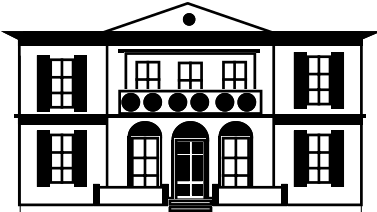


# IN TOUCH

WITH OUR AMERICAN FRIENDS OF THE JEWISH MUSEUM OF HOHENEMS



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## NEWS FROM THE MUSEUM

DR. HANNO LOEWY

Those who attended the descendants Reunion saw the results of the hard work of the staff, which brought forth a hugely successful reunion. But our efforts did not end there.

### Summer exhibition in the garden

On July 5, 2008, the Museum opened its first art exhibition in the garden of the Villa Heimann-Rosenthal. Pavel Schmidt, a Swiss-Jewish artist, presented his unusual sculptures under

the title "Partikelgestoeber," a poetic idiom borrowed from Paul Celan's poem "Engführung." These sculptures are intriguing collages consisting of fragments of classical sculptures. Taking statues of Venus and David, heroes of classical mythology and Jewish tradition, images that had been turned into commodities becoming kitsch over centuries, Pavel Schmidt broke them through violent explosions, and then reassembled the fragments, opening

our minds to new ideas. Their "afterlife" reassembly, in an ironic way, highlights our own attempts to live with the fragments of tradition and our present life and also the lives told in our Museum. Indeed, it even satirizes what the Museum does. The exhibition will continue until October 2008.

Pavel Schmidt was born in 1956 in Bratislava (Pressburg) in Slovakia –

*(Continued on page 14)*

## THE 2008 DESCENDANTS' REUNION

SUSAN ROSENTHAL SHIMER<sup>1</sup>

On July 30, descendants of the Jewish families of Hohenems began drifting back to Hohenems, the town of their ancestors. By July 31, the opening day of the second Reunion sponsored by the Jewish Museum Hohenems and supported by the town, its mayor and its citizens, 130 descendants, one as young as two years old and at least one other who had passed his 85<sup>th</sup> birthday, had arrived. They came from the U.S.A., Switzerland, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, France, Belgium, Israel, the Netherlands, and even from Austria. Represented were the Tänzer, Rosenthal, Brunner, Hirschfeld, Kafka, Burgauer, Landauer,

Reichenbach, Dannhauser, Silberstein, Weil, Hohenemser, Uffenheimer, Ullmann, Landauer, and Moos families.

Gradually everyone came to the Museum, and by 3:00 PM the activities began. Two options were offered to the descendants that afternoon. One possibility, chosen by many, was a walk to the Schlossberg, which lies about 300 meters above Hohenems and on which lie the remains of the castle of Ems, founded in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. From the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century it was one of the most important castles in the southern Germanic area, but in 1792 it was destroyed. Walls



*Schlossberg, the walk down, courtesy of Dietmar Walser*

remain, giving the visitor an idea of its original size, 800 meters by 85 meters. Work

*(Continued on page 2)*

# THE 2008 DESCENDANTS' REUNION

is presently being undertaken to improve the site and the trails to it. From the Schlossberg, one can see the valley of the Rhine. Hard to see, however, is the old Rhine, a narrow river that separated Nazi Austria from Switzerland, a haven back at the time of the National Socialists. The weather was hot on July 31 as the descendants made their way to the top of the hill, but those taking the walk had a

though he has turned over his duties to his son. Count Franz Clemens Waldburg-Zeil does not simply reign, but actually works as a restorer of old furniture. The result of that work can be seen throughout the Palace. Some of the furniture and original doors

5000 square meters (about 54,000 square feet). In addition, we saw tapestries and paintings, one of which

century when the original flat roof collapsed under heavy snow. The attic has recently been renovated, although it is still not fully restored. Many pieces of old furniture found in the attic are now on display in the rooms we visited. It was a privilege to tour the Palace and hear the Count's stories of the people who had occupied it through the ages. One of those stories related to the discovery of a text of the Nibelungen fable that was the basis of the operas of Wagner's Ring Cycle.

The evening brought us all together for wine and cheese in the courtyard of the Palace where we were



*Palace tour, courtesy of Tim Hanford*



*Tour of palace interior, courtesy of Tim Hanford*

new insight into Hohenems and its history and very much enjoyed the walk, as well as the opportunity it gave to meet other descendants.

The other possibility, which also attracted a number of descendants, was a guided tour of the Palace of Hohenems, built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Count Franz Clemens Waldburg-Zeil, the son of the Count many of us met during the first Reunion in 1998, gave a guided tour of much of this Renaissance palace, space that is rarely open to the public. The private quarters in which he and his wife and four daughters live, on the second floor of the Palace, was not open to us. The older Count joined us at various times during the Reunion, even

and doorframes have been preserved and restored. Several of them bear the inscription of Cardinal Markus-Sittikus, a member of the family who started construction of the Palace in the 1500's. Interestingly, the back wall of the Palace is a façade painted to look like one wall of the Palace, a favored style during the Renaissance.

The Palace itself is enormous: a three story building, with a central courtyard, many different rooms, huge fireplaces, amazing wooden ceilings dating from the time of the Renaissance, and original frescos that have been uncovered and restored; it comprises approximately

the Count found on eBay. It was most appropriate for the Palace since it was a painting of a Cardinal, thought to be Markus-Sittikus of Hohenems. We saw a family tree showing the Count's relationship with the prior Counts who presided



*Choral Group, courtesy of Tim Hanford*



*Hanno Loewy and Eva Häfele, courtesy of Darko Todorovic*

over Hohenems. We were treated to a visit to the third floor attic, a place not heretofore seen by tourists, which showed the wooden beams installed in the 18<sup>th</sup>

entertained with songs sung by the Nibelungenhort-choir Hohenems, a choral group originally organized by Harry Weil, the last cantor of Hohenems. Harry Weil wrote one of the songs performed. It was lovely. Then we all ascended to the first floor (2<sup>nd</sup> floor in America) Knights Hall where we were greeted by Dr. Hanno Loewy and Dr. Eva Häfele. They introduced our speakers.

First was Mayor Richard Amann of Hohenems, who

# THE 2008 DESCENDANTS' REUNION

(Continued from page 2)  
spoke about the community of descendants and residents of Hohenems. Since most of the descendants speak English, he and most of the other speakers were kind enough to address us in English.



Mayor Armann, courtesy of Darko Todorovic

Our next speaker was Dr. Esther Fritsch, President of the Jewish community of Tyrol and Vorarlberg, who described the disappearance and recent revival and growth of the Jewish community of Innsbruck.



Esther Fritsch, courtesy of Darko Todorovic

President Dr. Herbert Sausgruber of the State of Vorarlberg, who welcomed



Herbert Sausgruber, courtesy of Darko Todorovic

us to Vorarlberg, followed her. Dr. Sausgruber pointed out that the meeting of the descendants showed the Verbundenheit ("connection") of the descendants with Vorarlberg. Dr. Sausgruber emphasized the importance of remembering our roots in Hohenems, a point with which the descendants who attended would surely agree. He also talked about the history of the Jews in the community, dating back to 1617.

Luisa Jaffe, the chair of the Reunion Committee, welcomed the descendants and thanked those who had worked on her committee.



Luisa Jaffe, courtesy of Darko Todorovic

Finally, Pierre Burgauer, a descendant whose family moved to Switzerland many generations back and who served on the Reunion Committee, spoke in German. He lives in Rehetobel, Switzerland, and described the varied experiences of his family, including their departure for Switzerland and the family's work in the textile business through the years. He spoke about his initial reluctance to return to Austria, but in recent years that has changed and he has developed a growing relationship with the Museum. Mr. Burgauer has been very generous in contributing family objects for the Museum's archives.

The program concluded with a concert performed by the husband of Luisa Jaffe, Jan



Pierre Burgauer, courtesy of Darko Todorovic

Bach and Salomone Rossi. It was a truly glorious performance by both artists. To complete the evening, we returned to the courtyard where a delicious buffet dinner awaited us as we chatted with many fellow descendants.



Concert by de Figueiredo and De Winne, Courtesy of Tim Hanford

De Winne, a world-renowned flutist, and Nicolau de Figueiredo, a world-renowned harpsichordist. Jan De Winne used two different wooden flutes, each of which he had made himself. They performed music from the Renaissance and Baroque periods by

Friday was soon upon us. The morning began for many with a short breakfast meeting hosted by the AFJMH. Increased participation by the membership is vital to our success and our continuing support of the Museum. Claude Rollin, Uri

(Continued on page 4)



# THE 2008 DESCENDANTS' REUNION

(Continued from page 3)

Taenzer and Susan Shimer explained how we have been operating, and some of what we have done to support the Museum. We urged more people to become involved, by working on the Newsletter and by contributing articles and ideas. Thereafter Nicole

welcome.

The meeting was short because the Museum had arranged more for us. We were divided into groups, and on Friday and Saturday morning



*Museum tour, courtesy of Dietmar Walser*

Angiel volunteered to take over the task of formatting the Newsletter, a task that has been done with much love and great efforts by Sheila Piccone for our first 10 years. We look forward to increased participation by all our members. Articles are most

we all had the opportunity to visit the new Permanent Exhibition and tour the Jewish Quarter. Both are vastly different than they were 10 years ago. The Permanent Exhibition has been completely redone, and



*Jewish Quarter tour, courtesy of Dietmar Walser*



*Kaddish, courtesy of Christian Glass*

there has been considerable

restoration work in the Jewish Quarter. Our visits were short, but almost everyone visited both the Exhibition and the Quarter again during their weekend in Hohenems. On our individual visits we could listen to the audio guide, available in English among other languages, which provides translations of the descriptive signs and documents on exhibit. The audio also permitted us to hear

the interviews that had previously been conducted of a number of descendants, including the founder of the AFJMH, Stephan Rollin.

Before the morning was over most of the participants went to the Jewish Cemetery, where they were given a diagram of the burial sites and wandered about looking for their ancestors. Then a Kaddish was held, presided over by Rabbi Dr. Hermann Schmelzer of St. Gallen. The cemetery has been carefully preserved and beautified

(Continued on page 5)

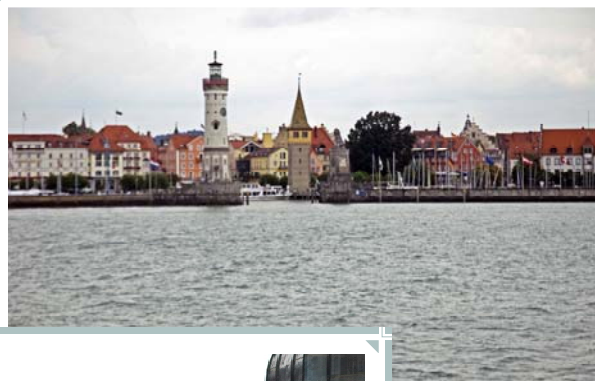


*Cemetery tour, courtesy of Dietmar Walser*

# THE 2008 DESCENDANTS' REUNION

(Continued from page 4)  
thanks to the efforts of the Cemetery Association, presided over by Yves Bollag, president of the Cemetery Association, and his team.

Rabbi Schmelzer spoke about how some people do not feel their roots, but that



*Bodensee Cruise*  
ties. We previously had expressed our preferences for the activities offered. Some of us were bussed to Bregenz where we boarded a boat for a trip on Bodensee (Lake Constance). The Museum had chartered a boat that accommodated all of us comfortably. We chatted, had coffee, delicious

experiences and sharing them with all visitors. It will only continue that way if we all contribute our ideas and our memories.

Other participants took a trip to St. Gallen, a visit separately described in this Newsletter. Still others went to visit the Bregenzerwald, accompanied by Eva Maria Heschke and Helga Rädler from the Museum. They made the participants appreciate how the Jewish peddlers brought their wares on foot across the mountain-passes. They opened our eyes to the old wooden houses, large enough to accommodate several generations, and some animals too. She helped us to understand what diplomacy and cleverness Angelika Kauffmann needed to become a woman painter of stature in the 18th century. We were shown around the Angelika Kauffmann Museum, including rooms furnished according to the period. There wasn't a great need for heavy walking shoes, but we nevertheless were refreshed with "coffee and cakes" locally, courtesy of the Jewish Museum Hohenems. This was followed by a visit to the church in Schwarzenberg with frescoes by Angelika Kauffmann. We got into the cars for the journey back just before the heavens opened.

we who are here recognize the importance of our ancestry. Yves Bollag pointed out that the Jewish Cemetery, dating from the 1600's, was the first monument preserved in Jewish Hohenems, and that it was not destroyed during World War II. Time and weather have taken their toll on many of the gravestones, but the Cemetery Association has worked to maintain and improve it, so that the cemetery continues as it was in the 1600s - with, of course, some additional graves. As an aside, we should point out that the Museum's website contains a complete

listing of all the gravestones in the cemetery, with inscriptions (to the extent legible), based on a detailed survey undertaken many years ago.

The nearby Hotel Adler was the site of our lunch, but by 2:00 PM we had assembled for the afternoon activi-

cake and snacks, and looked at the lake and its bordering communities. Some of us were interviewed for the Museum's archives and by the press. Many of us commented on the difference between "our" Museum and other museums. Ours is a living museum, collecting our



*Bregenzerwald tour, visit to Schwarzenberg, courtesy of Dietmar Walser*



*Kiddush, courtesy of Dietmar Walser*

In the early evening a Kiddush was held in the former Hohenems Synagogue, presided over by Rabbi Lisa Goldstein, the great granddaughter of Jakob Weil, once Cantor in Hohenems, and Cantor Marlena Tänzer, the wife of Aaron Tänzer's grandson. All

(Continued on page 18)



# A VISIT TO ST. GALLEN

TIM HANFORD

A small group of reunion participants took the short bus trip to St. Gallen, Switzerland. This is the town so

among us were humbled. One prize in the library's collection is a 9<sup>th</sup> century map of an idealized, but



*Strolling in St. Gallen, courtesy of Christian Grass*

many of our Hohenems ancestors considered the "big city" when they moved there in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Our first stop was the Abbey Library of St. Gall (known locally as the "Stiftsbibliothek.") The library is housed in the North wing of a massive complex that grew up from the small monastery founded in the early 8<sup>th</sup> century.

Built between 1758 and 1767, the library is a carved wood rococo gem housing 150,000 volumes, including 2,000 of the world's most precious manuscripts. As we shuffled between the manuscript exhibit cases wearing our felt protective slippers, the book collectors

never constructed, monastery that Umberto Eco used as part of the inspiration for "The Name of the Rose" (see [www.stgallplan.org](http://www.stgallplan.org)). The library also has an Egyptian mummy that has been in residence since 1824.

From the library, we walked across the street to the Gallusplatz, the town



*City Lounge*  
square where St. Gallen's development began. The square contains several medieval timbered buildings that made it not terribly difficult to let one's mind slip back through the centuries.

On our way to the St. Gallen synagogue, we entered the area where the Raiffeisen Bank has its new headquarter-



ters. To offset the cold nature of the modern buildings, the city held a design contest. The result was the "city lounge" opened in late 2005 – several largely car-free blocks that have been covered over in red carpet. The area includes carpeted seating areas and red-carpeted cars. (Did their

*Synagogue, courtesy of Christian Grass*  
owners somehow ignore warnings on carpet day?) Overhead, suspended on invisible wires, are large, pearlescent beans that serve as street lights.

Right in the middle of the this area that seemed to have escaped from a Dali

*(Continued on page 8)*

# REMARKS BY SUSAN ROSENTHAL SHIMER

HOHENEMS, 2 AUGUST 2008

Hello- Grüsse-

First, I bring you greetings from the American Friends of the Jewish Museum Hohenems, an association formed as a result of the 1998 Reunion of descendants. Unfortunately, not all of our members could be here today. Mark Brunner, our vice president, has particularly asked that I express his regret that he could not be here today and his best wishes to all of you. How wonderful it is to have this affair in once was the textile factory of my ancestors. Thank you Herr Otten. I also want to thank several others without whom this gathering would not be possible: Eva Grabherr, the first Director of the Museum; former mayor Otto Amann, whose support for the creation of the Museum was indispensable, Felix Jaffe, an honorary member of the Verein for his tireless support for the Museum and who, together with Kurt Bollag and Stephan Rollin, made the first Reunion of the Descendants possible, and Stephan Rollin, also selected as an honorary member of the Verein, whose relentless efforts, together with those of Uri Taenzer gave birth to the AFJMH. One of Stephan Rollin's last wishes was for another Reunion, and even though he passed from us, we knew his wish was right and so this Reunion has taken place. Lastly, but not least, thanks to Hanno Loewy, Eva Hafele and the entire Museum staff and volunteers for doing all the work that has made this weekend possible.

As I look around I see many familiar faces, people, outside of my own immediate family, people I have met over the past 10 years, people who live in Hohenems or nearby, and also people whose ancestors once lived here. Some are, indeed, my relatives, with whom my family long lost touch. The Museum and its wonderful work has brought us together. It has created a community beyond its own walls and even beyond the borders of Hohenems. Some of you who live here now may have moved here recently, or your families may have chosen to live here long ago, as did the ancestors of the descendants who are visiting now. We have a commonality in our connection to Hohenems, and our interest in other people. We the descendants who are here could have forgotten our past- but we recognize that our past is part of us - it helps makes each of us what we are today. And you who live in Hohenems could also easily ignore the heritage of your community, a heritage in which the Jewish families played a significant role. But forgetting the past of our communities is not in our interest. We can learn from our histories. We can learn from the past of Hohenems- what happens when people work together- build a school which is open to all, create a factory which brings jobs and people to a community, learn what happens when a singing group includes people regardless of religion and when it is limited to those of only one religion, learn what happens when prejudice drives people away- or worse... We can

learn from the recent experiences in Hohenems in forming and supporting this Museum what happens when people work together to create a community, to remember their history, to cherish differences- the revitalization of the old synagogue, the creation and support for a museum which brings in people from all over the world, the cross cultural experiences that Hohenems has given to all of us.

The Museum and this town have brought together people who now live all over the world - Austria, Italy, Belgium, Switzerland, Holland, England, Israel, Australia, Chile and the United States, among others - it has brought together people who have many different experiences through their work - Factory owners, lawyers, judges, doctors, teachers, professors in different fields, psychologists, physicist, oceanographers, mathematicians, musicologists, museum docents, archeologists, computer experts, geologist, economists and at least one clergyman. It brings together people of different religions- people for whom religion is very important and people for whom religion is not a significant part of their lives. One lovely consequence of our sense of community is taking place now at this dinner hosted by Herr Otten; another took place the other morning at the breakfast at the Schiffl hosted by the American Friends Jewish Museum Hohenems. Still another will take place this Sunday, when Father Francis, a descendant of the Brunner



*Courtesy of Darko Todorovic*  
family, will participate with Father Heilbrunn in the mass to be performed at St Charles Church here in Hohenems. Our understanding through these contacts is that we are all different, but that it does not matter. The Museum and Hohenems have shown that these differences do not need to be divisive, but in fact are enriching. We have a shared history- through Hohenems. So perhaps it is easy for us to feel a sense of community. But it is also a lesson that geographical dispersion and different life experiences are something to cherish.

In closing, let me add one thought. We have a shared history not just with each other but with all of the people of our planet. All people living today, wherever they live stem from a very small population that long ago lived together. I believe that this Museum shows the benefit of tolerance and the appreciation of differences. Why cannot this tolerance be applied to all the people with whom we share this earth. To me, that is the lesson of our Museum and the lesson I want to take home with me.





# REMARKS OF MICHAEL KOHLMEIER

HOHENEMS, 2 AUGUST 2008

TRANSLATED BY PETER NIEDERMAIR

Ladies and gentlemen,  
dear friends.

You have travelled from far and wide to be in Hohenems. You have literally travelled from all corners of the world to be here: from Italy, from many of the US-American states, Great Britain, Germany, Switzerland, Canada, Israel, France, Belgium, Holland, Liechtenstein, even from Australia. It's not the first visit for some of you, which leads me to suppose that you might not only be here out of a sense of nostalgia. Perhaps you have even come to like our town and us, the citizens of this town, a little too.

I can imagine that you were very curious when you first set foot in the town that your parents, grandparents, great-grandparents and other relatives had left many years ago. I imagine that you were curious to see what had become of Hohenems in all those years. Sitting amongst us is Mr. Harry Weil, who has come all the way from Albuquerque, New Mexico. If my information is correct, he is the only one of you who actually grew up in Hohenems. The rest of you

know our town mainly from stories, stories that don't actually ingratiate Hohenems to the listener. It is only natural that you should ask whether rests of that evil spirit that struck down the Jewish people with a maliciousness unparalleled in the history of the world still lurks in the minds of the people who live here today. I sincerely hope that the conversations you have had so far and those that still lie ahead of you may convince you of the contrary. Apart from a few singular exceptions, we have learned from our past. And anybody, whether they lived at that time, whether they are fortunate to have been born later, is filled with deep shame when they think of this past.

We have learned. However, that does not mean that we are suddenly immune to making mistakes. Help us to continue learning. Tell us about your experiences, about the experiences of your parents and grandparents and great-grandparents. How were they received after they had left Hohenems and set foot on foreign soil? Please tell us what you know.

We need to learn from you because today we find ourselves in a strange situation: We regret what happened here three quarters of a century ago. We regret that people had to flee for their lives, were driven out of their homes. We regret that even before the rise of National Socialism quite a number of people were pressured to leave this town, this country, whether for religious, political or economic reasons. We are filled with deepest regret and sorrow. In retrospect, we can only hope that all those people were well received wherever they went – to Italy, the USA, Great Britain, Germany, Switzerland, Canada, Israel, France, Belgium, Holland, Liechtenstein, Australia – and we admire those countries that did afford them every kindness. As a country we are now in a similar situation. People turn to us for help. We are no longer a country from which people emigrate, but a country to which people immigrate. People seek sanctuary here, just as your forebears sought sanctuary in those countries I have mentioned. They leave their countries for religious,



*Courtesy of Darko Todorovic*

political or economic reasons. Most of them are fathers and mothers with families. They are full of cares and worries. They haven't done anything wrong. They don't want to do anything bad. The most intelligent, worthiest and noblest way for us to seek atonement for our National Socialist past would be for us to afford these people every assistance and kindness. It would be for us not to deny their otherness, by ensuring, for example, that they can practice their religion in a dignified manner. Admittedly, in this respect we still have a lot to learn. Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends, please help us to do so. Thank you. ❖

## A VISIT TO ST. GALLEN

*(Continued from page 6)*

painting sits the synagogue built in 1880 by our Hohenems relatives. The

St. Gallen synagogue is essentially as it was in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – a highly decorated, but nonetheless tranquil space for con-

templation and worship. Rabbi Hermann Schmelzer gave our group an energetic 20-minute talk in German on the history of

the synagogue. ❖



# HOMILY BY FATHER FRANCIS WAHLE

ST CHARLES CHURCH, HOHENEMS, 3 AUGUST 2008

Your parish priest has asked me to give the homily today, and I want to say how grateful I am that he has given me this opportunity.

I want to tell you a little about myself. But why should I do that at a Mass? I am doing it because I hope it will influence your lives as Christians.

I hope it will stimulate you to ask yourselves: how do I relate to Jews or, more generally, to those of other Faiths. As a Catholic Christian, how should I treat them? I think you will see why I ask this question if I tell you a little of my family history.

My parents lived in Vienna where I was born in 1929. My father was originally Jewish but became an Old Catholic in 1911. My mother was also Jewish, though I discovered this only later.

Before the war, many thousands of Jews lived in Vienna, whereas there was only a handful of Jews here in Hohenems. A large proportion of Vienna's Jews, including my parents, were not, or not very, religious and lived in the more prosperous districts. They had no contact with the Jews who had come from Galicia (East Poland) and who lived in Vienna's 2nd district. Moreover, they didn't WANT to have any contact with them.

Though themselves Jewish, the richer Jews were almost anti-semitic towards the jiddish-speaking Jews in their cafés. It was only the persecution by the Nazis

which brought them together. Very few survived.

My parents had to leave their flat hastily on the 1st of May 1942. The Gestapo was actively looking for them. They remained in Vienna the whole time until the Russians liberated

yourselves are not of Jewish descent, and secondly because very few Jews live among you. (Jewish visitors are no problem. They are a source of income.)



Vienna two years later.

(They had previously sent my sister and me to England with heavy hearts.) They could not rely on friends.

Without identity papers, without anywhere to live, without ration cards but with God's help and their own quick wittedness they managed to stay alive.

My mother's maiden name was Brunner and the Brunner family, before they emigrated to Trieste, lived for many years here in Hohenems and are buried in the Jewish cemetery. This is why I am here, taking part in the meeting of Jewish families whose roots are in Hohenems, a Catholic priest who is also a Jew. How does one connect the two? For you, the question is rather different, firstly because you

*Courtesy of Dietmar Walser*

This is why I have broadened the question a little. How do you relate to those of other Faiths here in Hohenems? And how SHOULD you behave towards them? There seems to be a fair number of foreigners here: veiled women, who are probably Moslems, as well as people from Bosnia, Turkey and elsewhere.

My parents avoided all contact with the Jews from Galicia. Not only did they speak a different language but, in their eyes, they also had a lower culture. Is this similar to how you regard the foreigners here in Hohenems? Are you afraid to mix with them? That would be something quite normal. We are frightened



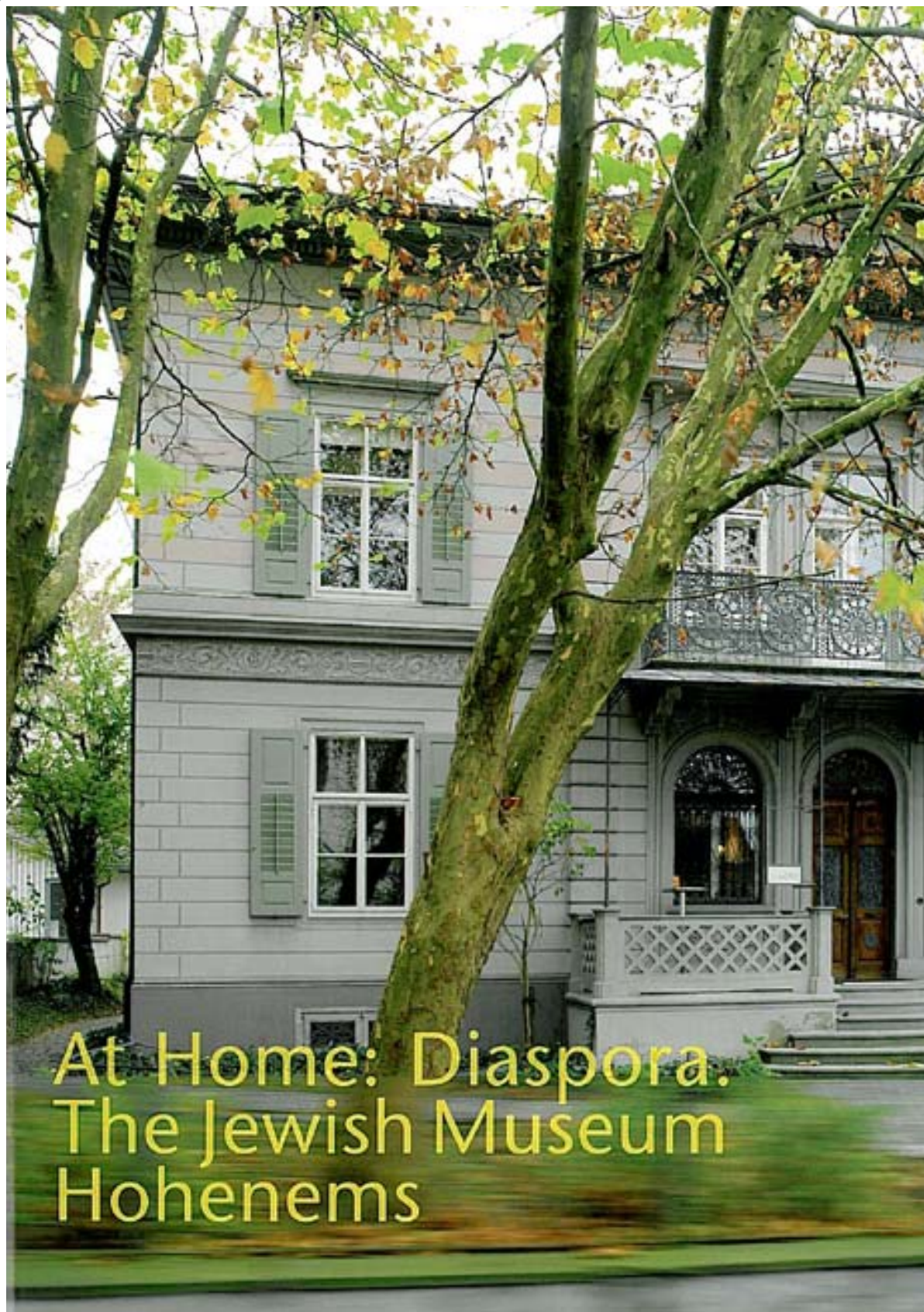
*Courtesy of Dietmar Walser*

of people who are different from us. It's only when we get to know them properly that we gain sufficient trust to communicate with them. We slowly change our attitude. It can even happen that we form real friendships with some of them and that mixed marriages result.

The Church is against mixed marriages. Does that mean that she is also against any opening towards those of other Faiths? Quite the reverse. As Christians we are committed to care for others, especially the poor and needy. The Second Commandment is "Love your neighbour", and that includes the underprivileged and the stranger, even if they are NOT Christians and even despite the danger that it might result in undesirable mixed marriages. A Bulgarian, a gypsy, a Jew, a Moslem - they are all as much human beings as we are. On Judgment Day the Lord will praise us if we have helped them ("you did it to ME"). And he will scold us if we ignored them: you left ME in the lurch, he will say to us.

*(Continued on page 14)*







## CATALOG: AT HOME: DIASPORA. THE JEWISH MUSEUM HOHENEMS

The new museum's catalogue is now available – in English!

Edited for the Jewish Museum Hohenems by Hanno Loewy the new catalogue tells the story of Hohenems in lucid essays and brilliant photographs. It tells the story of a typical—yet distinctive—Jewish community in the European-Jewish Diaspora. It describes the Jewish experience and the growth of a worldwide community: Diaspora and migration, tradition and modernity, transnational networks and local roots, persecution and Heimat. It is about life at the borders of Austria, Switzerland, and Germany, a community in the center of Europe, and about the conflicting forces of Jewish life. For the descendants this book offers fresh insight into their heritage. It describes

the history of families and their careers, their struggles for well being and their pride in surviving against all odds and unfavorable conditions of history.

The new catalogue of the Jewish Museum Hohenems also provides thought-provoking ideas about life in the Diaspora and its representation in Jewish museums today.

It comes with a complete history of the Hohenems Jews by Hannes Sulzenbacher and an extensive photographic essay by Arno Gisinger about the Museum and the Jewish quarter of Hohenems. Autobiographical texts by Stefan Zweig, Jean Améry, Aron Tänzer, Hugo Tänzer, Nanette Landauer, Moritz Julius Bonn and Wilhelm Frey, and contributions by Isolde Charim,

Eva Grabherr, Kurt Greussing, Michael Guggenheimer, Monika Helfer, Felix Jaffé-Brunner, Luisa Jaffé-Brunner, Michael Köhlmeier, Yves Kugelmann, Sabine Offe, Zafer Senocak, Barbara Steinitz and Vladimir Vertlib add their flavor to this unique book about the Hohenems experience.

**At Home: Diaspora.  
The Jewish Museum  
Hohenems  
Edited for the Jewish Museum Hohenems  
by Hanno Loewy  
Bucher Verlag /384  
pages/29,80€  
(22,30€ for members!).  
Richly illustrated.  
English edition: ISBN: 978-3-902612-69-4**

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## THE FUTURE OF OUR CONTACT WITH HOHENEMS

LUISA JAFFE

After the reunion ... Lets remain in contact!

A summary of the findings of the workshop ***"Distant and close. About Connections to Hohenems and the future of the descendants network"***

Facilitated by Ayalah Kahn and Luisa Jaffé-Brunner

Participants of the workshop expressed the desire to remain connected after the reunion and to preserve and continue to expand the network of descendants

present at the Hohenems 2008 reunion.

The main outcomes of the discussion were:

- Creation of an email directory: Descendants will be asked in the next mailing from the museum whether their email address can be published in a directory circulated electronically among descendants.
- Creation of a forum (possibly a yahoo group) where descendants could exchange ideas and remain in contact.

- To encourage descendants to meet outside of Austria: Through the directory, descendants can take the initiative to contact peer-descendants as they are traveling. Design of a feedback form: it was considered important to ask participants what they enjoyed most at the reunion, what they suggest for future reunions, and if they would like to take an active part in the organization of a reunion or in regular communications with the community of descendants.

Ayalah and Luisa thank you for attending the workshop and for sharing your ideas about the future! You can continue to do so by sending an email to [luisa.jaffe@skynet.be](mailto:luisa.jaffe@skynet.be) or in writing as you complete the feedback form, which will be included in the next mailing of the museum and descendants committee. ❖

# DOCUMENTS TELLING THE STORY OF VORARLBERG'S JEWISH HISTORY

GERHARD SALINGER

This is a review of some of the many documents in "Dokumente zur Geschichte der Juden in Vorarlberg" published by Karl Heinz Burmeister and Alois Niederstätter, which contains documents from the year 1617 and continues into the 19<sup>th</sup> century[i] Rabbi Aron Tänzer in his publication "Die Geschichte der Juden in Hohenems" [ii] referred to these documents and both works should be read together because they refer to the same subject matter in similar ways.

## July 1, 1617. Hohenems

This document describes Count Kaspar of Hohenems Schutzbrief (letter of protection) for Jews who settle in Hohenems and the conditions connected he set on it (see also Tänzer, pages 21-24)[iii] According to Tänzer, [iv]the first Jewish settlers in Hohenems in 1617 were the following twelve persons :

Jacob, who came from Pfersee near Augsburg;  
Jacob's sons, Josef and Moises;  
Isak Dillkomm and his son Aaron, who came from Immenstadt;  
Esaias and his brother David from Binswangen;  
Shevtle, son of Lazarus, from Binswangen;  
David Natis from Stockach;  
Two by the name Wolf; and Elias.

## 1618. Zolltariff zu Feldkirch und Höchst

This document refers to the duty/custom payment required of Jews who passed through Felkirch and Höchst: "Every Jews- male or female-riding on a horse or who is walking, shall pay the

amount of 2 shillings and 6 pfennig (pence)." [v]

## 1617-1674. A List of Debtors amongst Hohenems Jews[vii]

1. Herz, Abraham, Rabiner
2. Marx Hildefüng
3. Nataniel
4. Lazar Boleg
5. Isak Neiburg
6. Jacob Simon
7. David Fillischrebest
8. Joseph Henle
9. Jacob Henle
10. Moses Bernheim
11. Samuel Bernheim, "der alte"
12. Elies Bernheim
13. Oswald Kaufman
14. Wilhelm Boleg
15. Samuel Bernheim
16. Jacob Theinhauser

## April 13 1658. Trade of Meat Products

In a document dated April 13, 1658, Count Karl Friedrich of Hohenems prohibited Jews from engaging in any kind of trade with meat products. He did this in response to complaints from local butchers who feared Jewish competition. An exception was made allowing the purchase of meat animals for consumption by local Jews. But that exception was effective only after the Count's household, the clergy, the officials and the local butchers were supplied. In the official text , the word "Hebreer" (Hebrews) is used. [vii]

## May 25, 1675. Hohenems. Tax on Visitors

This was a restrictive measure issued by the Hochgräfl . Hohen Embsische Cantzley

Allda, the Count's Chancellory. Since many Jews from other locations visited Hohenems at that time, a measure was taken to restrict their presence in Hohenems. It was ordered that every host who accommodates Jews would be required to pay for each such person 8 Kreuzer per night. Exceptions were made for visits to relatives or the sulphur baths. Each transgression cost a host a penalty of 20 Reichstaler. [viii]

## Wie Ein Jud Recht Schwören soll bey den Christen (without specific date)

Important regulations during the 18<sup>th</sup> century related to the Jewish oath. Such a ceremony had to take place in the synagogue and the person had to swear by an open Torah scroll but not a printed copy of the Pentateuch (the five books of Moses). In addition, when taking the oath, the Jew had to put on a Tallis (a prayer shawl) and Tefillin (phylacteries). Whenever possible, ten Jewish men- but at least three- had to be present. Before the start, all participants had to wash their hands and the blessings over the Tallis and Tefillin had to be recited. [ix]

## February 9, 1700. Letter from Bishop of Chur

In a letter dated February 9, 1700, and mailed from Chur in Switzerland, the local bishop of Chur Ulrich VII complained to Emperor Leopold I, about the Jews in the district Rankweil-Sulz. He was especially concerned that the local Christian chil-

dren through their contact with Jews may be spiritually endangered, that they would neglect the Christian holidays and ceremonies and deviate from their faith. [x] Since no response is indicated, it may be assumed that Leopold I had more important affairs of State to consider than replying to the Bishop's letter.

## 1704/05 Schutzgeldverzeichnis

A document [xi] from 1704/1705 lists those persons who were required to pay Schutzgeld (protection money) either in the full amount of 24 Florins or half the amount, 12 Florins. The total amount paid was 204 Florins. They were:

Jacob Isaac, paid half of the Schutzgeld  
Isaac Ulmer, also paid half of the Schutzgeld  
Levi Levit, also paid half of the Schutzgeld  
Mayerle Moss Heyums, Sohn  
Simon Moss  
Mayerle Moss Gumpers, Sohn  
Heyum Moss  
Lämble Weyl, also paid half of the Schutzgeld  
Mayerle Isaac  
Wolff Levit  
Hürschlens, Sohn  
Hürschlens Levit  
Gumpers Moss  
Wolff Levit Levis, Sohn

A similar list in 1724 [xii]names the following persons who paid a total of 156 Florins, in most cases 12 Florins each:  
Urban Levit  
Causchele Moss  
Jackele Moss  
Löb Ulmer

(Continued on page 13)



## DOCUMENTS TELLING THE STORY OF VORARLBERG'S JEWISH HISTORY

(Continued from page 12)

Wolff Hirschlis, Sohn  
Heyumbs Meyerle  
Gumpers Meyerle  
Isach Levit Levis, Sohn  
Joseph Ainstain  
Wolff Levit Levis, Sohn  
Salomon Isach  
Jacob Weill

July 2, 1754, Permission to Transact Trade

In Reineck on July 2, 1754, the governing Landvogt Lorenz Franz Xavier of Fleckenstein gave permission to the Jews of Hohenems to transact trade and commerce in the upper and lower Rhine Valley. [xiii]

April 5, 1760, Ban on Commercial Transactions in Liechtenstein

In a letter dated April 5, 1760, [xiv] the Jews of Hohenems were informed by the Chancellor of the Duke of Hohenems that they were prohibited from conducting any commercial transactions in the principality of Liechtenstein. The letter was signed "Sigl. Hohen Embs, den 5ten April 1760 L.S. Richs Hochgräfl Oberamts=Canzley allda."

March 15, 1814, Dienstbotenverzeichnis.

By house numbers, the names of all Jewish households who employed domestic personnel at that time are listed in this document.[xv]

In most cases, the term "knecht" for a male servant and "magd" (maid) for a female servant are used. Most households had at least a maid. Joseph and Moritz Löwenberg had, in addition, a "Schreiber" (probably a bookkeeper and not a scribe), a maid for the

children and Joseph had a "Privatlehrer" (a teacher for his children). The list also states the names of these personnel and from where they came (mostly from Tirol, Switzerland, Württemberg and Baden).

May 4, 1829, Request for a Mikva.

On May 4, 1829, a letter [xvi] written on behalf of the Hohenems Jewish community (Israelitengemeinde), and signed by Salomon Bernheimer and Joseph Hirschfeld, was forwarded to the District Court in Dornbirn seeking permission to build a new Mikva (ritual bath for women). The letter pointed out that the repair of the old Mikva which had become defective would cost an estimated 1500 Florin, while a new building presumably would cost 714 Florin. The letter stated that after testing the suitability of the ground water for this project, it was determined that the location close to the school house of the community would be most suitable. Plans and drawings were enclosed with the request and the court was asked to grant the request of the Israelitengemeinde without much delay. While a response by the court in Dornbirn was not indicated, it is assumed that no objections were raised.

Rabbis in Hohenems

The Jewish community (Israelitischecultus-Gemeinde), with the exception of a few interval years, employed rabbis from 1760 until 1905. Some of the names, like Juda Loeb Ullmann, Samuel Ullmann, Abraham Kohn, Simon Popper, and, of course, Aron

Tänzer are well known; others who served only a few years are less familiar. Tänzer in his publication[xvii] lists the names of all those rabbis:

Judah Loeb Ullmann, 1760-1796  
Samuel Ullmann, 1796-1824  
Israel Lissa, 1825-1829  
Angelus Kafka, 1830-1833  
Abraham Kohn, 1833-1844  
Daniel Ehrmann, 1845-1852  
Simon Popper, 1852-1872  
Daniel Einstein, 1872-1876  
Dr. Adolf Guttmann, 1878-1883  
Dr. Samuel Gruen ( Grün) 1883-1886  
Dr. Aron Gordon, 1887-1890  
Dr. Heinrich Berger, 1894-1896  
Dr. Aron Tänzer, 1896-1905  
❖

[i] Karl Heinz Burmeister und Alois Niederstätter, Dokumente zur Geschichte der Juden in Vorarlberg vom 17. Jahrhundert bis zum 19. Jahrhundert, Dornbirn 1988  
[ii] Aron Tänzer Die Geschichte der Juden in Hohenems, Bergenz, Nachdruck 1971.  
[iii] Vorarlberger Landesarchiv, Hohenems Archiv, 159.1  
[iv] Aron Tänzer, *ibid*, p. 18  
[v] Otto Stolz, Quellen zur Geschichte des Zollwesens und Handelsverkehr in Tirol und Vorarlberg vom 13. bis 18. Jahrhundert, Wiesbaden 1955, p. 120  
[vi] 1674 is the year Jews were banished from Hohenems. The list is also in Tänzer, pp. 29-30.  
[vii] Vorarlberger Landesarchiv, Hohenems Archiv 158, 28  
[viii] Vorarlberger Landesarchiv, Hohenems Archiv 100, 4; also Tänzer, *ibid*, p. 41. Apparently the edict was not of long duration.  
[ix] Vorarlberger Landesarchiv, Hohenems Archiv, 159, 2.  
[x] Vorarlberger

Landesarchiv, Pfarrarchiv Rankweil, Schedule 1  
[xi] Vorarlberger Landesarchiv, Hds u Cad; Reichsgrafschaft Hohenems, 229 Blatt, 20  
[xii] Vorarlberger Landesarchiv, Hds u Cad; Reichsgrafschaft Hohenems, 239 Blatt, 19  
[xiii] Tänzer *ibid*, p. 445 f.  
[xiv] Vorarlberger Landesarchiv, Hohenems Archiv, 100, 6; see also Tänzer, p. 419  
[xv] Dienstbotenverzeichnis, 1814, März 15, Hohenems, original in Stadtarchiv Hohenems  
[xvi] Vorarlberger Landesarchiv, Landgericht Dornbirn, Sch.206, Baupol. 1639/44, aus 1828  
[xvii] Tänzer, *ibid* .p. 584

## NEWS FROM THE MUSEUM

*(Continued from page 1)*

the town where Aron Taenzer was born. He lives in Switzerland, Munich and Paris and has exhibited worldwide. Just recently he presented his Kafka Cyclus in the Jewish Museum Berlin and staged a One-Man-Show in the Tinguely Museum in Basle. He has long been a friend of the Jewish Museum Hohenems.

Schmidt participated in 2004 in the Museum's program "That Easy It Was, Jewish childhood and youth after 1945 in Austria, Switzerland and Germany". His Hohenems experience dates back fifteen years when he learned the story of Paul Grueninger, the Police Chief of the Canton of St Gallen, who was punished for assisting refugees in the early years of World War II. Many of those refugees escaped by crossing at the Hohenems - Swiss border. Passing by Hohenems regularly in the 1990s from Munich to Switzerland, Pavel Schmidt felt a connection that drew his attention back to his own Jewish roots, and subsequently played a major role in his life.

### Upcoming exhibitions:

**Here. Places of memory in Vorarlberg. 1938-1945**  
Photographs of Sarah Schlatter – Audio installations by Markus Barnay

From October 12, 2008, through March 30, 2009, the Museum will present an exploration of memory and forgetfulness in Vorarlberg. Fifteen landscape photographs by Sarah Schlatter, a young artist from Nenzing in Vorarlberg, will portray the sites of "every-day" events during the Nazi era in Vorarlberg. On display will be locations of escape and persecution, of public acclaim for the Nazi regime, of resistance and of bystanders, of forced labor and resettlement, of anti-Semitic action and the preparation of "euthanasia", of hiding and suicide.

In 2008, in recognition of the Remembrance of the Nazi takeover in Austria 70 years ago, the Museum for a few months is widening its outlook to illustrate different aspects of the National Socialist regime, presenting a critical perspective of our capacity to remember and to learn.

Markus Barnay has collected interviews with witnesses, with survivors and bystanders, with rescuers and descendants of perpetrators alike, commenting on events that one cannot see anymore. Some have been hidden by time, and cannot be seen even as one looks at the locations where the events took place. And, while we learn that history was made not only at some particular sites, but literally

everywhere, as time passes, our potential to grasp what happened becomes increasingly difficult. It is us who give meaning to a site; be it educational or morally charged, while the facts, simply recorded in textbooks, sometimes lose their poignant significance as ever more detail is added.

Sarah Schlatter's portraits of landscapes and urban environments in Vorarlberg present images that help us relate to history and support our interest in commemorating events and victims. They also remind us of the majority of bystanders and others who "simply" agreed with the regime, and even of perpetrators whose actions still puzzle us today. Just recently the name of an SS-guard from the death camp of Sobibor was "discovered" inscribed on an official war-memorial in Silberberg, a little village in the Vorarlberg mountains, as a "victim" of the war. The inflamed public debate in Vorarlberg on how to remember the crimes and the perpetrators is still ongoing, and probably never will be definitively answered. The exhibition in the Museum will offer a space for thought and discussion, providing visual and audio material, and a reading room will allow visitors to study documents and texts.

### **"Did you see my Alps?" A Jewish story**

In the spring and summer 2009, starting on April 26, the Jewish Museum Hohenems, and the Jewish Museum Vienna, in collaboration with the Austrian Alpine Club, will explore the never told story of the Jewish love for the Alps.

From the conflicts between the Alpine Clubs and their Jewish members to orthodox Jewish tourism in the Alps today, the exhibition will cover the stories of escape and migration before and after 1945, as well as the image of the Alpine experience at part of the diaspora, from the urban-intellectual salons in the mountains to the "Jewish Alps" in the American Catskills. These are stories of dreams and physical adventures close to the heart of the Jewish experience.

Initially the exhibition will be shown in Hohenems, then, starting in October 2009, in Vienna and starting in February 2010 in Munich, followed by other venues. ❖

## HOMILY BY FATHER FRANCIS WAHLE

*(Continued from page 9)*

The Lord demands an honest encounter, not for the purpose of converting these people, but because they are our fellow human

beings. Such an encounter takes time. It needs small steps. But it will not happen unless we take small steps. Doing nothing is not an option.

In this Mass I am praying not only for my dead ancestors buried in the Jewish cemetery but also for everyone who today is living in Hohenems. I invite you to do the same. ❖



# IN MEMORIAM - MARK BRUNNER (1926-2008)

FRANCESCA KENNEDY BRUNNER

Marko Joseph Brunner was born in Vienna, Austria on March 13, 1926, the younger of two children of Felix Robert Brunner and Maria Urban. He grew up in Mödling, a suburb of Vienna in a house with a large garden and adjoining fruit orchards. He learned to ski, swim, and love jazz at an early age, all of which gave him pleasure for the rest of his life. His father was Jewish; his mother was Catholic.

After the Anschluss, due to the Nazi anti-Semitism, his parents tried to get him and his sister to America where they had relatives living, but American visas were hard to come by. As part of the Kindertransport program, on December 22, 1938, Mark was sent accompanied by a stranger on a train bound for England. He was twelve years old and spoke no English. His older sister Helene, who was 19, had already arrived in London. She picked him up at the train station and deposited him in an English boarding school in Ascot.

In 1940, his visa to immigrate to America was finally approved. He departed England by boat for New York alone at the age of 14. It was June: just weeks before the Battle of Britain. He stayed in New York for a week with friends of the family, whom he had never met. After his stay, they put him on a train bound for Chicago. He stayed again with family friends in Chicago and then was put on a train bound for Los

Angeles, his ultimate destination. In Los Angeles, he finally saw familiar faces. The train was met by his aunt, cousin, and his father, who were living in a house in Pasadena, where Mark ended up spending his teenage years. His mother Maria, who was Catholic, remained in Austria. She and Felix had divorced, hoping that would allow her to stay in Austria throughout the war and preserve the family property and business.

Mark went to high school and then junior college in Pasadena. His father and aunt became part of the Free-Austrian movement. Many of the members were distinguished refugees. Members were issued identification cards certifying that they were Austrian citizens prior to March 12, 1938. The cards were signed by the last Chancellor of Austria, Kurt von Schuschnigg.

Mark volunteered for the Army as soon as he turned 18, but was not accepted because he was considered German and an "enemy alien". However, in 1944 they drafted him anyway. He was awarded American citizenship and became a paratrooper in the Field Artillery branch. He was still in training when the war ended, so he never saw combat. However, he re-enlisted and was sent to Japan for a year.

After the Army, he attended an art school on the G.I. Bill. Initially he worked as

a carpenter, and then later as an architectural draftsman. In the early 50s, he pursued his interests in sports cars, the Pacific Ocean (sailing, surfing,

swimming), jazz, and architecture. He bought a 1949 MG TC, brought it up to competition specifications, and joined a sports car club, and began racing.

Mark's father Felix moved back to Austria in the early 50's, back into the house in Mödling, and resumed his life with his wife Maria. Maria had managed to retain the family house during the war, but not the Engler factory, which was confiscated by the Nazis. However, in 1948 the Austrian Restitution Commission returned its ownership to the Brunners. Upon his return, Felix once again took up his position as owner and director of the factory.

Mark did not return to Austria until 1955 at the age of 29 to see his mother after 17 years absence. By that time, Mark was an American through and through. He did not care for the Austrian lifestyle. He despised the class distinctions and superficial, unearned titles. Because of his father's position as



owner of a factory, people called Mark "Herr Engineer" though he was not an engineer. Therefore, when his parents asked him to stay in Vienna and run the family factory, he declined. He couldn't wait to get back to his life in the U.S. and his career as an architect.

Upon returning to the States, he continued to race cars, ski, and pursue architecture. After working for many different architectural firms around Los Angeles, Mark opened his own firm. Unfortunately, his one-man firm was rewarding him too meagerly and he was unhappy with the few creative opportunities it afforded him. Thus, he took an opportunity to join a business acquaintance at a new shopping center development company called Winmar. The company took him to New York, where he lived for two years, and then in 1963 to San Francisco, where he lived until his death. He worked for Winmar for 10 years before opening his own shopping center development com-

*(Continued on page 23)*

# IN MEMORIUM - SERGE ANGIEL (1938-2008)

NICOLE ANGIEL

Dr. Serge Francois Angiel was born in Paris, France on March 2, 1938 and came to the United States in 1940. He grew up in New York City and in Woodstock, New York with his younger brother Pierre. Serge's father was a Russian Jew and his mother was French Catholic.

In 1963, Serge married his childhood sweetheart, Christine Reitlinger, a descendant of the Hohenems Brunner and Rosenthal families. The two first met at ages 10 and 12, when Christine attended the French camp run by Serge's parents in Woodstock, NY. It was hardly love at first sight. Christine recounts the traps he would lay in attempts to soak her with water when she opened her door, and the time he rolled a stink bomb under her door. They attended grammar school, high school and university together, dating off and on before finally deciding it was inevitable that they tie the knot.

The newlyweds lived together in New York City, while completing their graduate degrees and working as teachers. Serge earned Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts and Doctor of Education degrees from Columbia University, and devoted his career to education. He started as a high school math teacher and soon became assistant principal just outside of New York City.

After several years of marriage, the couple welcomed

their first and only child, Nicole, into the world. Serge and Nicole shared that special bond that many fathers and daughters do and were always very close. He joked and called Nicole his favorite daughter. Of course no one was jealous since she was the only one.

Serge, Christine and Nicole moved to Maplewood, New Jersey in 1973 when Serge became the principal of the local public high school. He held this position until 1980, when he assumed the role of superintendent of schools of the Emerson School District in New Jersey from 1980 to 1993. He touched many people's lives, and was well loved as a fair, honest and devoted educator and school administrator.

An avid skier, Serge was a volunteer ski patroller for many years. He served as section chief and regional director of the Southern New York Region of the Eastern Division of the National Ski Patrol for many years. Serge and his family spent many vacations on the slopes of the western United States and in Europe.



a trip to Greece and Hohenems, for the second descendents' reunion. Serge travelled to Hohenems with his wife Christine, daughter Nicole, son-in-law David Rehkopf, and granddaughter Cleo Angiel Rehkopf. The photo at left was taken at the Hohenems reunion and shows Serge and his granddaughter enjoying the Bodensee cruise.

Serge was extremely handy and was a skilled carpenter. He built several pieces of furniture, including a beautiful dining room table which is still in use in Serge and Christine's home. His other passions were oil painting and photography. Following the times, he traded his black and white darkroom equipment for digital video editing equipment. Serge also volunteered as a videographer and editor for the Newark Museum in New Jersey.

Throughout his life, Serge travelled frequently to Europe and spent many summers in France and Greece. In fact, Serge passed away just a few weeks after returning from

Those of you who knew Serge, or recently met him at the descendants' reunion, will remember him for his gentle nature and great sense of humor. He was a true "bon vivant" and lived life to its fullest. He enjoyed every moment and made the best of any situation. Through his nearly two year battle with cancer, Serge kept telling jokes and smiled through his good days and bad. He died at home on August 27, 2008 with his wife, daughter and son-in-law by his side. ❖

# IN MEMORIAM - HELENE AMLER (1928-2008)

ROBERT W. AMLER, MD

## Nini - Optimism that Inspired and Prevailed.

Helene (Nini) Amler (Rosenthal, Rollin) lived in New York since 1949. She is survived by her husband of 58 years, Dr. Mel Amler, and by the warm and loving family they raised. Nini was the sister of AFJMH's late founding president, Stephan Rollin.

Born Helene Rosenthal in Vienna, to Friedericke and Paul Rosenthal (b 1891 Hohenems), Nini was the granddaughter of Arnold Rosenthal (b 1856 Hohenems). She was the great-granddaughter of Josef and Clara Rosenthal, whose large portraits are on display in the Jewish Museum Hohenems (JMH). This part of the Rosenthal family resided at Schweitzer Strasse 1 for some 50 years, and relocated to Vienna in the mid-1890s.

Nini and Stephan grew up in the upscale Viennese district of Döbling. But as Nini reached her 10<sup>th</sup> birthday, powerful waves of anti-Semitic violence overran her world, punctuated by the Anschluss. The two children were hastened out of Austria.

Nini's own words, as written for granddaughter Allison Amler, reflect her optimistic spirit that prevailed through nearly all adversities (N Amler, 2007).

"My mother, my brother Stephan (12) and I (10) left Vienna by train on July 30, 1938. We were on my mother's passport and since the Gestapo was controlling the train, my mother told my

brother to duck and make himself smaller so as not to draw the attention of the Gestapo. It went well and the next day we arrived in Bordighera, Italy.

We went to our new boarding school which was a very nice building, a former hotel, and were received by the Director of the School, a Dr. Kempner. He showed us to our rooms where my brother and I were to stay for the summer, and after a few hours we said goodbye to our mother, with hugs and kisses. We took her to the train and saw the blue railroad car, marked *WIEN*

(Vienna) to take her back home.

The school was situated on the shore of the glistening Mediterranean Sea, with its green moss-covered rock croppings and almost eternal sunshine. For us kids, coming from a cold

climate it was a warm welcome. We went to the beach every afternoon, and then off to the *gelati* stand for many little *gelati* cones. The owner always greeted us with a big smile on his face because we were his best customers. We enjoyed our stay at the school. There was very little supervision and we did more or less what we wanted. The school was not air conditioned, and since it was very

hot and humid, we pulled our mattresses off the beds and out onto the balconies, and so we all slept *al fresco*.

Time passed, and we got used to the daily routine. We made friends and stayed out late, promenading on the boardwalk, eating *gelati* forever, and loving the balmy evenings and nights. There was music and lights, and a wonderful feeling of happiness.

One of those beautiful mornings, I went out for a swim and swam out to the float to sun myself and let my mind and body just rock with the

swam back to the shore. When I returned to the house, it was surrounded by police and detectives. I was shocked by the commotion - people running here and there, everyone speaking Italian, most of which I could not understand. The teachers called all children to an assembly and we were told that Dr. Kempner had skipped town because he could not pay his bills in town and, otherwise, he was deeply in debt all over. The police were there to see what they could recover in goods to convert to money: furniture, appliances, household goods.

Now the teachers had to decide what to do with the children. Stephan and I were quite upset. We decided we could easily go home, since the blue railway car called *WIEN* passed this town every afternoon. By now, the teachers had already alerted the parents of the other children, by telephone, that their children would be sent home immediately.

By the time our phone call was made, all the other children had left, and Stephan and I were starting to feel anxious and homesick. We wanted to go home like the other children and hear our sweet mother's voice on the phone. So, here it goes:

"*Mutti, Mutti*, (Mommy) we have to come home. The school is closing and nobody is left here but us. We can take the blue railroad car tomorrow afternoon." . . . pause  
 "You can't come home!"  
 "But why not?"  
 "You can never come home again!"



Nini and Aunt Clara

waves. One of our teachers came aboard the float and looked very upset. He said the Director, Dr. Kempner, had left the school and had fled to France, and would not return. It took me a minute to digest what he had said. I never had imagined that a director of a school could just leave a school with all its children unattended. I was in disbelief, but jumped off the float and

(Continued on page 23)



## THE 2008 DESCENDANTS' REUNION

*(Continued from page 5)*

those present commented on the beautiful service and the joy of again having the former synagogue available for services in Hohenems, even though there is no longer a Jewish community there.

Friday evening was devoted to family dinner gatherings, where some of us met distant cousins from all over the world.

Innsbruck, a longtime supporter and advisor to the Museum. They discussed the relevance of genealogy and family history to an overall picture of the Hohenems story. Felix Jaffe explained the importance of a family tree by emphasizing his theme that a family without a tree is like a person without a backbone. He also explained that it is easier to start a family tree with the living

Dr. Eva Grabherr, the first Director of the Museum, and Rabbi Lisa Goldstein led a workshop that discussed the world wide Liberal Jewish movement, which found its way to Hohenems over a hundred years ago, and compared it to contemporary issues of Liberal Judaism today. Eva Grabherr provided insight into the beginning of this movement in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and its further development with

Jewish community. Rabbi Lisa Goldstein described issues of contemporary liberal Judaism, using as an example her own work as Executive Director at the Hillel of San Diego.

Participants found it fascinating to explore questions such as how various streams of Judaism interact with each other, how a person can be both an identified Jew and a citizen of the nation or the planet, how Judaism functions both as a religion and a culture, and how this played out in Hohenems and is still being debated and discussed in contemporary Jewish circles. The participants in the workshop came from a wide variety of backgrounds and their questions and observations stimulated the



*Felix Jaffe and Thomas Albrich, courtesy of Dietmar Walser*

Saturday brought more activities. First we assembled for a group photograph in front of the former synagogue. Then we assembled in family groups for another photograph. After that we spent our time either at the Museum or in the Jewish Quarter. Some attended a lunch sponsored by the Hohenems Jewish Cemetery Association to discuss improvements to the cemetery. A separate article on that subject will appear in a future issue.

Eight workshops were held in the afternoon. Dr. Felix Jaffe, without whom there probably would not be any involvement of the descendants with the Museum, spoke with Dr. Thomas Albrich of the University of

and then to work backwards. Professor Jaffe emphasized the importance of searching for, and through, old documents. Klara Heymann's postcards, which tell the heart-wrenching story of her time before deportation, came to light through such a search. They are now part of the Museum's archives.

connections to Hohenems. All effected the reform of Jewish tradition in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and had an impact on Jewish culture far beyond the borders of the Hohenems



*Harry Weil and Helmut Schlatter, courtesy of Darko Todrovic*

conversation to everyone's enjoyment. In particular, the audience found of high interest Rabbi Goldstein's report on why and how she became a Rabbi.

Harry Weil, Jr., a trustee of the AFJMH who lives in New Mexico and describes himself as an Austrian, an Italian, a Catholic and a Jew, spoke with Helmut Schlatter,

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*Eva Grabherr and Lisa Goldstein, courtesy of Dietmar Walser*

## THE 2008 DESCENDANTS' REUNION

(Continued from page 18)

who has been working with the Museum for the past 12 years, about his flight from Hohenems as a youth and his life on two continents. He talked about his pleasant memories of his first years as a child in Hohenems, about the imprisonment and death of his uncle, and his parents' escape to Switzerland while he stayed with relatives in Bregenz. His parents later collected him and together they went to America. He grew up with two religions - Fridays he went to the Synagogue with his father and Sundays to

disagrees with some of the decisions made by President Bush and wishes for changes in the foreign policy of the United States.

Susan Shimer spoke with Dr. Kurt Greussing about the taboo that precluded discussions about the Holocaust amongst both families who had escaped and families who continued to live in Austria. She pointed out that her family and others who escaped had suffered unspeakable losses and alluded to the death of her uncle Robert Rosenthal. Her parents could not

talk about this, apparently even when their children were not around. Kurt Greussing pointed out that in Austria people were uncomfortable with the subject - and, as a practical matter,

ordinary life just continued. They were content to

particular not the former Nazis, had to take - or at least feel - personally responsibility for the murderous persecution of people of "non-Aryan" descent, of political opponents or of deserters.



Luisa Jaffe

No distinction was made, under the prevailing political mentality, between "legality" and "legitimacy" of state action. Susan Shimer expressed the view that Roman law, upon which, as she understands it, the law of Germany is grounded, requires adherence to the written law and contrasted that with the common law of America and England. Discussion ensued about a different attitude prevailing

in the 1960s, Susan Shimer emphasized that some theorists in those countries have taken the position that a person must refuse to follow certain laws, laws that are so contrary to what is now called international criminal law that adherence to them cannot be required, provided that such refusal does not result in actual harm to the refuser. The essays point out the theoretical basis for the Nuremberg trials.

After a brief coffee break, more workshops took place. Luisa Jaffe spoke with Ayalah Khan, a member of the Museum staff, who only recently learned that she is in fact a descendant of the Moos family, about connections to Hohenems and the future of the descendants' network. Luisa's summary of this workshop appears separately in this Newsletter.

Peter Reichenbach, a film producer and screenwriter, explained that his own family was engaged in creative processes for many generations. He and Dr. Hanno Loewy discussed the way that



Church with his mother. Kurt Greussing and Susan Shimer, courtesy of Dietmar Walser

He himself is not religious. He first returned to Europe as an American marine and traveled by car on his own to Bregenz to visit the relatives with whom he stayed. In America he always felt secure, but he also has felt comfortable in Austria. Indeed, he has a tattoo of the Austria heraldic animal, the eagle, on his upper arm. Like his father, Harry Weil, Sr., Harry wants to be buried in the Jewish Cemetery in Hohenems. He reminded us that one need not favor the leader of a country to have friends in that country. He is proud of America and likes Americans very much. Harry



Peter Reichenbach and Hanno Loewy

assume that all had happened within a legal - or state - framework, so that basically nobody, in

in some circles in America and England toward following the written law. Reading from essays written

images by others about Jews influence our lives.

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## THE 2008 DESCENDANTS' REUNION

(Continued from page 19)

Reichenbach's own encounter with images of Jewish life date back to his childhood in Zurich, where Orthodox Jews were perceived to be a kind of other. Only later did he realize that this thinking was connected to him, even though he grew up in a family that had converted to Christianity around 1900. The sense of otherness became obvious when the Nazis came to power and the life of those living in Germany became threatened. Thinking about images of Jews in the cinema and on stage became an increasing challenge in his own life. Since he works as a film producer, he is interested in creating more complex and diverse images. The

for Fake" - a film that focuses on Elmyr de Hory's career as an art forger, one to which he turned out of desperation. Constanze Brahn-Reichenbach from Konstanz, a musician, also participated in the workshop and was able to add more information.

Uri Tänzer spoke with Dr. Eva Häfele about growing up in different countries and learning to speak different languages. Mr. Tänzer was born in what was then the Palestine Mandate, moved to the U.S. as a youth, and spoke Hebrew, German and English. He noted that the first language, if not reinforced at home, is often lost. Interestingly, if the language is not lost, that is the language with which

young child will learn the language more readily - particularly if it is spoken at home.

Father Francis Wahle spoke with Peter Niedermair about his parents' life in Vienna during World War II and briefly described his childhood, having left Vienna as part of the Kindertransport. We previously have published his sister's memoirs of this period (see, In Touch, Volume 8, Issue 1). Although they traveled



*Herr Otten, courtesy of Darko Todorovic*

the original printing block, which he recently was able to purchase. The result was a beautiful scarf that will enhance all the ladies and girls who attended the Reunion, a wonderful remembrance, and one more connection for us to Hohenems.

Herr Otten's welcoming remarks were followed by those of the editor of this Newsletter on behalf of the AFJMH which are reprinted elsewhere. She spoke about our common history, our diversity, and our common interest in Hohenems today, together with that of the people who live in Hohenems now. And she spoke about how we have learned from our diverse experiences and expressed her heartfelt wish for more tolerance among all of mankind.

While we dined, the famous Austrian writer Michael Köhlmeier, who lives in Hohenems, addressed us in German, but provided an English translation for the benefit of those whose German was lacking. A copy of his speech appears in this

(Continued on page 21)



*Eva Häfele and Uri Tänzer, courtesy of Dietmar Walser*

conversation also included discussion of other Reichenbachs who have contributed to music, theatre, the arts and film. One example is Francois Reichenbach, a documentary filmmaker who collaborated with Orson Welles in the making of "F

people count. Other participants in the workshop noted similar multiple language fluency: in French and English, in Hebrew, German and English, and in Italian and English. All emphasized the importance of teaching a new language to a young child, since the

together from Vienna, they parted at the London train station to go to separate homes - and only saw each other infrequently in the ensuing years. Of course, those of us who attended the 1998 reunion saw them together once again.

Our day was not over. The evening brought us to the former Rosenthal factory, now the Otten Gravour, where the Ottens hosted us to a gala evening. After aperitifs outside, we were welcomed within by Herr Otten, who presented all the ladies with a scarf he had specially made in Italy from a 19<sup>th</sup> century design created in the Rosenthal factory. Recreating the pattern required acquiring



*Father Francis Wahle, courtesy of Dietmar Walser*



# THE 2008 DESCENDANTS' REUNION

(Continued from page 20)

Newsletter. Mr. Köhlmeier expressed regret and shame that so many of our ancestors had been required to leave Austria for economic or religious reasons, and wanted to know how they were received in their new homelands. He told us that Hohenems had learned from its past but that did not prevent people from making mistakes. He pointed out that Hohenems is now a place for migration, and thus compared our immigration with the present immigration into Austria of people seeking sanctuary. He asked that we help Austria learn how to provide these new immigrants with assistance, by telling about the assistance our forefathers received in their new homelands



*Felix Jaffe, courtesy of Darko Todorovic*

Our keynote speaker was Dr. Felix Jaffe, who was intimately involved with the creation of the Museum and the first reunion of descendants. He expressed his pleasure at seeing so many descendants. He described his satisfaction in having the number of known living descendants increase since the 1998 reunion from about 400 to nearly 1000,



*Harry Weil, courtesy of Tim Hanford*

and looked forward to the 2017 reunion with the hope that the number would double to 2000 by then. Perhaps Felix is right: we may find more descendants who then will come to Hohenems to share our dream of peace and understanding.

Harry Weil made a presentation of mementos made by North American Indians to a number of people now living in Hohenems who

made this Reunion possible.

Cantor Marlena Tänzer led us in song and dance and we all sang happy birthday to her husband Uri. Uri Taenzer welcomed

are incorporated as a not for profit in the U.S.A.

Andreas Mailath-Pokorny, the Head of the Cultural Department of Vienna and a resident of Hohenems, was our final speaker. He emphasized the importance of the restoration of Jewish culture in Austria and the importance of the Jewish Museum Hohenems in that cultural restoration.

Throughout the reunion, while the adults were busy



*Bauernfanger and Marlene Taenzer, courtesy of Darko Todorovic*

all to the AFJMH, pointing out that we had members from all countries even though we

with the various events described here, the children, utilizing cameras provided by the Museum, made videos exploring the cemetery, interviewing descendants, and otherwise showing the reunion from their perspective. The final cut of those videos, edited by the children with the assistance of the Museum staff, entertained us all at the end of the official program of the evening. While some participants retired for the evening, many remained behind for a jazz session performed by the band Bauernfanger and Marlena Taenzer.



*Children exploring cemetery*

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## THE 2008 DESCENDANTS' REUNION

(Continued from page 21)

Sunday some of the participants had to leave to catch flights home, and before long there were few still around. But all was not over. A service conducted jointly by Father Hellbruner of the St. Charles Church Hohenems and Father Francis Wahle brought a number of descendants to St. Charles. The homily was given by Father Francis who spoke a little about his background - a Jew through his mother, members of whose family, the Brunners, are buried in the Jewish Cemetery in Hohenems.

Father Francis said he came to the gathering of descendants of the Jewish families of Hohenems as a Catholic Priest who is also a Jew, and spoke about how he relates to Jews and to other non-Catholics. Father Francis preached that we should care for others. Whether a Bulgar, a Gypsy, a Jew or a Muslim, we are all people. So his mass was not just for his ancestors buried in Hohenems, but also for all who now live in Hohenems. An English translation by Father Francis of his homily

appears separately in this Newsletter.

All weekend, participants looked at the Museum's genealogical database, and even as some participants needed to return to their

2017, the four hundredth anniversary of our ancestors' arrival in Hohenems, to meet again. In short, this was a highly successful reunion and the Museum staff is deserving of our heartfelt gratitude for a job well done.

[hohenemsreunion.com/](http://hohenemsreunion.com/), on which he has placed photographs that he and other participants took at the Reunion. That web page also has a link to the documentary created by the children who attended the Reunion, a home video of the musical performance at the Palace, and a home video of "Hava Nagila."

The gathering also resulted in much press coverage. Newspaper articles on the Reunion were published in the St. Gallen Tagblatt, Der Standard (one of the main newspapers of Vienna), Neue Vorarlberg Tageszeitung, and the Jüdisches Allgemeine. Coverage in Die Illustrierte Neue Welt appeared on the web site <http://www.neuewelt.at/online/>. ❖



*Descendants review genealogical data at the Museum, courtesy of Dietmar Walser*

homes, others remained affixed to the computer screen and learned more about their ancestry. The Reunion came to a close with a gathering at the Museum, where lively discussions took place during a lovely brunch. Goodbyes were permeated with comments asking if we really need to wait until

The Museum has placed on the web photographs of the Reunion taken by various professionals. They can be found at <http://altneuland.rivido.de/hohenems>

Tim Hanford, a Hirschfeld descendant, also has set up a web page, <http://>

[i] I would like to thank the many individuals who assisted in the preparation of this article: Rabbi Lisa Goldstein, Dr. Eva Grabherr, Dr. Kurt Greussing, Dr. Eva Haefele, Luisa Jaffe, Dr. Hanno Loewy, Helen Lott, Helmut Schlatter, Birgit Sohler, Father Francis Wahle, Harry Weil, Jr.

## THANK YOU TO SHEILA PICCONE

Sheila Piccone is not a descendant of the Hohenems Jews and is not a member of the American Friends of the Jewish Museum Hohenems, but she will always be an honorary member. Sheila began working with Sue Shimer on the Newsletter at the

very beginning. Indeed, she designed the Newsletter. She had worked for Stephan Rollin's company, and as a dear friend had volunteered to help out with this important venture. Even this past January, long after Stephan passed from us, Sheila

continued to labor long and hard on the Newsletter. Without her, there would have been no Newsletter. Saying thank you in this public way is hardly adequate, but she should know how indispensable she has been to our success. Sheila has helped

in our transition to a new designer, Nicole Angiel. She has provided us with the templates of all her designs, from the wonderful front page to the layout of the rest. Words cannot express our gratitude. Nevertheless, thank you Sheila. ❖

## MARK BRUNNER

*(Continued from page 15)*

pany called Cendel. Although he did develop a couple of shopping centers, most of his work came from consulting, and acting as a commercial real estate broker leasing office space and retail locations. Mark loved his work and having his own company, and worked up until a few months before his death.

Mark was married three times: at the time of his death to Zarina Issac. He had a daughter Francesca by a previous marriage, and he has a granddaughter named Amanda Kennedy by Francesca.

Mark loved to travel. His

travels included Peru, Central Europe many times, India, Portugal, and a favorite car trip to New Mexico. He made several pilgrimages to Hohenems over the years to see the Jewish cemetery and later to attend the first reunion organized by the museum. He has been an active participant in the Brunner Family reunions that sprang out of the first Hohenems reunion. He was also the leader of the organizing committee planning the next Brunner reunion in 2010 in his beloved San Francisco. He was an avid reader. He skied until a year ago. He loved to hike and often hiked the Sierras with his cousin

Glenn Clark. He walked to and from his office every day: 1-1/2 miles each way over the San Francisco hills.

Mark lived a full, active, and happy life full of friends, relatives, travel, and work. Although he suffered with prostate cancer and congestive heart failure in the last year of his life, he continued to work, exercise, and try a variety of treatments. However, on August 27<sup>th</sup>, his body finally gave up the fight. He lapsed into unconsciousness on August 26<sup>th</sup> and stopped breathing peacefully the next morning with Zarina and Francesca by his bedside. ❖

## NINI AMLER

*(Continued from page 17)*

At that point we both started to cry. We just can't understand that you don't let us come home. "Please, Mutti, please . . ."

"I can't let you come home because . . . you might be killed by the Nazis!!"

This was the end of my childhood."

Thus, two frightened, lonely children were separated from home and security, but also from the Nazis' lethal grip that extinguished countless other young lives. Nini and Stephan were comparatively safe. And they stuck tightly together.

Family members arranged for the children to travel to Switzerland, a neutral coun-

try. Nini and Stephan grew into their teens and attended school while the war raged around them for six long years. Money was difficult to transfer across the border from Vienna, but they received generous help from Swiss relatives of their grandfather Arnold Rosenthal, in particular "Aunt" Clara, the widow of his cousin William Hirschfeld. Clara had no children and accepted responsibility for the teens with genuine enthusiasm and warmth. They both adapted well – making new friends, speaking Swiss German, and becoming top-notch skiers.

After the war, Nini finished school and found great personal satisfaction in her first job, as a multi-lingual office

assistant. Her father (Paul), whom she had not seen for 12 years, sent her money for a visit to New York, where he had emigrated. While in New York, she was introduced by her cousin to a close friend, Dr. Mel Amler, a Manhattan dentist and biomedical researcher at New York University. Nini and Mel married in 1950 and raised a close-knit and gregarious family in New York, that spread out over time to the Midwest, the South, and the Pacific coast.

Nini's early life experiences, while often painful, gave her great empathy for others. Throughout her adult life, she greeted friends and acquaintances with enthusiasm and cheer. She helped people approach problems

with the extra hope that even difficult situations could improve with time. In her visits to JMH events, she especially appreciated some wonderful new acquaintances she made with cousins she barely knew before. Nini's optimism inspired many others, and ultimately prevailed over the adversities of her youth. She died with a clear sense of satisfaction about her life and optimism for the future of the family she and Mel had created. ❖



The Newsletter of the  
American Friends of the

## IN TOUCH

OCTOBER 2008



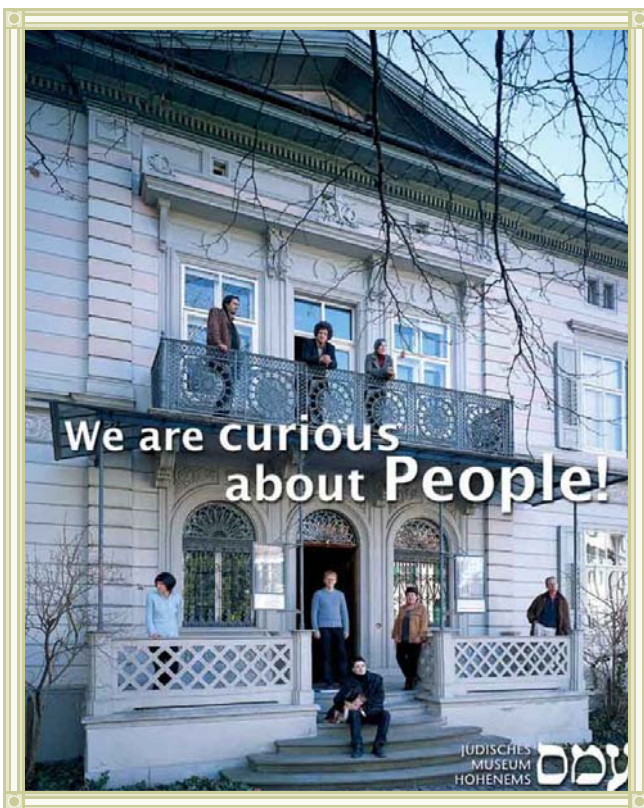
We're on the Web!

<http://www.jm-hohenems.at>

The Jewish Museum of Hohenems, as a regional museum, remembers the rural Jewish community of Hohenems and its various contributions to the development of Vorarlberg and the surrounding regions. It confronts contemporary questions of Jewish life and culture in

Europe, the diaspora and Israel - questions of the future of Europe between migration and tradition. The museum also deals with the end of the community of Hohenems, the regional Nazi history, the expulsion or deportation of the last members of the community, anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. Along with these fragmented lines of regional and global history, it is also devoted to the people and their histories and maintains a relationship to the descendants of Jewish families in Hohenems around the world.

The permanent exhibition in the Heimann-Rosenthal Villa, which was built in 1864, documents the history of the Jewish community in Hohenems which existed for over three centuries until its destruction during the era of the Nazi regime. The museum offers annually changing exhibitions and an extensive program of events. ❖



### JOIN US . . .

BECOME A MEMBER AND LET'S KEEP *IN TOUCH*!



During the meeting of the descendants of Jewish families from Hohenems in 1998, the idea to found the American Friends of the Jewish Museum Hohenems, Inc. emerged. The association unites the numerous descendants living in America and supports the Jewish Museum

of Hohenems in various ways. Annual dues are \$25. We hope to count on you to join today. Dues can be sent to:  
**PO Box 237**

**Moorestown, NJ 08057-0237**

Any additional contribution you could make would be very

much appreciated and thus enable the American Friends to continue to make important contributions to the Museum at Hohenems as well as to other endeavors designed to contribute to knowledge of the Hohenems Jewish Community as it was when our ancestors lived there. ❖