opa (Uffenheim/Nuremberg), as a World War I soldier for the Kaiser



Family Spotlight

The **Family Spotlight** is a regularly featured column in our newsletter. This is a place where you can help us get to know your family and its history by sharing stories that focus on an event, a family heirloom, your family's contributions to Augsburg, etc. Please include photos (.jpgs please) and contact information with your submission. Thank you!

Remembering the Kahn, Farnbacher, and Arnold Families

By Lawrence S. Kahn, great grandson of Aron Kahn, based on conversations with his cousin, Eva Eckert, Aron Kahn's granddaughter. He resides in New York City.

NOTE: The narrative below was published in the 2019 Newsletter "Just Us" of the New York Supreme Court, New York County. It is a somewhat expanded version of the narrative as delivered by Lawrence as a candle lighter at the 2019 Remembrance Ceremony of that Court.

Aron Kahn was born in 1841 in Baden, Germany, and later moved to Augsburg, Bavaria. He married Flora Farnbacher and they had ten children. A peddler as a young man, in 1869, with a partner, Albert Arnold, he started a textile business in Augsburg and soon acquired a spinning and weaving factory. Two of Aron's sons, Berthold and Alfred, eventually succeeded to the business, together with Benno and Arthur Arnold, two of the children of Aron's partner. Benno married Anna, one of Aron's daughters. The families prospered until Kahn & Arnold was aryanized by the Nazis in the guise of a "voluntary" sale in 1938.



Flora Farnbacher,
Aron Kahn's wife

On Kristallnacht, also known today as the November Pogromnacht, yet another of Aron's sons, Anselm, was victimized. He was arrested and imprisoned. Anselm was eventually released after agreeing to leave the country immediately and sell his own chemical business and his house at a small fraction of their value. Anselm and his wife Laura were able to emigrate to England in 1939 and then to the United States. Luckily their children, Fred and Lisl, were able to emigrate to the United States in 1938.

One of Aron's daughters, Else, married a non-Jew (who died in 1926). Else was thus considered "privileged" during the early war years, forced "only" to work in a defense factory. However, shortly before her daughter Eva turned 17, Else was deported in January 1944 to Theresienstadt. Upon her arrival, Else learned that her sister Anna, who had preceded her there in 1942, had died.

Anna's husband, Benno Arnold who was deported with her, was barely alive, but had so badly deteriorated that he did not recognize Else and died of starvation soon after her arrival. Benno's brother, Arthur, an inmate at Dachau, died in 1941, apparently from experimental surgery performed by a Nazi doctor without anesthesia.

After Else was deported to Theresienstadt, her daughter Eva, who had been expelled from school in December 1943, was forced to work in a defense factory. Her older brother Wolf was sent to a work camp in September 1944. Eva barely survived the Allied bombing

of Augsburg in February 1944, which virtually destroyed the house in which she was living.

Else miraculously survived her nearly year and a half at Theresienstadt and was liberated by the Russians in May 1945. She was a shadow of herself when she returned to Augsburg. Else and Eva emigrated to the United States together in 1948. Wolf had passed away shortly after the war. Eva, 93, lives on the Upper West Side of New York City, and is the sole surviving grandchild of Aron Kahn.



Eva Eckert, Else's daughter, at her 90th birthday with family

While Anna Kahn and Benno Arnold and many others in the Arnold and Farnbacher families died in the camps, or in some cases committed suicide in anticipation of being deported, others managed to emigrate to various parts of the world that would accept them, including India, New Zealand, Argentina, England, and Palestine.

As many of the readers of this newsletter know, in June of 2017, the Jewish Museum and Synagogue in Augsburg invited the few remaining Jewish survivors of Augsburg from the Nazi period, and nearly 100 descendants of the pre-war Jewish community, to commemorate the Synagogue's 100th Anniversary. The Synagogue had been badly damaged from a fire on Kristallnacht but was one of the few in Germany that survived because it was across the street from a gas station, which would have destroyed the surrounding homes of non-Jews if it exploded. Many German officials spoke at ceremonies at the Augsburg City Hall and the Synagogue about the need always to remember the Holocaust and to avoid attitudes that recall the sins of the country's past.

More than twenty descendants of Aron Kahn gathered at the Synagogue commemoration. Lawrence Kahn, a now retired former attorney for the New York City Law Department, the New York State Attorney General's Office, and a legal services program, the son of Fred Kahn, grandson of Anselm, and great-grandson of Aron, attended the commemorative week. At the Augsburg State Textile and Industry Museum, he encountered a display case in an exhibit entitled "Rise, Persecution, and Emigration of Two Augsburg Families of Entrepreneurs in the 20th Century", which featured his grandfather's Ph.D. in Chemistry, earned in 1903, alongside a certificate gratuitously issued in 1940 by the Third Reich nullifying the Ph.D.

We now call upon Lawrence Kahn to light the next candle in memory of the many Kahn, Arnold, and Farnbacher family members who did not survive the Holocaust.☸



Aron Kahn, daughter, Else,
and grandson, Wolf

Family Spotlight continues on Page 6



Family Spotlight

Search for my Father's Footsteps

By Richard Oppenheimer who resides in Florida and is the son of Max Oppenheimer. He often speaks on the subject of his family history at schools in Germany. Richard has authored two books, "Walking in My Mother's Footsteps" and "Searching for My Father's Footsteps." His mother and maternal grandmother survived the Riga Ghetto and Stutthof concentration camp and were liberated during the Death March of 1945.

My parents, who both survived the Holocaust, met in New York and married in 1947. Neither talked to me about their lives in Germany, which is not uncommon among Holocaust survivors. I was raised in a household where children are to be seen and not heard. Hence, I never asked any questions, even in my adulthood. My father lived the first 25 years of his life in Augsburg, born in Schrobenhausen on April 19, 1915. What I now know about their lives was only learned after their deaths, when I found hidden among their personal belongings: letters, photographs, and even a hand written diary. Max died in a nursing home on Long Island, New York in 2006 at the age of 91. He suffered from dementia as a result of a burst aneurism in 1990, shortly after my mother's death.

My grandfather, David Oppenheimer, was born in Mergentheim and moved to Augsburg in August 1911. He lived at Schisslerstrasse 10, where he operated a small grocery store. My grandmother Maria Kraus was born in Reutern. Her mother, also named Maria Kraus, moved to Augsburg in 1897 and owned a milk store at Ebnerstrasse 5. My father, Max Oskar Oppenheimer, was the illegitimate child of David and Maria. Maria was Catholic. The couple married in 1918 after David returned from serving in the German Army during WWI. Max became legitimate after the marriage. In 1919, the couple had a second son, Ernst.

Max worked at Weinberger & Bissinger on Bahnhofstrasse until they were aryanized in 1938 and he lost his job. Max then obtained a job as a laborer at the Bader Leather Factory in Goppingen. Max was injured in a work related accident and was hospitalized in early November 1938. On November 10, 1938, David and Ernst were sent to Dachau. Max, being in the hospital, wasn't found during the Kristallnacht Pogrom/November Pogromnacht and was spared going to Dachau.

After being released from the hospital, Max did forced

labor (Zwangsarbeit) at the brick factory (Ziegelei) in Hochfeld. Meanwhile, David's bank account and inventory were seized by the Nazis and his business was aryanized, meaning they were forced to sell their business and home to a Nazi couple, Franz and Magdalena Bold. Mrs. Bold filed a police report about David and had him arrested in March 1940. He was sent to the Katzenstadel prison before being deported to Sachsenhausen concentration camp where he was killed a month later in April 1940. David's ashes were shipped back to Augsburg, where they are buried at the Haunstetterstrasse Jewish cemetery. One of the hidden letters I found provided eye witness testimony to David's ashes being returned to Maria and the urn's burial.

Max obtained a visa to travel to the United States and escaped Augsburg in March 1940. After getting settled in New York, Max obtained a visa for his mother to travel to Cuba in November 1941. Unfortunately by the time she was to board the ship in January 1942, all travel from Germany to Cuba was banned.

Maria became a forced laborer in Augsburg at the Ballonfabrik (gas balloon factory) from November 10, 1941 until March 3, 1943. Maria was deported to Auschwitz in March 1943, and presumably was gassed to death on her arrival.

I have been to Augsburg in 1973, 1991, and five times between 2011 and 2018 researching my father's life. With the help of the Augsburg City Archives, Gernot Römer (Augsburg historian and author), Benigna Schönhagen, and Souzanna Hazan, I was able to find out many missing details. At the 2017 jubilee celebration of the Augsburg synagogue, I was given copies of two newspaper announcements of my father's and uncles' Bar Mitzvahs in Augsburg. Only this year, in March 2020, was I finally able to locate the official documents, dated 1919, memorializing Maria's and Max's exit from the Catholic Church. Max was considered Catholic because his mother was Catholic. In April 2020, I received proof of Maria's and Max's conversion to Judaism, which was recorded in Munich in 1920. In March 2020, Souzanna sent me a photograph of a plaque (ca. 1936) in the Kriegshaber synagogue which documents David's, Max's, and Ernst's permission to receive aliyahs (being called to the Torah). This was the first evidence I have that the Oppenheimers belonged to the Kriegshaber congregation.

During my 2017 visit, I was introduced to two women still living at Schisslerstrasse who were neighbors of my grandfather and witnessed him being arrested by the Nazis in 1940. If my parents only knew what I have learned about their lives without their help. ❧



Oppenheimer home Schisslerstrasse 10 ca 1939



Max, Ernst, Maria, and David Oppenheimer Family Portrait, ca 1924



Maria Kraus' Milk Store, Ebnerstrasse 3, Max, Ernst, cousin Josepha Dauner, ca 1926



In Memoriam

Please let us know if a former member of the Jewish community of Augsburg passes away. Please send an article and a photo to djcaugsburg@gmail.com. Thank you.

In Memory of Ralph August Dreike (Rolf August Dreifuss)

June 16, 1922, Augsburg, Germany –

July 17, 2020, Sunnyvale, California

Submitted by Rosemary Mark, daughter of Ralph Dreike, Walnut Creek, California

Ralph passed away with family near his side after a long and proud life. Son of Ludwig and Amalie Dreifuss, Ralph carried deepfelt fondness for Augsburg throughout his life, despite the hardships of persecutions as the son of a Jewish father and Catholic mother.

In 1938, through sponsorship by a distant cousin of Ludwig Dreifuss, Ralph emigrated to San Francisco, where he lived with a Catholic foster family while attending high school. Then, he started college before being drafted into the United States Army in 1944. Meanwhile Ludwig, a lawyer and member of the Social Democratic Party, was taken into custody many times and finally deported to Theresienstadt in February 1945. Fortunately, he was liberated on September 1, 1945. Throughout his internment, Ralph's mother Amalie was hidden in a convent, narrowly escaping Nazi persecution.

Ralph served three years of active duty in the United States Army. Towards the end of the war while he was stationed in Okinawa, he learned of his father's deportation. Through the Red Cross, his mother had been able to send monthly letters, which were not allowed to exceed ten words, and often were recomposed due to strict censorship. "Father is currently traveling," stated the contents of a spring 1945 letter. Ralph understood that his father was imprisoned.

After recuperating from his internment, Ludwig, 70 pounds underweight, was appointed by the American occupation military as Oberbürgermeister (mayor) of Augsburg in 1946. Ralph was reunited with his parents in Augsburg in 1948 and he continued to visit there many times throughout his life, introducing his Berlin born wife Ruth and his six children to his homeland.

In the spring of 2019, through the happenstance of a letter from the Leo Baeck Institute and Jewish Museum of

Augsburg, at the age of 97, Ralph again yearned to visit his Heimatland, knowing it could be the last time in his life. Though of significant age, he was able to travel with his four daughters and spend a week in Augsburg in August 2019, reliving his fondest memories of his life in Germany: Wurst und Brezeln at Der Markt; Kaffee und Kuchen at Eber Café; enjoying the sites of Augsburg; and a momentous reception in the Goldene Saal honoring his father for his service as Oberbürgermeister.



Ralph Dreike (center) surrounded by his daughters and granddaughter at Oberbürgermeister Dreifussstr. Photo taken in 2019.

After returning from the trip, a friend asked Ralph if he had any unfulfilled wishes in his life. He said no, he had been to Germany again.

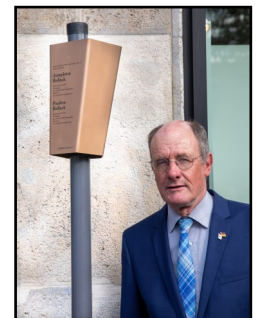
We thank the Leo Baeck Institute and the Jewish Museum of Augsburg for the inspiration to pursue what became an epic life experience for our family. ☸

Remembrance Post for the Bollack Sisters: Impressions from the Unveiling

*By Michael Bernheim
Augsburg, Germany*

As of September 16, 2020, Augsburg has a new remembrance post. It reminds us of the sisters Pauline and Josephine Bollack. You can find it on Königsplatz (King's Square) in the middle of the city. The building in front of which it was installed used to be called "Königsbau" (King's Building). Until 1934, it housed the Landauer department store. On the 3rd floor, Josephine and Pauline Bollack ran a kosher restaurant. They had inherited it in 1910 from their parents and had to close it in 1939. In August 1942, the sisters were deported to the Theresienstadt concentration camp. Pauline died there shortly upon arrival at the age of 79; Josephine perished in December 1943. She was 74 years old.

The new remembrance post was sponsored by the German Israeli Society Augsburg. Two high school students read the sisters' biographies. Thanks to the location, quite a large audience attended.



Gerhard Schröder, Chairman of the German Israeli Society Augsburg addresses the audience.

Photo Credit: Nikolaus Hueck



Two high school students read Josephine and Pauline Bollack's biographies.

Photo Credit: Nikolaus Hueck

NOTE: Additional photographs can be found at: <https://erinnerungswerkstatt-augsburg.de/blog/erinnerungsband-fuer-die-schwestern-bollack-eindrucke-von-der-enthuellung>. ☸

Our Journey with Wolfgang Bernheim: Augsburg Students' Award-Winning Holocaust Memorial Project

By Michael Bernheim (adaptation from the Augsburg Remembrance Workshop's website); Augsburg, Germany.
For further information, see www.erinnerungswerkstatt-augsburg.de.

Three students of Augsburg's Mary Ward High School received an award in a state high school competition. The Bavarian Culture Department honored Pauline Schäffler, Zoe Maridakis, Anna Hackenberger, and their teacher Joanna Linse, for their project called "Our Journey with Wolfgang Bernheim" which they had prepared for International Holocaust Memorial Day on January 27, 2020.

Thanks to the Remembrance Posts erected in memory of the Bernheim family, the entire 8th grade of the school learned the fate of the Bernheim family as an example of what happened to so many Jews in Nazi Germany. This is the report the students wrote:

"Towards the end of the 2019 school term, our German and History teacher Joanna Linse approached us and asked whether we would like to participate in the competition "Give History a Face". She had already found someone whom we could write about namely, Wolfgang Bernheim, born in the Pfersee district of Augsburg. You should know that we also live in this district, so it was even more interesting to find out what the neighborhood looked like in the past. From the parish circular of the Sacred Heart Church we learned that Wolfgang was baptized there. We contacted the parish priest, Franz Götz, in order to receive more information. We were lucky because he knew a relative of Wolfgang living in Augsburg, Michael Bernheim, whom we also approached. Father Götz also gave us Wolfgang's Certificate of Baptism. Michael Bernheim shared more information with us and the picture of Wolfgang's life was taking shape. We were shocked about what had happened, and we felt the need to show our fellow-students how terrible these times were and that something like this should never happen again.

So, we had the idea to organize a procession on Holocaust Memorial Day starting from St. Stephan High School where Wolfgang was a student, via Maria Bernheim's (his great-grandmother's) Remembrance Post, via the Central Station and the site of the former family business to the Sacred Heart Church. The project was supported by the research that had been done by a high school teacher, Albert Eichmeier, in preparation for Wolfgang's Remembrance Post. Eventually, about a hundred girls and boys, a number of teachers, and some journalists were marching together through town on a busy Monday morning. In addition, we had written Wolfgang's biography which we read before a large audience during the official Holocaust memorial event in Augsburg's city hall. A few weeks later, together with Michael Bernheim, we visited the Augsburg Jewish Cemetery."



The procession stops near the Augsburg Central Station as a reminder of the huge railroad organization and its many employees involved in the deportation of the Jewish citizens. Foreground left to right: Joanna Linse, high-school teacher, holding Wolfgang Bernheim's photograph, Anna Hackenberger and Pauline Schäffler (students); (Photo by Annette Zoepf).



We welcome your feedback!

Please send your comments, suggestions or corrections to the editor at djcaugsburg@gmail.com. We may not be able to print all of them, but we will certainly try. We will definitely respond to you. **Thank you!**

We received feedback on our June 2020 issue with the theme "Family Attitudes towards German Traditions and Culture." Apparently the topic really resonated with many of you! We present a sampling of your comments below.

Comments

From: Steven Anson, Glasgow, Scotland

Congratulations on another excellent (issue) and an 18 page edition - a lot of work in there I know.

I liked the many family stories, the survey results, Family Attitudes Towards German Traditions and Culture, and of course the touching story of Liese B. Fischer.

So many amazing family connections to Augsburg - and great we can keep the memory alive. My parents didn't tell me the story Struwwelpeter so I looked it up (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Struwwelpeter>). Also didn't know about Hoppe Hoppe Reiter (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dkOaz-4HRk0>). I think (my brother) Howard and I were deprived...my parents just told us gentle child friendly stories from the Brothers Grimm books! Keep up the excellent work, and stay well!

From: Michael Bernheim, Augsburg, Germany

Again, congratulations! The entire issue is a masterpiece. It brings the whole community back to its common roots. And it shows the dilemma of

having both a Jewish and a German heritage. Debbie and Diane, I love your descriptions of your childhood. And I was really laughing when I read Jeffrey Englander's article in which he mentions the culture clash between his parents, one being Bavarian and one North German ("Prussian") using different German words for the same thing (please see my own article). And I read with great interest that there is another family with partially Jewish roots living near Augsburg (Janice Balin's report). By the way: Claire Jebesen's recipe for Semmelknödel looks perfect, including the pictures. I am sure it delivers good results. Semmelknödel are also delicious with roast beef and red wine sauce (Sauerbraten) or wild mushrooms with cream sauce.

When I read this issue, I have the same feeling I had when my cousin Anne Regensteiner and her husband Ken spent two weeks in Bavaria last year. We had a guided tour of the Augsburg Synagogue and visited the Jewish cemetery and said Kaddish for our joint ancestors. This gave me a strong feeling of belonging together and an idea of how it could have been without the Nazis. Thanks again!

From: Connie Heller, Potomac, Maryland (whose family was from Nuremburg, Germany)

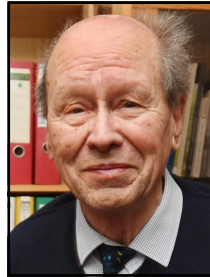
Thanks for sending me this newsletter. I almost had goosebumps reading about it as so much of it was/is

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Our Tribute to Gernot Römer

Some Background on Gernot Römer

Gernot Römer has dedicated himself to preserving the memory of the fate of Swabian Jews who had been expelled and murdered by the Nazis. His books document the contributions to cultural, economic, and political life made by members of the Jewish community in Augsburg and the entire Swabian region. Gernot Römer became editor of the Augsburg daily newspaper, the *Augsburger Allgemeine*, in 1971 and through his retirement from the paper in 1994 -- and beyond -- has dedicated himself to educating the public about the lives of the German Jewish people who suffered at the hands of the Nazi regime, many of whom perished, and all of whom were oppressed by unchecked hatred and prejudice.



Römer's publications helped many descendants to understand their family's experiences. Through television documentaries, exhibitions, and articles, his work has become the key that opens the door to the history of a once flourishing and vibrant community in which our parents, grandparents, extended family, and friends once lived. Despite threats against him over the years, Römer, who is not Jewish, persisted in documenting this important chapter of our ancestry. He has been honored for his historical accounts and his educational work in schools and with youth organizations.

His publications are all in German. Several are available for sale through the Jewish Museum of Augsburg/Swabia at <https://en.jkmas.de/category/zubestellen/page/2/> or on Amazon.com, at https://www.amazon.com/Books-Gernot-Romer/s?rh=n%3A283155%2Cp_27%3AGernot+Romer. Further information on available books can be found at <http://worldcat.org/identities/lccn-nr89006003/>.

We, the Descendants of the Jewish Community of Augsburg, are pleased and proud to pay tribute to the accomplishments of this extraordinary human being.

Some Publications written/published by Gernot Römer (in order of their publication dates)



Für die Vergessenen: KZ-Außenlager in Schwaben - Schwaben in Konzentrationslagern (For the forgotten. Subcamp in Swabia - Swabia in Concentration Camps) by Gernot Römer, Augsburg 1984. 231 pages, numerous photos



Der Leidensweg der Juden in Schwaben: Schicksale von 1933 bis 1945 in Berichten, Dokumenten und Zahlen The expulsion of the Jews from Swabia. Fates after 1933 in reports, documents, figures and pictures, by Gernot Römer and Ellen Römer Augsburg 1987



Die Austreibung Der Juden Aus Schwaben - Schicksale Nach 1933 In Berichten, Dokumenten, Zahlen Und Bildern The Expulsion of the Jews from Swabia - Fates After 1933 In Reports, Documents, Figures And Pictures, by Gernot Römer, Paperback, January 1987



Schwabische Juden, The Jews of Swabia. Paperback – January 1990



Ein fast normales Leben: Erinnerungen an die jüdischen Gemeinden Schwabens: Ausstellung der Stiftung Jüdisches Kulturmuseum Augsburg-Schwaben An almost normal life. Memories of the Jewish communities in Swabia. Exhibition by the Jewish Culture Museum Augsburg-Swabia based on a concept by Gernot Römer, Augsburg 1995



Wir haben uns gewehrt: wie Juden aus Schwaben gegen Hitler kämpften und wie Christen Juden halfen - We defended ourselves: How Jews from Swabia fought against Hitler and how Christians helped Jews, by Gernot Römer, Augsburg 1995. 224 pages



In der Fremde leben meine Kinder--: Lebensschicksale kindlicher jüdischer Auswanderer aus Schwaben unter der Nazi Herrschaft My children live in a foreign country--: The life stories of child Jewish emigrants from Swabia under Nazi rule, by Gernot Römer, 135 pages, Published by Wissner, January 1996



Wo Steine sprechen: die jüdischen Friedhöfe in Schwaben; ein Buch der Erinnerung Where Stones Speak: Jewish Cemeteries in Swabia. Augsburg, 1999, by Stefan Vogel and Gernot Römer. 184 pages, large size, several color photos. (German text)



An meine Gemeinde in der Zerstreuung - Die Rundbriefe des Augsburger Rabbiners Ernst Jacob 1941-1949 To My Scattered Community - The newsletters written by Rabbi Ernest Jacob of Augsburg from the United States, 1941-1949, Augsburg, 2007 (second edition). 472 pages, with more than 600 short biographies of the people mentioned in the letters. (German text), Published by Gernot Römer

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Greetings from Gernot Römer via Dr. Dieter Münker



Photo Credit: Dieter Münker

Gernot Römer holding the *Connections* newsletter.

Dr. Dieter Münker, retired Managing Director of the Augsburg Chamber of Commerce and Industry who succeeded Gernot Römer as Chairman of the German-Israeli Society of Augsburg (*Deutsch-Israelischen Gesellschaft*), recently shared a copy of **Connections** with his dear friend Gernot Römer. According to Dr. Münker, when Mr. Römer saw **Connections**, he wanted to send greetings to his Jewish friends. Dr. Münker

said that readers should “take his hand as a sign of close friendship.”

We are pleased to share tributes to Mr. Gernot Römer received from our readers. It is our pleasure and honor to recognize Mr. Römer for his significant contributions to preserving the history of the Jewish community of Augsburg and Bavaria, and his life's work.

Mr. Gernot Römer ... An Appreciation

One normally writes a tribute about someone who you were directly involved with or you derived a great benefit from – but this tribute is different.

I think I only met Gernot Römer once in a café in Augsburg in 2012 with my mother Pat Anson (née Beate Einstein) when accompanied by Liesel Fischer (née Einstein) and other family relatives.

While I have no direct involvement with this great historian, I know from my parents' reaction when ever a letter or document was received from him, usually in German, this was VERY IMPORTANT. I doubt if a letter from Queen Elizabeth II would have been received with more attention or respect.

I know Gernot provided a great deal of valued information and comfort to my parents, my mum in particular, and to other families. He took it upon himself to research and explain to them the fate that befell their families that were left behind while they were able to emigrate to escape the racism of Nazi Germany.

I believe Gernot did this out of love and respect for Augsburg's former Jewish citizens. Perhaps it was his

way of dealing with and healing the guilt he felt for the genocidal humanitarian crimes his countrymen committed on innocent people.

Our families owe a great debt to Gernot. Without his tireless efforts and research, we wouldn't have the historical facts that allow us to know what fate befell our relatives, preserve their memories, and bring us closure.

His historical research will outlive us all.

- Steven and Hilary Anson, Glasgow, Scotland

Thank you, Mr. Römer

Thanks to the good offices of Gernot Römer, my father, Rudolf Aub, was invited to contribute to a volume of essays about the experiences of German Jewish émigrés in their new homelands. He wrote his memoir during the last year of his life and found it a very rewarding experience, not least because it gave him the opportunity to express his gratitude to Jamaica, the country which had given us all a new home. Sadly, he did not live to see the publication of the book. *Das Exil der kleinen Leute: Alltagserfahrung deutscher Juden in der Emigration* ('The Exile of Ordinary People: the everyday experience of German Jewish émigrés'), edited by the historian Wolfgang Benz, came out in 1991, two years after my father's death. His contribution was very warmly received and in 1993 an extract from it was chosen to appear, under the title 'Ein Jamaikaner aus Augsburg' ('A Jamaican from Augsburg'), in an anthology issued by its publishers (C H Beck in Munich) to showcase their list. Thank you very much, Mr Römer, for making all that possible.

- Gertrud Aub-Buscher
Kingston upon Hull, United Kingdom



Gernot Römer reading DJCA's June 2020 *Connections* newsletter.

Photo Credit: Dieter Münker

Finding the words

There are two books for which Gernot Römer and my father worked together: Gernot Römer's "Die Austreibung der Juden aus Schwaben (The Expulsion of the Jews from Swabia)", 1987, and Erhard Bernheim's "Halbjuden im Dritten Reich ('Half-Jew' in the Third Reich)", 2000. The former contains a chapter about my grandfather for which Mr. Römer used documents my father provided to him. The latter, written by my father, was edited by him. And I am very sure that "editing" also meant a lot of gentle guidance, since my father was an impatient and impulsive writer who hated delays, revisions and second thoughts. At any rate, my father always held Gernot Römer in high esteem. Mr. Römer had helped

him find words for what had happened to him between 1939 and 1945.

- Michael Bernheim, Augsburg, Germany

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The Odyssey of the St. Louis

My late husband, Fred (Fritz), was very pleased to be part of Gernot's research into the surviving Jews of Swabia. Gernot visited our home and interviewed both of us for his chapter "The Odyssey of the St. Louis." Our family histories were documented with compassion. I grew up in Ichenhausen and lived in Augsburg before emigrating to the United States. Fred grew up in Krumbach, studied in Ulm and was a passenger on the St. Louis. Gernot's writing is an important testament to the truth about the Holocaust and the impact on so many of our lives. His support of Fred's published diary from his voyage on the St. Louis was very much appreciated.

- Lotte Buff, née Neuburger
Paramus, New Jersey/Rockville, Maryland

Eternally grateful

Some time in the 1980s, my mother (Liese Fischer, née Einstein) started telling me about a German man named Mr. Römer who had contacted her to ask about her family's history in Kriegshaber. He would visit when he was in the United States and conduct interviews. She was fascinated to find that her story and that of other family members were included in several books that he wrote. I always had the sense that she was somewhat perplexed about why this man was interested in her family, especially since he was not Jewish. At the same time, I think the realization that her story might be of interest to someone outside of her family contributed to an evolution in her thinking about her role as a witness to, and survivor of, the Holocaust, leading her to speak about her experiences to various groups. As I had long been interested in my family tree, I appreciated Mr. Römer's efforts to document these stories (even if it was in German, which I do not read or speak). It was years before I actually got to meet this mysterious Mr. Römer on one of our trips to Augsburg. His polite, unassuming manner belied all of his achievements, of which I had previously been unaware. No wonder my mother enjoyed speaking with him so much! His outreach to my mother started us down a road that led to greater exploration of her family story and renewed connections with Augsburg/Kriegshaber. My family will eternally be in Gernot Römer's debt for all that he has done to preserve our history and that of the Jewish community of Swabia.

- Diane Castiglione, Gaithersburg, Maryland



(L-R around the table) Gernot Römer, his partner, Lizzy Müller, Claire (Cramer) Jebson, Dieter and Anne Minker (good friend of Gernot) at dinner in May 2019 at the restaurant Riegele in Augsburg.

Glad to know you.

My brother Tom and I got to know Gernot through our parents Marianne (Untermayer) and Ernst Cramer. After our parents passed away, Gernot remained our contact when we visited Augsburg. In January 2020, Gernot was not feeling well, so we couldn't meet. I would not have known much about our former

Augsburg friends and family and the fate of the other Augsburg Jews without all of Gernot's research and publications.

- Claire Jebson, Norway

A true friend...

One of the unforeseen advantages of being my father's social secretary for all of his Augsburg projects is that I got to know Gernot Römer. When my father died, I took all of the Römer books and put them on my bookshelf in my house. Who would have thought that the person who wrote all these books about the Jews of Swabia wasn't even Jewish? But just like when Robert Bachner, a Christian, was put in charge of the Jewish Community after the war, Gernot, a Christian, took it upon himself to remember and explore all things about the Jewish community of pre-war Augsburg.

I first met Gernot when he was collecting photos and information on the rehabilitation of the Augsburg synagogue. Mr. Römer put out the call for people to give him photos from their weddings and Bar Mitzvahs showing the interior of the synagogue. Then Gernot came to America for both of the Augsburg reunions that my father organized in the Catskills (New York). About 88 former



Henry Landman (L) and Gernot Römer (R) at the 1988 reunion.

Augsburgers showed up from around the entire world. Gernot would keep in touch with everyone who showed up and those who couldn't come.

At one of the Kristallnacht programs in Augsburg, my father mentioned that there was no memorial for the Jewish victims of the Nazi era. Again, Gernot was very helpful in putting together all of the names of the victims for the glass memorial which was then placed in the City Hall, instead of in the cemetery where it was first suggested to go. The two of them worked together as friends for decades.

Finally, it was Gernot who asked my father to give the Jewish Museum of Augsburg the lederhosen that he



A more senior Henry Landman wearing the same pair of lederhosen he wore when the Gestapo arrested him.

wore when the Gestapo woke him up on the morning after Kristallnacht and sent him to Dachau. Gernot also asked for the Army uniform that he wore when he got to Augsburg the day before the American liberation. If it wasn't for Gernot Römer, those items and all of my father's stories would not have been recorded. Gernot has been a true friend to my father and all of his extended family of the Augsburgers Jews.

- Rick Landman, New York

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Gernot Römer the Advocate

Gernot Römer made it possible for me, an American born child of German Jewish immigrants, to obtain a German passport in 1997.

In 1991, when I was working for a European independent film production company, I had the opportunity to produce a movie which was a Canadian/German/Russian co-production. In order to receive an on-screen credit for my work as a producer on the movie, I needed to have citizenship in one of those three countries. I explored, and learned from an employee at the German Consulate in Los Angeles, that as a child of a German citizen who had been forced to give up his German citizenship during the Nazi regime, German law (newly) in effect at that time allowed for me to be granted German citizenship.

I spoke to my father, Ralph Dreike, who eagerly compiled all the historical documents for both himself and his parents from Augsburg and for my mother and her family who were from Berlin, and had also fled Germany during this time.

We submitted the documents but were turned down. The Augsburg government office said, "Ralph Dreike was only half Jewish (his mother was Catholic) so he could not have been forced to leave Germany." In Berlin, on my mother's side, they said, "This family left Germany in January of 1933. This means they left by choice; no one was forced to leave until later."

This was German bureaucracy choosing the letter of the law rather than the spirit in order to say NO. This was 1991.

My father would not give up. He continued to write letters and submit documentation, first to Augsburg, then to Berlin, then back to Augsburg.

In 1997, he told the story to Gernot Römer. Gernot wrote an article mentioning the situation that former Oberbürgermeister

Dreifuss' granddaughter (my grandfather, Ludwig, had been appointed mayor of Augsburg by the U.S. military in 1945) was being denied German citizenship. This was brought to the attention of the then

Oberbürgermeister of Augsburg. Upon reading the story, he immediately declared "if the granddaughter of Oberbürgermeister Dreifuss would like a German passport, she shall have one!"

Within 24 hours, I received a letter from the German Consulate in Los Angeles telling me that I had been granted German citizenship by declaration. This was due purely to the kind efforts of Gernot Römer.

I received my German passport very quickly after that. Later, when my two children were 5 and 8 years old, in 2006, I obtained passports for them.

Thank you Gernot.

- Anita Dreike Lischak, California



L-R Gernot, Römer, Ralph Dreike, Marianne Dreike SaneiNejad

Tying the past to the present and future

The fact that we even visited the Augsburg synagogue in the first place is directly attributable to Gernot Römer, the same fellow who had helped Uncle Ludi publish his book in Germany, which in turn led to my reexamination of my German family ties, eventual German citizenship, and our entrée into this strange little world in the family seat of Augsburg.

Several years before, after I had contacted Gernot to introduce myself as the last Mayer, he suggested that my wife, Norma, and I might be able to do a concert at the Augsburg synagogue, which would have been the farthest thing from our mind at the time. So, he passed us along to Benigna Schönhagen, the director at the time of Augsburg's Jewish museum.

On a trip to Paris, we got in touch with Gernot and arranged to take the train over to Augsburg for several days. This would be my first visit there since the early



Gernot and Lizzy Müller visit with Richard Mayer in 2010

1970s and Norma's first ever. And we would meet Gernot in the flesh for the first time, too. The train pulled into the Augsburg Bahnhof (train station) on a blustery, sleeting evening in April 2009. We dragged

our suitcases across the square to the hotel and settled in for the night. The next morning, Gernot came by and immediately took us around the corner to the synagogue, where we were buzzed in by a guard in a booth at street-side and caught our first glimpse of the edifice where my ancestors spent many an hour. Then up the back stairs to the museum directorate's offices.

Benigna was waiting for us in the library. We put on a little impromptu concert for her over coffee and she countered with an offer to bring us back in the fall to do a concert.

Afterwards, Gernot, spry for a fellow nearing 80 who had had heart surgery just a couple of years before, walked us around a snowy Augsburg, passing by the neighborhood where we thought the Mayers had presumably lived before the war and then on to the Jewish cemetery, where somehow we couldn't find the family markers that I had seen in 1966. Without a map of the cemetery, the place was cold and inscrutable this time.

In any case, we were to move on to other places nearby in Swabia that were part of the family lore, with concerts in Nördlingen (where my grandparents were betrothed), Hainsfarth (where my grandmother was born and raised), and Bopfingen. And later we returned to concertize in Augsburg at a local theater and at the Mozarthaus, the present-day museum and concert hall where Wolfgang's father Leopold used to live. Gernot was always there in the audience, smiling and nodding intently to the music and even introduced us at the concert in Hainsfarth, officially presenting us with a copy of Uncle Ludi's book.

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Lizzy Müller, Gernot, and Richard Mayer visit the Steinbeck Center 2010

In February 2010, Gernot and his companion, Elizabeth Mueller, visited us at our home in Monterey at the end of Gernot's last visit to the United States. We took them to the obligatory sites of the area. Gernot especially wanted to visit the John Steinbeck Center in neighboring Salinas in order to get an idea of their exhibit on the famous author. Gernot had talked to us about his plan to put on an exhibit in an Augsburg museum to honor the old Jewish textile families.

He also told us that we should contact George Sturm, another former Augsburger living in the United States, whom he knew to

be a composer. We eventually got a copy of George's duet for soprano and flute entitled "Heine Lieder," which we later recorded and played for the Sturms on their subsequent visit to us in Monterey.

But that's another tale, to be told another time.

- Richard Mayer, California

Thanks to your work...

I met Gernot Römer for the first time in 1991 when I visited Augsburg with my father, Max Oppenheimer, as guests of the city with five other Jewish families who once lived in Augsburg prior to the Holocaust. I visited Mr. Römer on several of my later visits to Augsburg after the death of my father in 2006. I own several of the books he has authored. In two of these books, I learned many facts about my father, whom Mr. Römer had interviewed in 1983. My father was born in Augsburg in 1915 and fled to New York in 1940. My father never talked to me about his life in Augsburg, and it was only after my father's death that I learned many details about his life through the work of Gernot Römer. It is through the efforts of people like Mr. Römer that future generations will be able to learn about Jewish life in Augsburg and Swabia.

- Richard Oppenheimer, Florida

You and your work have touched our lives

We, the descendants of the former Jewish community of Augsburg, Bavaria and Swabia, owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Gernot Römer whose dedicated efforts to catalogue those whose lives were forever changed by Hitler and the Nazis has resulted in the historical and narrative preservation of their existence. My siblings and I were deeply moved to read and learn more about our family's history in his books. We were able to learn more about our father, Walter Sturm, and our great-grandfather Hugo Steinfeld, especially in *An meine Gemeinde in der Zerstreuung*, which was published in Augsburg in 2007, long after my father had passed away.

Personally, I have enjoyed meeting with Gernot on two occasions, where he told stories (thankfully with an interpreter's help) about my Dad, my great-grandfather Hugo, and my great-grandmother Lina (Karolina). I have always found him to be a warm, engaging, and compassionate person, and his caring nature came

through loud and clear in his words and actions. I particularly loved having coffee with him in his home on one occasion. I will never forget his kindnesses.

My family and the descendants of the Jewish community of Augsburg have knowledge of and access to our respective ancestral histories in large part because of his tremendous efforts to preserve them. He has touched our lives in more ways than words can describe, and we will be forever grateful.

- Deborah Sturm Rausch, Latham, New York

Gernot Römer deserves to be counted among the righteous

At a luncheon at the Princeton Club (2009), I asked Römer how his passion for Augsburg Judaica started. He told me that the seeds of his fascination could be traced back to an appointment with his half-Jewish pediatrician, a close family friend, on November 10, 1938 - the morning after Kristallnacht. When he and his mother arrived, the doctor had disappeared, never to be seen again. Many years later, when he came to Augsburg as editor of the *Augsburger Allgemeine*, an excellent newspaper, he thought he might inquire at the Synagogue what actually became of the Augsburg Jews since no trace of them was to be found. The Orthodox Russian rabbi there shrugged his shoulder and disclaimed both knowledge and interest, saying only that "We are here now." Since Römer knew of the existence of a Jewish community in Augsburg going back to the 13th century, his curiosity was piqued and he decided to see how far his investigations might take him. Little did he know at that time that he would be preoccupied with this effort for the rest of his life, or that the investigations would lead not only to many very close friendships, but also to a relationship with the lady he found in Israel, Lizzy Sokolofsky Müller, some time after the death of his wife, Ellen.

For his untiring work, his sense of community, his intellectual curiosity, and his unbending loyalty, Gernot Römer deserves to be counted among the righteous.

- George Sturm, New York

Excerpted from his self-published memoir *An Early Life: Remembrances and Stories. A Photo Biography* (2017) ❧



Continued from Page 8

familiar to me. Yes, we had classical music at home, were always on time (my first cousin and I still are), had most of the food mentioned, frequented Karl Ehmer Deli etc. We played (Hoppe Hoppe Reiter) with our kids (and made up words). I also used certain German words with my kids which my son has adopted. Please keep sending this to me. It is extremely well done and I enjoyed reading it a lot - in spite of the goose bumps!

From: Betsy Kaplan, California

Born in Stettin, Germany to Ellen Feldberg (née Arnold) of Augsburg

I loved and totally enjoyed the **Connections** newsletter. It is beautifully written and so well done. It so much reminded me of my youth, and I could relate to so much. It made me feel sad and yet happy to hear about the past. I am humbled by these stories and proud to have a daughter* who is interested in her family roots.

*Note: Betsy is Bettina's mother. ❧

KÖNIGSBERGER KLÖPSE

Submitted by Deborah Sturm Rausch, daughter of Walter Sturm and descendant of the Heilbronner/Steinfeld family of Augsburg.

A note about **Königsberger Klöpse**: This was a favorite of my father's! According to culinary history, ground meat was first introduced into the German diet in the early 1800's and Königsberger Klöpse was created shortly thereafter. The dish is named for the former German city of Königsberg which fell during World War II and is now Kaliningrad, Russia. The well-known dumplings get their unique taste from the combination of veal and anchovies and of course the capers in the sauce. This recipe is adapted from the original.

Ingredients:

MEATBALLS

1 lb. ground sirloin
 1 lb. ground pork
 1 lb. ground veal
 4 eggs, slightly beaten
 1¼ cups fine plain breadcrumbs (I use plain breadcrumbs. For more traditional, use a hard roll or two slices of stale bread soaked in milk for about 10 minutes. Then squeeze the milk out.)
 ½ cup milk
 1 medium white onion, finely chopped
 1 lemon, zest of, small finely chopped
 1 lemon, juice of
 3 Tablespoons capers, chopped
 3 Tablespoons finely diced anchovy fillets (I prefer white anchovies) Note: you may substitute with 3 Tablespoons anchovy paste.
 ¼ cup melted butter
 1 teaspoon kosher salt
 ½ teaspoon ground black pepper (or adjust to taste)
 flour (for rolling)

BROTH

1 (32 ounce) box chicken stock or (32 ounce) box vegetable stock
 1 bay leaf
 ¼ cup cider vinegar
 ½ cup good quality dry white wine
 4-7 black peppercorns (depending on how peppery you like it)
 2 Tablespoons capers

SAUCE

Zest of 1 lemon
 Juice of 1 lemon
 1 cup full fat sour cream (don't reduce the fat content as full fat prevents curdling)
 ¼ cup fresh parsley for garnish



Directions:

1. In a large saucepan heat the broth ingredients and simmer over medium heat.
2. While the broth is simmering, combine meatball ingredients. Do not overwork the meat but make sure the ingredients are well mixed. The mixture will be light, and a bit sticky.
3. Form the meat into balls about 1½ to 2" in size (like a ping pong ball)
4. Roll the meatballs in flour to coat.
5. Carefully place the meatballs into the hot broth being careful not to put too many meatballs in at once. It's better to do this in batches.
6. Simmer each batch for 15 minutes. It's better for the meatballs to simmer, rather than boil. The broth will thicken as you add the flour covered meatballs. This turns into the sauce.
7. Carefully remove meatballs from the hot broth with a slotted spoon. Keep them warm in a covered dish or pan in the oven while you make the sauce.
8. Remove the bay leaf from the broth and discard it.
9. To make the sauce, add the sauce ingredients to the pot and continue to simmer on low to medium heat. The sauce should coat the back of a spoon, but not be too thick or gooey.
10. Remove the meatballs from the oven and gently return them to the pot with the sauce.
11. When thoroughly warmed, they are ready. Sprinkle with the fresh parsley (chopped or snipped) before serving.

This recipe may be made ahead and frozen. Thaw and reheat gently. It's traditional to serve these with boiled potatoes. However, I also like to serve them with noodles, spaetzle, or rice. ☘



NEXT issue

Coming in June 2021...

The theme for the June issue of **CONNECTIONS** is:

The Value of Sharing Family Memories and Stories

As the three of us read the tributes to Gernot Römer, we began to think about how each of us preserves our own family stories, and wondered how other families do that. How do each of you keep the memory of your ancestors alive and pass them on to the younger generations? Some of us tell family stories at holiday dinners. Others of us have written books. Some have made presentations in our children's schools or in our respective communities.

We would like to hear your family's approach to this. How do you keep these stories an integral part of your family history? We would also like to hear why you think passing along these narratives is important.

We hope you'll share your ideas and experiences with us!

Please send your submission(s) to us at djcaugsburg@gmail.com to be received not later than April 15, 2021.

Thank you.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

There is no Food for Thought column in this issue. If you have an idea for a future "Food for Thought" topic, please email it to us at

djcaugsburg@gmail.com.

Everyone's input matters! Please let us know what you'd like to discuss.

THANK YOU!

JMAS Monthly Newsletter Now Available in English



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The Augsburg Synagogue is the only original synagogue left in Bavaria. The last major construction work was done nearly 30 years ago. Your contribution will help make the needed renovations possible.

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Thank you.