

# In Touch

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE AMERICAN FRIENDS OF THE  
JEWISH MUSEUM HOHENEMS, INC.

ISSN: 1559-4866 • November 2017



[www.afjmh.org](http://www.afjmh.org)

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## Letter from the President

TIMOTHY L. HANFORD

It is my pleasure to share this special year-end newsletter with you. As you will see from the articles in the newsletter, this has been a remarkable year for the Jewish Museum Hohenems.

2017 is the 400th anniversary of Jewish presence in Hohenems, commemorated in part by the Descendants Reunion July 27-30. I was privileged to join some 200 Hohenems descendants, including 30 Hirschfeld cousins, this summer in Hohenems to see old friends, make new ones, and most importantly, learn more about my heritage. Director Hanno Loewy and the museum staff deserve special thanks for the tireless efforts they put in to make the Reunion such a memorable event.

The Reunion photos in this issue and also on the Museum's website [http://www.jm-hohenems.at/static/uploads/2016/05/A\\_Bilderserie-Reunion-2017.pdf](http://www.jm-hohenems.at/static/uploads/2016/05/A_Bilderserie-Reunion-2017.pdf) bring back many happy memories. Regardless of whether you attended the Reunion, I urge you to check them out. You may also enjoy the ORF documentary on the reunion, even if you don't speak German. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L\\_6JPh7DrFM&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L_6JPh7DrFM&feature=youtu.be)

As you may know, the Museum continues to work on researching and detailing the history and genealogy of the Hohenems Jewish families. Please see the Hohenems Genealogy database here: <http://www.hohenemsgenealogie.at/en/>. One Hohenems descendant, the noted New York architect Ely Jacques Kahn, was the subject of a documentary filmed in part during this year's reunion. The Museum is also interested in acquiring and preserving documents and materials relating to life in Hohenems. In that spirit, I gave the Museum an eBay-found coin issued in 1617 by Markus Sittikus von Hohenems—a coin that may have passed through the hands of our ancestors the year they arrived in Hohenems.



The mission of the AFJMH is to provide additional financial support for the Jewish Museum Hohenems. The AFJMH also provides financial assistance for maintaining the Hohenems Jewish Cemetery. Your support for the museum's exhibitions, its publications, its research, and its events (including this year's reunion) is absolutely indispensable. Accordingly, I encourage you to continue your financial support. I would also urge you to consider making a special 400th anniversary contribution.

The AFJMH is proud to have so many American Hohenems descendants as members. But we would be pleased to welcome more! Please send a note to your siblings and cousins and urge them to take a look at the AFJMH website ([www.AFJMH.org](http://www.AFJMH.org)) and consider joining AFJMH.

**I also want to take this opportunity to extend our best wishes to all for another productive year in 2018. Your past generosity to AFJMH is deeply appreciated.**

Sincerely,  
Tim Hanford  
President



# News from the Museum

DR. HANNO LOEWY

We all have enjoyed a great year at the Museum. The Reunion, in July, celebrated the 400th anniversary of the beginning of Jewish history in Hohenems. Our exhibition “The Female Side of God” brought more visitors to the Museum than any other exhibition in the past. So this year we will have about 19,000 visitors, an incredible development, and a great challenge for our team and the small villa that is waiting for all these guests.



Female Side of God Exhibit

In the beginning of 2018 we will produce a newspaper documenting not only the Reunion but also some of the family histories that were so vividly presented during the fabulous days in July. We hope you will support us as you did so generously before. Our strength is our friends.

## 400 years of Jews in Hohenems

On July 1st 1617, 12 Jewish families were allowed to settle in Hohenems. The Letter of Protection, which was entered into on that date, marked the beginning of Jewish history in Hohenems. The Museum celebrated this anniversary with a big event on July 2, 2017 and, in the spring, a small exhibition, displaying vital documents relating to the Letter of Protection. The negotiations about the conditions of the settlement started in March 1617, when Wolf of Langenargen, a protected Jew from the region north of Lake Constance, wrote a letter to Count Caspar. In the beginning of April, the Letter of Protection was drafted. Later letters of protection were issued before the Hohenems countship reverted to the Habsburg emperors in 1758. The exhibition's display of the original Letter of Protection and some of the later letters highlighted the complexity of interests and negotiations between the Jewish community and the governing authorities.

On July 2nd 2017 Professor Dan Diner (Berlin/Jerusalem) spoke in the overcrowded “Rittersaal” in the Hohenems Palace, contextualizing the Hohenems Jewish story in the

framework of European history. A remarkable speech, in German, documented on the you tube channel of the museum (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-CTECuYnZ-E>). Countertenor Michele Andaló, the ensemble “La Dafna” and the vocalists “Animantica” performed Jewish baroque music from Italy, composed by Salomone Rossi, the great predecessor of Salomon Sulzer.

Just in time for the anniversary, the Museum produced a newspaper presenting reports from 400 years of history of Hohenems and its Diaspora: “Old Liberties of Hohenems”. There are still copies to order (coverage of postal costs required). A second newspaper will be published in the beginning of 2018, covering the Reunion and some of the family stories.

## Next exhibition:

## Shibboleth!

## On Visible and Invisible Borders

March 18 – October 7, 2018

Curated by Boaz Levin

While we are talking about globalization and international community, new borders, fences and walls are erected all over the world—around states, occupied territories, and gated communities, between public and private spaces, legal and illegal. Some of these borders are permeable and others fatal, some are visible and others reinforced by cultural codes, language tests or biometric methods. Borders decide about life and death, “identity” and “otherness”, belonging and exclusion.

*“The Gileadites captured the fords of the Jordan opposite Ephraim. And it happened when any of the fugitives of Ephraim said, “Let me cross over,” the men of Gilead would say to him, “Are you an Ephraimite?” If he said, “No,” then they would say to him, “Say now, ‘Shibboleth.’” But he said, “Sibboleth,” for he could not pronounce it correctly. Then they seized him and slew him at the fords of the Jordan. Thus there fell at that time 42000 of Ephraim.”*

*Judges 12:6*

Taking the biblical story of the Ephraimite's escape from the victorious tribe of Gilead ending on the banks of the Jordan as its starting point, the Jewish Museum Hohenems has invited international artists, to critically reflect upon borders—just a stone's throw away from the “Old Rhine”, the banks of the river where in 1938 refugees tried to reach Switzerland and dramatic moments that still hover over us today took place.



## News from the Museum *(cont.)*

### Successful traveling exhibitions

Our show “Jukebox. Jewkbox! A Century on Shellac & Vinyl” has been successfully traveling through Europe. After Hohenems, Munich, Frankfurt and London, the show traveled to Warsaw’s great Jewish Museum “Polin” this spring, presenting a separate installation on Polish-Jewish musical culture and music business. Until January 2018, it will be on exhibit in the Jewish Historical Museum of Amsterdam. Then it will travel to the municipal museum of Graz and more venues are envisioned.

Our show on Mikvaoth, of 2010 also is still on the road; this year it was presented in Kissinger in Frankonia.

In 2018, we hope more venues will present “The Female Side of God” exhibition.

### News from the Collections

#### *Yerusha Project*

The Yerusha Project, sponsored by the Rothschild Foundation, which we joined in January 2017 with our project “Documentation of Jewish Life in Western Austria,” has allowed us to commit until 2019 a team of two historians and one translator to research, collect and interpret data from archives in Austria, Italy, Liechtenstein and Switzerland.

#### *Brunner Collection*

In late March 2017, the sad news about the passing of Nurit Brunner (1940-2017), wife of Carlo Alberto Brunner (1933-2014) and mother of Nili ben Yossef, Michal and Ariel Brunner reached the staff of the Jewish Museum. The siblings reached out to the Museum for advice on how to preserve the library and collection of precious memorabilia, papers, photographs and paintings their father had gathered over decades. This collection is a telling memoir of the story of the Brunner family in Trieste from the 19th century until today and will help us in the future, to make an old dream come true: an exhibition about “Hohenems at the sea” and the Brunners in Trieste.

It was soon decided that this Brunner Collection should be kept intact and ought to be transferred to the Museum as a permanent loan. With the generous support from the Ars Rhenia Foundation in Liechtenstein and the cultural department of the State of Vorarlberg, we were able to organize safe transport to Hohenems, where the collection now will be catalogued and researched, and serve as a starting point for projects to come.

### *Other Activities*

In 2017, the archive staff undertook further archival and curatorial training. While Raphael Einetter joined the National Gathering of Archives in Bregenz in early October, Anika Reichwald participated in two curatorial workshops of the Association of European Jewish Museums in Izmir and Venice this year. The Jewish Museum of Hohenems defines itself as a research institution, active in various fields including the on-going research of the genealogy database, and academic publications, such as contributions in handbooks, articles and in-house catalogues. We are also happy to celebrate the successful completion of the 6-year genealogical project about Jewish families from Tyrol—and will now continue to extend the project into South-Tyrol and the remarkable history of Merano.

### News from the Museum Education

The Museum’s education department had to confront a pleasant challenge in 2017. More visitors than ever before came to participate in guided tours and workshops of the museum. The exhibition “The Female Side of God” attracted not only adult groups but also many school classes.

Special attention was given to another subject at the core of the Museum’s interests: the refugee trails along the “Old Rhine” and the border to Switzerland (see article in this newsletter). In the spring, we welcomed a study group organized by Yad Vashem for teachers from the Alpine countries, concentrating this year on the subject of persecution, refugees and helpers.

Together with an expert in drama pedagogy, we developed new workshop formats for youth and adult groups designed to explore the history and presence of refugee experiences. And together with the Swiss organization for inter-religious dialogue—and as their only partner abroad—we developed special group excursion programs for Swiss schools and adult education that are now advertised in Switzerland.

And finally we were able to customize our children’s program for tours in the Jewish quarter, so that individual visitors and families, could book our “rucksack”-kit for their own discovery of Jewish history. Tours in the Jewish Quarter for individual visitors and tourists will be further developed by means of a new App, offered together with the State of Vorarlberg and the marketing office of the city of Hohenems in 2018.

And in 2018, we are also preparing collaborative training projects for young apprentices at Collini, today one of

*Continued on Page 10*

# Four Days to Remember, The Reunion 2017

DR. HANNO LOEWY

The white table was waiting while the crowd made its way to the Schlossplatz for the group photo. The weather, monitored nervously over the last week, proved to be on our side. A glorious day welcomed the “lunch with locals,” the climax of our four day reunion of descendants. The Reunion was the third of its kind, after 1998 and 2008. And we were wondering what we could offer that would last-be worthy of remembrance after two previously memorable events. In the end we had enjoyed four days that produced memories all along, every minute.

From the tours to the old Rhine on the paths taken by refugees who crossed the threshold between death and life 79 years ago, to the joyful variations of Salomon Sulzer’s music performed by his great-great-great-grandson Danny Blaker from Melbourne. From the sometimes witty, sometimes poignant (and mostly both) speeches during the evening events to the excursions on the lake, or to St. Gallen and the countryside, this was not only a journey into the past of family memories but an exploration of the diverse dimensions of the present, some pleasant and some scary.

All of this was articulated without taboos (including Philip Jaffé-Brunner’s discussion of encounters with Palestinian refugees and their hardships when visiting their hometowns – or the troublesome experiences with the newly elected United States President that Christopher Brauchli-Reichenbach articulated), and the mood of these days was relaxed, full of energy and joy. The 180 descendants, literally from all regions of the world, enjoyed being together, transcending borders between religions, nations and languages, forming a truly cosmopolitan community that you will not easily find anywhere else. Many were meeting their relatives for the first time, exchanging experiences, family legends, names and other genealogical bits and pieces.

Did I ever encounter a group of people with such a sense of irony and so much to tell and to discuss with each other? Does that necessarily mean that there was a gap between insiders and outsiders? Astoundingly the answer was: no! Helpers and friends from our Association, staff members of the Museum, and locals from the town joined the descendants, so nobody stood apart. For the first time, a large number of descendants, members of the Hirschfeld family who still live in Vorarlberg, took part. Having Jewish ancestors was not always something to talk about, or even to boast about, after all that had been done to Jews in the 20th century. Now, for the first time this was no longer a barrier to talking about family memories in the open and with relatives, coming from the U.S. and Guatemala, Great Britain and elsewhere.

While many of the participants were here for the first time, there were others who had already become regulars. One of them is Jessica Piper-Rosenthal, who spent her summer 2016 in Hohenems and at the Museum as the first intern sponsored by the American Friends. We hope there will be more coming.

Her thoughts about community, expressed in her opening speech in the Palace, still resonate in my heart: “Community is something that people choose to create, something that each and every one of us here tonight has chosen to be a part of. (...) Let us be open to community, even when it doesn’t look or speak like us.”

The Reunion 2017 was remarkable for all those who came for it from more or less distant places – but it also opened a new chapter in the presence of memory in Hohenems itself. We are grateful for that, and for all the true and moving support we receive from you, the Friends of the Jewish Museum Hohenems. Come again soon!

## The Events

SUSAN ROSENTHAL SHIMER

For many of us, the big event of 2017 was the Reunion of the Descendants of Jewish Families of Hohenems, held from July 27 to July 30. This issue of the newsletter of the American Friends is a celebration of that event for those who attended (over 180 of us) and also a summary for those who could not. There are over 3000 living descendants known to the Museum now. As evidenced by the photographs included here and by the reports of the events, it was a very special Reunion.

Why this year?

400 years ago, twelve Jews were invited to live in Hohenems under a Writ of Protection issued by the Count of Hohenems. Rabbi Taenzler, in his monumental book *Die Geschichte der Juden in Hohenems*, reported that we know the names of those first Jewish residents, but cannot be sure of their family names. No matter.

By the early 18th century a number of our ancestors were living in

Hohenems and more were to come and stay- before many of our ancestors dispersed to lands far and wide—to all continents—except Antarctica. We have tried to tell their stories in these newsletters, but the Reunion told it better. There was so much on offer, we could not partake in everything, but everyone took advantage of many of the offerings, and we all learned about Hohenems, and our forbearers, and we met other family members.



## The Events (cont.)

From the very first, we had to make choices—a tour of the Palace of Hohenems, the residence of the Counts for many centuries, still occupied by the current Count; guided by the current Count, we saw grand rooms, marvelous paintings and furnishings, all of which gave a sense of the times when our ancestors had lived in Hohenems. Some of us chose to take a hike to the ruins of the castle of Ems, lying above the city with wonderful views of Hohenems and the old and new Rhine. Still others chose a tour of the escape routes to the Swiss border during the Nazi era. As the article, “To the Border” in this newsletter lays out; Hohenems was a place from which many Jews tried to escape into Switzerland. We saw how that was possible, via only a narrow crossing of the old Rhine, that is if no border guards blocked the route and they often did. Unfortunately, not all the Jewish residents of Hohenems could escape after the Anschluss, and, as we walked in the Jewish Quarter, we could see the Stoppelsteins at the former residences of the nine who remained and were murdered in the Holocaust. The report about these memorial stones placed in 2014 at the behest of the former mayor Herr Amann appeared in *Int Touch*, Vol. 16, May 2015.

After these activities we all came together for a welcoming ceremony. Moderated by Jutta Berger, head of the Museum Association (the Verein), Luisa Jaffé-Brunner, Chair of the Reunion Committee and Dr. Hanno Loewy, Director of the Museum, we were greeted by Mag. Karlheinz Rüdiss, Deputy Governor of the State of Vorarlberg, Markus Klien of the City Council of Hohenems, who delivered the remarks of Mayor Dieter Egger who could not attend because of a very significant last minute health crisis in his family, and Tal Yehiely, deputy chairman of the Jewish Community Tirol and Vorarlberg. Hanno Loewy delivered the welcome address of Alexander Van der Bellen, President of the Republic of Austria and a member of the Verein, who was unable to attend. Then we heard speeches by Philip Jaffé-Brunner and Jessica Piper-Rosenthal, both of which are included in this issue, and by Tim Hanford-Hirschfeld, President of the American Friends. The talks were interspersed with music by Salomon Sulzer, arranged and performed by his descendant Danny Blaker, who lives in Melbourne, Australia—beautiful music to all of our ears—and a reminder that our ancestors remain part of us.



Count of Hohenems in Palace Courtyard  
©Tim Hanford



Palace Interior ©Tim Hanford



Palace Interior ©Tim Hanford



Magistrat Karlheinz Rüdiss  
©C R Walser



Markus Klien ©CR Walser



Tal Yehiely ©CR Walser



Tim Hanford ©CR Walser



Danny Blaker ©CR Walser



Opening Ceremony ©CR Walser



Speakers at Opening ©Johannes Neumayer



Opening Ceremony—Hanno Loewy, Luisa Jaffé, Jutta Berger  
©CR Walser



We retreated to several rooms in the Palace where wonderful and ample food was served. But we could not go home—we had one more treat—a musical performance by the Gesangsverein Hohenems, the Hohenems male choir, which began in the 19th century as the Synagogue Choir.

The mornings of July 28 and July 29 began with guided tours of the Jewish Museum and the Jewish Quarter. Those who had previously been to Hohenems could see the beautiful restoration work that has been undertaken in the Jewish Quarter. Seeing it while listening to narratives by the Museum staff was fascinating. A short report about the renovation is included in the December 2016 issue of *InTouch*

Then to the cemetery—we searched for our ancestors and found cousins of whom we had known nothing, until

we searched for the same gravestones. Then there was a Kaddish with Tovia Ben Chorin, the Rabbi of St. Gallen. After lunch we had a lovely boat trip on Lake Constance, a/k/a Bodensee. On our return there was a Kiddush at the former Synagogue, again with Rabbi Tovia Ben Chorin and Cantor Marlena Taenzer. Our day ended with family dinners, at which we met relatives previously unknown to us and, of course, old friends—often people we had first met at earlier Reunions.

On July 29, we had the opportunity to take those tours we had missed the previous day. Then we all met at the Emsbach at the Schlossplatz and the group photo reproduced on the last page of this newsletter was taken. In addition separate family photos were also taken.



Hohenems Male Choir ©Tim Hanford



Tour of Jewish Quarter ©CR Walser



Tour of Jewish Quarter ©CR Walser



At the Cemetery ©CR Walser



Searching for Ancestors in Jewish Cemetery  
©CR Walser



Kaddish at Cemetery ©CR Walser



The eldest participant, Jacques Dannhauser, 91 years old and the youngest, River-Kate Kinghorn, with mother, April Kinghorn  
©Helmut Schlatter



Boarding Boat on Lake Constance/Bodensee  
©CR Walser



Kiddush in Salomon Sulzer Hall ©CR Walser



Lunch was quite the event on July 29—locals and descendants— we shared tables and stories. The weather cooperated, as did the city of Hohenems. The streets near the Museum were blocked and long tables were set out. What a lovely way to meet. During that lunch, a bench in the Museum garden was dedicated to Stephan Rollin, the founder of the American Friends. More about that later.

The afternoon offered lectures, workshops and talks. We had the opportunity to hear Family Stories from the Hirschfelds, the Burgauers and the Rosenthals. We could hear about the escape of the Brunners from Vienna. We learned from Peter Reichenbach about events at the Swiss border between March 1938 and March 1939. We could listen to Eva Grabherr talk about her find in a shoebox—letters between family members in Hohenems and Augsburg—letters that tell the difference between life in Hohenems and the “big city” of Augsburg. A chapter of her story was published by the American Friends in *InTouch*, Vol. III, Issue 2, May 2002. We learned about

Anti Semitism in Vorarlberg and Jewish Life in Tyrol from Hannes Sulzenbacher and Niko Hofinger.

Ingrid Bertel, who was working on a now completed film about Ely Jacques Kahn, the world-renowned architect, talked about his architecture and his connection to Hohenems. They were recorded and will be available at the Museum. Niko Hofinger gave participants an opportunity to learn about the tools and techniques of genealogy. And of course we had the opportunity to learn more about the cemetery in which so many of our ancestors are buried. The television film *Akte Grüninger* was presented. It focuses on the events in the late summer of 1938, when Paul Grüninger saved the lives of almost 3,600 Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria by pre-dating their visas, so as to enable them to migrate to Switzerland.

Finally came the Gala Dinner at the Löwensaal on Schlossplatz. Music was provided by the local group Bauernfänger. But there were talks too.



Long Table ©CR Walser



Long Table ©Dietmar Walser



Workshop– Hirschfeld Family ©CR Walser



Workshop– The Burgauer Family–  
Understanding Switzerland? ©CR Walser



Workshop– Rosenthal ©CR Walser



Workshop– Events at the Swiss Border March 1938–March 1939  
with Peter Reichenbach ©CR Walser



Brunner Workshop ©CR Walser



Workshop– Anti-semitism in Vorarlberg; Jewish Life in Tyrol  
©CR Walser



Your editor spoke about the formation of the American Friends, its future and the future of this newsletter. Nadia Follman reminded the young descendants that the American Friends sponsored Jessica Piper's internship at the Museum and would welcome applicants for an internship at the Museum for the summer of 2018.

We also heard from Dana Burgauer, Karla Galindo-Barth, Andy Barth, Christopher Brauchli, and Vayide Aydin, a member of the Vorarlberg Parliament. Some of these remarks appear in this newsletter

Finally we saw the video produced by young descendants. We had seen them videoing throughout the events of the past three days and their film gave us a joyful memory and look into the future.

Many of us needed to leave on Sunday, but a number remained and partook in conversations in the morning, and then in the afternoon viewed the current exhibition, *The Female Side of God*, reported in *InTouch*, December 2016. Others took a trip to St Gallen or to the Bregenzerwald, at both of which very special visits had been arranged by the Museum.

I can end by saying only that this was an amazing experience- and I don't want to wait 100 years for another. Thank you Dr. Loewy, thank you to everyone at the Museum for a weekend not to be forgotten.



Nadia Follman-Rosenthal at Gala Dinner ©CR Walser



Gala Dinner, Dana Burgauer ©CR Walser



Gala Dinner- Karla Galindo-Barth and Andy Barth ©CR Walser



Photographers at Work ©CR Walser



Gala Dinner ©Tim Hanford



Gala Dinner ©CR Walser



Outside Löwen Saal before Gala Dinner ©CR Walser



Gala Dinner ©CR Walser





Museum Cafe ©CR Walser



Outside Löwensaal ©CR Walser



Photographers at work ©Helmut Schlatter



Hiking in the Bregenzer Wald ©Helmut Schlatter



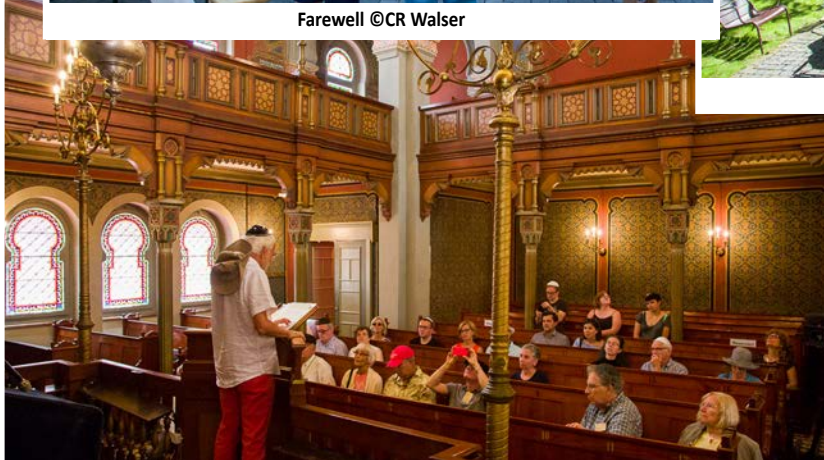
Conversations- Mayor and Mrs. Egger with Dr. Hanno Loewy  
©Wolfgang Presinger



Farewell ©CR Walser



Farewell ©CR Walser



St. Gallen Synagogue ©CR Walser



Dancing with locals at the Farmer's Inn in Bregenzerwald  
©Hanno Loewy



## News from the Museum (cont. from page 3)

Europe's most important and internationally active companies in the field of surface enhancement technology, and the biggest company in Hohenems. Together we will work on hot issues like radicalization and populism – and on the history of migration, using as an example one of the former Jewish houses in Hohenems, a house that became the home of the Collinis in 1900, when this Italian family started their business as knife sharpeners in the town, and later became the home of Turkish immigrants working for the Collini company.

The Jewish Museum is also collaborating with the “World of Children” project of the State of Vorarlberg, developing projects for multi-ethnic classrooms, such as “peer-to-peer” guided tours in the Jewish Museum and the Jewish Quarter.

### European Summer University for Jewish Studies

In July 2017, Hohenems again was bustling with students for one week, when the European Summer University we organize together with the Jewish studies departments in Munich, Basel, Salzburg, Vienna, Zurich and Bamberg concentrated on the subject of “marranism”, converts and “secret” Jewish identities. Next year the motto of the Summer University will be “Power”.

## To the Border

ANGELIKA PURIN

The story the Jewish Museum related on the way from the Museum to the Alter Rhein is the story of the year 1938 after the Anschluss. By that time, communal Jewish life in Hohenems had almost ceased to exist; the Jewish community consisted of only a handful of members. Harry Weil was among the few who still kept Jewish religious life alive. And soon, in July 1938, he decided to escape across the Alter Rhein.

After the Anschluss, Hohenems was evolving into a vital site for tens of thousands of Jewish Austrians. They arrived from the east of Austria, mainly from Vienna. On their flight from the horrors of National Socialism, Hohenems became a possible gateway to liberty; from Hohenems, they hoped to escape to Switzerland.

For several years now, the Jewish Museum has been offering its visitors the opportunity to trace the steps of those refugees and to hear their stories while walking from the Museum to the Alter Rhein and beyond into Switzerland. During the Reunion 2017, many descendants from around the world set out together on an excursion into the countryside and, at the same time, into history.



at the Emsbach ©CR Walser

### The way out- to Vorarlberg

12 March 1938. German troops marched into Austria after the Austrian National Socialists had assumed power the previous night. A large part of the Austrian population cheered the new rulers and looked forward to the “German Reich.” For Austrian Jews, the Anschluss meant the immediate onset of extremely severe repressive measures, humiliations, and expropriations. The Nuremberg Race Laws became applicable in Austria.

In eastern Austria, Vienna had the country's largest Jewish community with over 70,000 individuals. Many of them decided soon after the “Anschluss” to escape National Socialist terror in a western direction. One of them, Paul Pivnik, a young man at the time, wrote:

*“That it would be impossible to remain in Vienna was a done deal in my mind, and I looked for the quickest way to get out, yes. The way was to Vorarlberg.”*  
(Museumstexte, S.19)

Like Paul Pivnik, thousands set out westward in the initial weeks and months following the “Anschluss.” Usually they took the train to Feldkirch and proceeded from there in various ways directly to Switzerland. Initially the first refugees were received with open arms. Until 1 April 1938, between 3000 and 4000 Jewish refugees entered Switzerland legally, despite Switzerland's already difficult restrictions. As early as 1933, the Federal Department of Justice and Police ruled that refugees would no longer be granted permanent residence, work permits, or any financial support. Moreover, Jewish refugees were denied the status of “Political Refugees;” persecution for racial reasons was not recognized. Switzerland



## To the Border (cont.)

considered itself a transit country (at most) for Jewish refugees. In the Federal Council, “Jewification (Verjudung) of Switzerland” and alleged “excessive foreign influence (Überfremdung)” were under discussion.

Then, as of 1 April 1938 Switzerland toughened its entry requirements; a general visa requirement for Austrians was put in place. Simultaneously, Swiss consulates were instructed to restrain themselves in issuing such visas.

In this period, Heinrich Rothmund, was chief of the immigration authorities; a punctilious and diligent civil servant, he was an obvious anti-Semite as a 1939 quote reveals:

*“We have not been fighting for the past twenty years with the means available to the immigration authorities against the increase in foreign influence and particularly against the Jewification of Switzerland only to now get saddled with the emigrants.” (Keller, S.111)*

Nevertheless, Rothmund offered free transit for refugees at the Évian Conference in July 1938. However, the conference failed; ultimately, not only did Switzerland refuse to accept Jewish refugees on a long-term basis but no real willingness could be found anywhere in the world.

### The Alter Rhein

Numerous refugees, without any travel documents, were on the road before the visa requirement of April 1938 became effective. They searched for routes across the border. Due to the nature of its border, Hohenems became a port of call for many. Paul Pivnik wrote:

*“Thus I alighted in Hohenems and looked around ... and then I heard that Jews met in Hohenems, near the inn at the train station, who wanted to reach Switzerland, and I listened to anyone who had failed to get through.” (Museumstexte, S.19)*

The Alter Rhein, which formed the border to Switzerland, was an abandoned river course of the “Neuer Rhein.” Ever since the river regulation and the creation of the “Neuer Rhein” in the 1920s, the Alter Rhein carried very little water and hence constituted a traversable section of the demarcation line. At several points, it was even possible to reach dry-shod the Swiss community of Diepoldsau, located across the Alter Rhein from Hohenems.



The Alter and Neue Rhein ©Böhringer Friedrich

Many refugees were briefly accommodated in various Hohenems inns, “Zur Frohen Aussicht, among others; from there, they set out to the border. The Emsbach, a creek whose course leads from the Hohenems town center through the valley area towards the Alter Rhein (Rhine), led the way.

July 1938 brought the start of a second wave of refugees. In former Austria, Jewish citizens were forbidden to work in commerce and industry. This systematic deprivation of their means of existence forced thousands to try to emigrate and thus head towards Vorarlberg and the Swiss border.

In most cases, this meant an illegal journey, again without any valid travel documents. The Swiss Federal Department of Justice and Police decreed that visas were to be issued only if “it has been clearly determined that they are not for Jews.” The Swiss consul general in Vienna issued visas only after the presentation of an Aryan certificate.

However, people applying for a visa at the Swiss consulate in Bregenz were often in luck. There, Ernest Prodolliet, as vice consul, issued transit visas for Switzerland, frequently without any legal basis, thus becoming a lifesaver for hundreds of individuals. As a result of his activities, he was transferred for disciplinary reasons to Amsterdam in 1939; undeterred, he continued with his lifesaving actions there, as much as he could. Today, Prodolliet is honored as “Righteous Among the Nations” at Yad Vashem.

During that early summer, flight was often encouraged by another side as well, the Nazi SS. At the Hohenems railway station, those fleeing often were taken into custody by SS units and led to a nearby inn. There, the refugees were robbed of their belongings and then, in line with National Socialist expulsion policy, were forced by armed SS men to cross the border; despite that Swiss border authorities were turning these refugees away.

Willy Geber, a young Jew from Vienna wrote in a letter from Switzerland to his relatives in Vienna on 17 August 1938, shortly after his flight:

*“The SS told us that they would now take us to the border... It was already pitch-dark. We were in an open area... He now described us the path we would have to take.”*

After wandering around for a long time with his group in despair, Willy Geber reached a bridge across the Rhein; on the other side of the border, they managed to organize a taxi to St. Gallen where they were able to stay. Thus, they were among the last refugees who got “into the city” and were permitted to remain there. Soon thereafter, refugees were accommodated in camps right along the border; one of these camps was situated in Diepoldsau in an abandoned factory.

## To the Border (cont.)



refugee trails ©CR Walser

“We must admit many.”

That same August 17, as Willy Geber was writing his first letter after his successful escape, a conference of Swiss Police was held. They discussed the situation at the border and possible alternatives for action concerning the ongoing flow of refugees. According to the minutes, St. Gallen Police Commander Paul Grüninger made the case for admitting many refugees:

*“Rejection? What if 50 arrive together? Impossible already from the human point of view. Heart-rending scenes! ... We must admit many.” (Keller, S.49)*

As soon become clear, his plea was in vain; two days later, the border was closed without exception to anyone wishing to cross with an Austrian passport without the required visa from a Swiss consulate.

Effective August 1938, passports in the former Austrian territory were converted into German ones; thus Jewish refugees with valid German passports found themselves at the border trying to enter Switzerland. Ivan Landauer of Hohenems was one of them; literally at the very last moment, he was able to enter Switzerland in August 1938 with a newly issued German passport. Subsequently, in October the German Reich introduced another coercive measure. In the wake of the decree requiring Jews to adopt the additional names “Israel” and “Sara,” the designation of German passports held by Jews was jointly arranged with Swiss authorities to have a large J-stamp imprinted, hence stigmatizing all Jews. Thus, a Swiss demand was met: undesired individuals were now clearly identifiable.

That summer the situation along the border varied. While some border posts were traversable, other border guards were sending refugees back into the German Reich. Yet, the tide of refugees did not stop; many tried to pass the border in the Rhein valley; crossings of the Alter Rhein still was the best chance of succeeding.

On the Swiss side, Police Commander Grüninger made several attempts at organizing legal entries following the complete

closure of the border. However, requests by Grüninger were rejected by the Swiss immigration authorities. At this point, Grüninger began to issue documents for refugees who illegally crossed the border during the fall and winter of 1938 and appeared personally before him; all of those papers showed an entry date before August 19. These backdated and forged documents enabled hundreds of Jews to remain in Switzerland. Ernst Kamm, head of the refugee camp established by Grüninger in Diepoldsau, recounted:

*“The man and his sons are already here and now his wife with the daughters arrive. What should we do? Then Grüninger came to me, possibly bringing along Governing Council Member Keel as well. They had tears in their eyes and said: We have to see what we can do.” (Keller, S.64)*

Very often the decision was in favor of remaining in Switzerland. For this purpose, Grüninger not only forged documents, in several cases he personally made sure that valuables and papers were smuggled across the border.

With the renewed surge in refugees in the wake of the Pogroms in November and December, the escape-aid system around Paul Grüninger reached its limits. In Bern, Rothmund again demanded the complete closure of the border and had the occurrences in the Rhein Valley investigated. In 1939, Police Commander Paul Grüninger was dismissed, and his pension rights were revoked. The following year, he was sentenced to a small financial penalty for breach of official duty. The damage to his reputation had severe consequences: for the rest of his life, he was unable to find permanent employment. His daughter, Ruth Roduner-Grüninger, says that his disappointment was visible, but that he nevertheless kept emphasizing until his death that he would act the same way again. One year before his passing in 1972, Paul Grüninger was recognized as “Righteous Among the Nations” at Yad Vashem. Today, among others, the bridge over the Alter Rhein linking the Swiss and the Austrian customhouses bears his name.

### “...We young guys have risked it.”

Others, though, provided escape aid as well. Smuggling goods, but also people, was nothing new at the Swiss border. The economic situation in the 1920s and 1930s was bleak; many inhabitants of the Rhein Valley were unemployed and lived from smuggling goods. Until well into the 1930s, local border traffic functioned without any documents; people on both sides of the Rhein were connected in numerous ways. Several Swiss farmers, for instance, owned fields in Vorarlberg and cultivated them. Before the Anschluss, people were aided in illegally crossing the border by local smugglers for other reasons. Hundreds of men did so, against the will of their respective governments, to travel to Spain to fight against the Franco regime. The smugglers took them across the border.



## To the Border (cont.)



Refugee trails - at the old Rhine ©CR Walser

Jakob Spirig was a young Swiss man who liked to visit the neighboring country to enjoy cheap beer. On one occasion, he was asked whether he could take a few people with him on his way back. Thus, the young man became an escape aid; in the ensuing months, he smuggled dozens of refugees across the Alter Rhein for a bit of cash. Such illegal flights became increasingly difficult, almost impossible. Both sides of the Rhein border were becoming equipped with weapons; on the German side, an armed soldier was positioned every 100 meters along the Rhein Valley.

Nevertheless, Jakob Spirig made one more attempt at helping people across the border in 1942. Five elderly Jewish women from Berlin without valid documents battled their way as far as Vorarlberg and had been waiting at the border for three weeks for a propitious moment. The night arrived and everything went well up to the border. But when they tried to overcome the barbed wire, the border guard noticed, four of the women were seized and arrested. Only one of them managed to escape, for the other four women arrest ended in deportation and extermination. Spirig was put on trial in Switzerland and sentenced to three months imprisonment.

This is one of the few documented escape attempts across the Swiss border at such a late date; National Socialist policy had shifted from expulsion to annihilation of Jews. Only as late as 1944, did Switzerland recognize Jews as political refugees. Following tenacious negotiations between Recha Sternbuch of St. Gallen and the National Socialist rulers, several trains with ransomed concentration camp inmates reached Switzerland via Vorarlberg in the final year of the war.

### “But I am my own part”

During World War II, people who had managed to reach Switzerland and were allowed to stay usually spent their life in a system of camps or homes. The Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities (SIG) was in charge of caring for the Jewish refugees; therefore, it was obliged to muster considerable funds. Refugees who were able to work were transferred to labor camps. Life in transit camps, such as that in Diepoldsau, was characterized by idleness. The inmates were strictly prohibited

from performing paid work. Otherwise, they faced penalties or even deportation back to Germany. During their entire time in Switzerland, refugees were urged time and again to continue their journey. Residence permits were always issued for only a brief time limit. To obtain an extension, one had to provide evidence of having made serious efforts to continue onward. Ivan Landauer needed to keep proving that he strived to emigrate although he had relatives in Switzerland who supported him. Finally he was used as a cook in the Gordola labor camp in Ticino. However, he suffered from cardiac problems. Ivan Landauer did not live to see the end of the war; he died in Heerbrug at the home of his sister, Jenny Bollag.

As a five-year-old, Heinz Müller escaped in 1938 via Hohenems to Switzerland. Together with his parents, he was accommodated in the Diepoldsau refugee camp:

*“One was so pressured to emigrate- every three months one had to provide evidence of one’s efforts toward emigration and so on. Indeed, the Swiss didn’t make it easy at all for us to remain here. And now I am part of it, of Switzerland, but I am my own part” (Museumstexte, S. 22)*

At over 70 years of age, Heinz Müller described how as a child he sensed the impending danger of deportation hovering over his family:

*“And then I ran to my parents and said, we must pack right away and run away because I have broken something, and since I have broken something, we might get arrested and thrown out.” (Museumstexte, S.22)*

### Accounting for the past in the 1990s

Only in the mid-1990s, more than twenty years after his death, Paul Grüninger was granted political and legal rehabilitation. In 1999, the Independent Commission of Experts Switzerland – Second World War, acknowledged for the first time that Switzerland’s refugee policy before and during World War II must be categorized as inhumane and not compatible with the principles of a state under the rule of law.

The heirs of Paul Grüninger were awarded compensation payments. Today, these funds finance the Paul Grüninger Foundation, which champions active defenders of human rights to whom it regularly awards a prize.

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# The Federal President of the Republic of Austria

ALEXANDER VAN DER BELLEN

Ladies and Gentlemen,

These days Hohenems is looking back at its long and varied Jewish history.

These 400 years of history can be felt at this moment by the presence of you, the descendants of former inhabitants of the city, who have gathered for the Reunion 2017 here in Hohenems.

The reasons why your families have been dispersed all around the world are varied. Many of them left during the 19th century, looking to find better living conditions and opportunities elsewhere, wanting to enjoy religious liberty and individual happiness. As a consequence family ties and networks were forged abroad.

It grieves me to have to include in this enumeration of reasons those that caused your ancestors to leave Hohenems

in the 20th century: the merciless persecution of the Jewish population by the National Socialists' regime of terror, forcing your ancestors to choose between flight and deportation to death camps.

I feel deeply grateful that amongst you, who have come to Hohenems, there are descendants of the victims of this dreadful time. I am convinced that today you will take away with you many positive experiences.

I would like to thank the museum for organizing the event, as well as all supporters, and most importantly, I would like to thank you, the participants from all around the world who have taken part in this solemn event in Hohenems.

I wish you a pleasant time and send you my warmest regards!

Dr. Alexander Van der Bellen

## Remarks of Magistrat Karlheinz Rüdissler at Opening Ceremony

At first a very warm welcome to you, our guests, the descendants of Hohenems Jewish families from all over the world, who have gathered here in this historic building.

Dear esteemed President of the American Friends of the Jewish Museum Hohenems, Timothy L. Hanford, Distinguished Director of the Jewish Museum Hohenems, Dr. Hanno Loewy, Mayor of the city of Hohenems, Dieter Egger, Ladies and Gentlemen!

For the third time after 1998 and 2008, today the descendants of Jewish families of Hohenems from all over the world come together for this special family reunion. This time, there are more than 180 people from different countries from almost all continents, commemorating and celebrating their common heritage. You all remember that the Alpine Rhine Valley with the city of Hohenems was once a center of Jewish living and culture, at a time, when nobody thought about or discussed freedom of faith, tolerance or equal rights. It's this heritage that helps us to remember, what precious achievements those values are.

This year, we have two anniversaries to commemorate. In 1617, 400 years ago, Imperial Count Kaspar of Hohenems issued a writ of protection establishing the legal base for the settlement

of Jewish families and for the establishment of institutions of a Jewish community in Hohenems. He promoted the settlement of a Jewish community in his territory. In an interview, Director Hanno Loewy once described this document as a "good" writ of protection—as it set decent rights and duties for the Jews at that time. The fact, that the writ of protection did not contain an obligation for identification marks indicates a certain security at that time, as did the toleration of a Jewish cemetery. It's also

remarkable that Jewish people, contrary to Christian Protestants for instance, were officially allowed to practice their religion at home.

Today we sadly know that the road from the edge into the middle of society was still vast and full of obstacles, dangerous even and grueling.

The second anniversary marks a decisive milestone to individual rights, not only for the Jewish population: the "Staatsgrundgesetz"—the Basic Law on the General Rights of Nationals—which was enacted 150 years ago. This law was a landmark for individual rights

of citizens, but it also marked the beginning of the dissolution of the so-called "rural Jewish communities", as all citizens were allowed to move within the empire. It also included the right to emigrate—which, commonly known, proved to be important for the Jewish community of Hohenems.



Magistrat Karlheinz Rüdissler © C R Walser



## Remarks of Magistrat Karlheinz Rüdissler at Opening Ceremony (cont.)

In 1866, the Swiss Confederation granted the Jewish people the freedom of movement. The free practice of religion followed only a few years later in Switzerland. Probably we should take this as a historical reminder, as a reminder that even in our times basic rights and equality are never to be taken for granted. We must secure and fight for them, today and in the future.

564 people of Jewish faith lived in Hohenems in 1862; in 1890 the number of people reduced to 118; in 1938 the Jewish community in Hohenems counted only 15 members. Many families had moved to Switzerland.

I point this out especially in regard to the shameful anniversary that we have to remember in 2018, the so-called “Anschluss” of Austria to Nazi-Germany in 1938 with its dreadful consequences. None of the former members of the Jewish community, who had escaped or had already emigrated, ever came back to Hohenems to live here.

For more than 300 years there was a Jewish community in Hohenems. The fact, that for today’s third reunion around 200 people have come to Vorarlberg again reflects very clearly that the

remembrance of Hohenems is still fully present in the minds of the descendants.

I would like to thank all of you for maintaining your close relation to Hohenems and Vorarlberg. Keeping up this bond is a pronounced expression of being connected to the city and region that was called home by many of your ancestors.

It should not be forgotten, however, that these strong bonds are essentially the merit of the continuous efforts and dedication of the Jewish Museum and its association. With these reunions, the Jewish Museum and its association enable dialogue between generations. A special thanks to Hanno Loewy, his team and all the people who helped to organize this reunion, especially Luisa Jaffé and all the members of the Committee of descendants.

I would like to end at this point and simply thank you for coming back to Hohenems and being part of this reunion. I am really delighted to meet up with you here! I hope you’ll spend an inspiring time in Vorarlberg and gather pleasant memories—so that you hopefully wish to come back soon—home to Hohenems.

Thank you for your kind attention!

## Remarks of Mayor Dieter Egger,

DELIVERED BY MARKUS KIEN OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF HOHENEMS, AT OPENING CEREMONY



Markus Kien ©CR Walser

Dear descendants of the former Jewish community of Hohenems—

Welcome to Hohenems, the city with interesting history and cultural diversity! Hohenems has always been a place which looks for its own way between the wider world and its limited borders, between earls and farmers, between the Christian Lane and the Jewish Lane, between the so-called locals and immigrants—immigrants that finally turned into locals themselves.

And then, after 1945, the Jewish quarter “stayed an open wound” and its last inhabitants were scattered over the globe.

In 1938, there were only 16 Jews left who were still living in Hohenems. 9 of them were deported—and murdered. Most of them were well known in the city, their families even for generations. It took a long time to overcome the speechlessness. Many years after these shocking events had taken place the city still remained paralyzed and restless.

The open minds and hearts of the descendants of this community helped to cure this paralyzing status. The community helped the city to heal and find its peace again. The foundation of the Jewish museum was a great and important part of this process, too—even if sometimes the impulses of the museum may be painful they are necessary and precious to fight oblivion. And after all: The revitalization of the old Jewish district lead to the revitalization of the whole city of Hohenems and made it possible to build a new, creative and inspiring city that celebrates its diversity.

This is now the third time we all come together to the so-called “reunion”

here in Hohenems. Not less than 180 descendants have come to Hohenems to discover their common history. We do hope that every one of you, dear descendants, will discover something during this stay which you can take back home—and keep in mind—such as: new knowledge about your own roots, unique experiences, beautiful impressions and unforgettable encounters.

As a sign of reconciliation and as a commitment to the rich Jewish history of this city last year, the square in front of the former synagogue has been officially re-named as “Salomon Sulzer Platz”.

Also this year we want to set another sign – during this reunion - we want to name the space close to the former house of the Brunner family “Brunner Platz.” These public places are visible places of remembrance—and daily encounter.

This is the sign, the gift we will give to you.

Your willingness to share your memories—even the painful ones – with us here in Hohenems is the greatest gift we can imagine. And we assure you, that we will really take great care of this gift. Thank you.

# Excerpts-Memory markers. Why do I come to Hohenems?

PHILIP D. JAFFÉ (BRUNNER)



Philip Jaffé ©CR Walser

It is a real honor to address all the participants at the outset of this 2017 meeting of Hohenems descendants.

I am going to challenge you, each of you, to try to answer what seems like a simple question, but in fact is not. The question is: What is it that drives me to come to Hohenems? What are the motivations for each of you to come to Hohenems? In all honesty, when I started thinking about this question, as a social scientist, as a psychologist, some of the answers were rather negative. In fact, some dredged up quite a bit of cynicism and I will share this with you even if it makes you a little uncomfortable. But in the end, I am glad to report that I found my happy ending, a positive answer to the question, and it is probably one you can adopt and feel good, indeed very good, about coming to Hohenems. Why do I come to Hohenems? The short answer is that, on the one hand, there are cultural social reasons and, on the other hand, there are personal reasons. Let me start with the cultural social reasons, which essentially have to do with Jewishness, the public domain and the market forces of tourism.

## Jewishness has become part of the public domain

Jewishness is the single most important element that binds the descendants to Hohenems. We are all the descendants of Jews who, for the most part, left Hohenems generations ago for a variety of reasons. They migrated to Vienna and other urban centers in the same way most rural populations did during the Industrial Revolution to seek upward social and economic mobility. They migrated across Europe and around the World because it is part of our Jewish genes and a clear advantage to see the world through the global lenses of the Diaspora. Many migrated to distant countries to avoid the stigma of discrimination and anti-Semitism. Some migrated just in time to avoid extermination.

But there is more to it than mere Jewishness that brings us back to Hohenems. It also has a lot to do with the other

inhabitants of Hohenems. Beyond Jews or people of Jewish descent, to a large extent Europe itself is defined by the Holocaust. And as we all know, it took a while, several decades, to confront the trauma of the Shoah—obviously for the survivors, but also for the European nations and population at large. Acceptance of the ugly truth and various types of collective European mourning and Jewish mourning had to take place before descendants could even imagine returning to ancestral and nearly forgotten Jewish communities. For decades after World War II, memory of history and heritage was often marginalized, repressed, or forgotten, also in countries less directly touched by the effects of the Shoah.

Things started to change at the end of the 1990ies<sup>1</sup>: *«Jewish culture - or what passes for Jewish culture, or what is perceived or defined as Jewish culture - became more and more a visible component of the public domain»* (Gruber, 2002)<sup>2</sup> and started to attract tourists, many tourists. Before Hohenems, there were of course notable exceptions of cities that were attracting Jewish visitors much earlier than the 1990ies, not surprisingly they are all situated outside of Germany and Austria. The most famous may be the Jewish Quarter (Josefov) in Prague, the Venice Ghetto, and to some extent the Juderia in Toledo. Beyond these exceptions what we witnessed at the turn of the century was the rise of what is referred to as Jewish heritage tourism. And, to welcome these tourists, ancient Jewish neighborhoods were rediscovered and spruced up, Jewish musea were opened, Jewish festivals popped up, Jewish restaurants with Hebrew-sounding names began serving kosher dishes but also some met the demand by selling ham and cheese sandwiches, Jewish heritage summer schools welcomed young and older pupils alike, souvenir shops with Jewish paraphernalia became a hot business... you name it! But, then again, Jewishness is not the only brand selling nowadays. Think of how some cities market cultural diversity to attract tourists. You visit 'Little Italy' in New York, 'Chinatown' in San Francisco, 'Banglatown' in London, just to cite but a few of Hohenems' somewhat larger competitors!

To some extent, as descendants of the Jews of Hohenems, we are also caught up in this global tourism market because, if we are honest with ourselves, we are somewhat lost in a globalized world. And of course our heritage interests us and many of us end up practicing identity tourism, also known as roots tourism. As descendants of the Jewish families of Hohenems, we are roots tourists who have a personal connection with their heritage beyond a general relationship of collective ancestry. Some of us may also be legacy tourists who travel to engage in genealogical endeavors, to search for information on, or to simply feel connected, to ancestors and ancestral roots.

We are Jewish or of Jewish origin and we visit what reminds us of who we are and where we are from. (Some of us



## Excerpts-Memory markers. Why do I come to Hohenems? (cont.)

have engaged in the practice what is called dark memory tourism, like visiting concentration camps and the Gestapo headquarters in Berlin). We plan our vacations to carry out genealogical tourism and to stay in touch with distant cousins. But overcoming the trauma of the Holocaust, the revival of a European consciousness of Jewishness, and potent market forces are not sufficient to bring us back to Hohenems: we also need personal reasons.

### What are the personal reasons that bring us to visit Hohenems?

As we visit places that are relevant to us, we throw down what cognitive scientists call memory markers. We create special places that fit our memories and help us understand who we are. In Hohenems we have traces of who we are. Indeed, we can go back in time and visit the beautiful cemetery where our ancestors are buried. We create memories, we see traces, our identity is reinforced, we have what a French sociologist by the name of Pierre Nora called “lieux de mémoire”, places of memory, not because we know Hohenems or we have lived here, but because I believe we are working on trying to figure out our origins. Nora has a very nice way of putting it: *“The quest for memory is the search for one’s history”*.<sup>3</sup>

And we feel comfortable with Hohenems because we are in somewhat familiar territory. It is not too ancient. We have tombstones we can look at and touch. We have a museum to visualize and friendly staff to help us understand. Indeed, it could be even dangerous to go too far back in time to search for our identity, our origins. To paraphrase a quote attributed to Friedrich Nietzsche: “If we keep searching for our origins we all become crayfish”. In Hohenems, by looking at the other 180 descendants here tonight at the opening of this 2017 reunion, the vast majority of which do not look like crayfish, we also feel comfortable with who our ancestors were.

Two weeks ago, I was visiting a Palestinian refugee camp in Tyre, Lebanon, not far from the border with Israel. These refugees have been parked in camps for about 70 years. I met

and spoke at length with a camp administrator who dreamt without any hope of seeing the town of Hebron where his family was from. And he told me that a few years ago, driven by this same dream, his adolescent nephew tried to enter Israel and make it to Hebron. He was shot and killed at the border. I was luckier. My sister Luisa and I were much luckier. Our late father Felix Jaffé (Brunner, 1924-2012) brought us to visit Hohenems even if it was still “hostile territory”. Indeed, it was against the wishes of our late grandmother, the late Carolina Jaffé (Brunner, 1895-1981), who in those days, and indeed until her passing, refused any contact with anything that had to do Austria or Germany. My first visit to Hohenems was 47 years ago.

I often quote my friend Nicole Prieur, a French philosopher, who wrote: *«L’origine, c’est davantage l’horizon du devenir que le lieu du souvenir»* (Origin is more the horizon of becoming than the place of memory). Indeed, in returning to Hohenems, that is exactly what we are doing. We are creating continuity; we are looking to the future. This is why this time I am so proud, along with my spouse Aian Jaffé (1979- ), to bring my two sons Jasper (2009- ) and Zachary (2012- ) to Hohenems for the first time. And one day in 30 or 40 years they will meet your descendants at a future gathering in Hohenems. And I could go on and on, way into the future, we will keep meeting in Hohenems, even if Woody Allen famously once said “Infinity is a very long time, especially towards the end”.

1 I would like to acknowledge the very pertinent contribution to my thinking of the Master’s thesis in Tourism studies of Olivia Sandri (2013). *Histoire, mémoire, patrimoine, deuil : la touristification des anciens ghettos juifs de Rome et de Venise*. Institut universitaire Kurt Bösch, Sion, Switzerland.

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3 Nora, P. (1989). *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire*. In *Representations*, n° 26, 7-24.



The Jaffé Family ©CR Walser

# Remarks

JESSICA PIPER-ROSENTHAL AT OPENING CEREMONY



Jessica Piper-Rosenthal ©CR Walser

Guten Abend! Mein Name ist Jessica. Ich bin Zwanzig Jahre alt. Ich komme aus der USA. Das ist alles deutsch dass ich sprechen kann. It is my pleasure to be here with all of you tonight. I want to thank Hanno Loewy and Luisa Jaffe-Brunner for inviting me to speak. I also want to extend a very large thank you to all of the wonderful people who worked tirelessly for many months to make this reunion possible. If you didn't catch my poorly pronounced German, my name is Jessica, I am American, and I am twenty years old, which means I will be reading notes off my phone because I'm nervous and this is how we do things in my generation.

My first time in Hohenems came at the age of 11, at the 2008 descendants' reunion. I wish I could say that it was a profound, moving experience for me, but if I am honest, my strongest memory from 2008 is finding an abnormally large spider during our visit to the cemetery.

Childhood memories are funny that way. When I was in kindergarten, my grandmother told me the story of how she left Austria at age 3 to come to the United States. I remember her telling me how she was one of the only people on the boat who avoided becoming seasick, and so she celebrated her fully functioning digestive system by eating an inordinate number of olives one night. I was just a child, so she de-emphasized the reasons why our family couldn't stay in Austria in 1940. To my young mind, she might as well have left Austria because of an olive shortage.

I've grown up a bit since then. I now know that my family was among the millions of people forcibly displaced during one of the worst ethnic cleansings in human history. I learned that it took them three tries to get an American visa—the United States wasn't exactly welcoming to immigrants, even then. I learned that they stayed with another family of Hohenems descendants—the Brunners—in Trieste in Northern Italy before catching the boat to America. I learned how my great

grandfather taught himself English by going to the movie theater and watching the same films over and over again, and my family gave up speaking German almost entirely.

Coming back to Hohenems is a bit of a cultural shock for me. I worked for a few months last summer as an intern at the Jewish museum. Although I might look Austrian or Jewish, my religious knowledge is limited to lighting a menorah and eating matzos when I was a kid. While I can stand in the entryway of the museum, in a house that once belonged to my family, I can't speak with most of the people who walk by.

In some ways, it is easy for me to feel like an outsider here, but my time in Hohenems also forces me to question what an outsider even means. We can walk down to the Alte Rhein and see where Jewish refugees tried to escape to Switzerland, and on our way we'll pass one of the shelters where Austria now houses refugees from the Middle East. We can talk about a Hohenems Diaspora that is spread across the world, yet I learned last summer that another Hohenems descendant attended my same university, just a few years ahead of me, and I got an email on Tuesday from a descendant who lives in my hometown. While my grasp of the German language reveals that I am an outsider in Austria, every individual I have met in this country has welcomed me with open arms.

We live in a world that is constantly moving and changing. The story of Hohenems is one of migration and transformation. From the original 12 Jewish families who settled in the town centuries ago, to their descendants, some of whom moved across Europe and some of whom stayed, to the gradual dissipation of the Jewish community in response to changing political and social dynamics, to the horrific deportation of the remaining Jews during the Second World War, to postwar resettlement and continuing with the various religious and ethnic minorities who have moved here since, the community in Hohenems has often been one of circumstance.

But despite this sometimes chaotic history, the community I have found in Hohenems is not merely the product of chance. This community is intentional—it is not something any of us are owed by virtue of our birth, or our family, or our religious or national origin. Community is something that people choose to create, something that each and every one of us here tonight has chosen to be a part of. We create community when we fly across oceans to reunite with long-lost relatives, and when we sit down with our grandparents and ask them to tell us about our family history. We create community when we share our memories and when we open our homes, our hearts and our minds to people who seem different from us.

So as we move forward with this weekend and with our futures—both together and apart—let us remember the lessons from Hohenems, and let us be open to community, even when it doesn't look or speak like us.

Thank you. Danke schoen. Goodnight.



# Speech by Claude Rollin at Dedication of Bench Honoring Stephan Rollin



Dedication of Bench to Stephan Rollin; Claude Rollin speaking ©CR Walser

Hello. My name is Claude Rollin (from the Rosenthal family) and I want to first thank everyone for being here today to dedicate this absolutely gorgeous bench in honor of my father, Stephan Rollin (Rosenthal). I am delighted to be here myself to say a few words on behalf of my family.

More than a year ago, we were thinking about how my family might contribute, in a meaningful way, to this reunion and also to continue the legacy of my father, Stephan Rollin (Rosenthal).

For those who don't know, my father was one of the earliest supporters of the Museum, and the founder and first President of the American Friends of the Jewish Museum Hohenems, a non-profit organization set-up in the United States to support the Museum.

So we came up with a plan to create a bench in honor of my father and thought it would be wonderful if we could place it here, in the garden of the Villa Heimann-Rosenthal, which is our ancestral home in Hohenems. My mother, Renee, supported the project and made a generous donation from our family charitable foundation, which provided funding for the bench and also funds to cover some of the costs of the reunion.

My sister, Nadia, gets credit for first contacting Hanno and asking if it would be possible to create an appropriate memorial to my father in the form of a bench and place it here in the garden of the Museum.

Hanno immediately and enthusiastically supported the idea, and ultimately made all of the arrangements, including coordinating many details involved in the design, construction and transport of the bench to this location.

And what a great job he did on the details. Isn't this bench absolutely beautiful? And I am not sure that we could have found a more beautiful location for the bench, here in

this magnificent garden, where everyone can just sit and contemplate history, the future or just appreciate all that nature has to offer.

Hanno—we can't thank you enough for all of your hard work in making our dream a reality. This is, indeed, a very fitting tribute to my father, who loved this Museum and eagerly supported many of its projects over the years.

For those of you who don't know our family's connection to Hohenems: My father was the son of Paul Rosenthal, who was born in 1891 in Hohenems, and the grandson of Arnold and Ottilie Rosenthal, who lived in the house that is now the Museum.

While my father grew up in Vienna, not Hohenems, he established a strong connection with the Museum soon after discovering it in the early 1990s, while on a ski trip to Austria. He visited the Museum a number of times in the early years and developed friendships with other early supporters of the Museum, including Uri Taenzer, Felix Jaffe, Kurt Bollag and Sue Shimer.

My father supported many projects of the Museum over the years, was an active participant in the first descendants' reunion in 1998, and encouraged all of our family members to participate in the Museum's activities.

In short, the Museum was very important to him and he was passionate about supporting all of the Museum's activities. Therefore, I can tell you that I am thrilled, and my family is thrilled, to dedicate this absolutely gorgeous bench, which is in this perfect location, to my late father, Stephan Herbert Rosenthal.

Thank you.

# Excerpts from Remarks

BY SUSAN ROSENTHAL SHIMER AT GALA DINNER



Susan Rosenthal Shimer at Gala Dinner ©CR Walser

A visit to Hohenems is always a great experience for me and this time is even more special. We who are gathered here are the descendants of the Jewish people who lived in Hohenems in times long past. Many of us are cousins, and many of us lost touch with one another long ago.

I first came to Hohenems for the 1998 Reunion—to find the Brunners, a family who had played an extremely important role in my life. By early 1940, my parents, with whom I lived in Vienna, had managed to secure a visa to the United States and we had boat tickets for the voyage from Trieste. But as I learned recently when reviewing old correspondence, we suddenly needed to leave Vienna without delay, hence arriving in Trieste a week before our boat's departure. And we had no money— we could not take any with us. My father sent a telegram to the Brunners, the Brunners who were, like me, descended from Philipp and Regina Rosenthal— my father's father and the Brunners of Trieste were first cousins. We were welcomed and cared for in Trieste—very well cared for, I should add. I had a memorable third birthday celebration at their townhouse. I wanted to meet the descendants of those wonderful people, and so I came to Hohenems. There I met a number of Brunners, and very importantly to me, Helen Brunner. After her return home, she found and sent me a copy of her grandmother's calendar noting our visit, and we have stayed in touch over the past 19 years—we visited her in Trieste and she came to New York. In 1998, I also met a number of other people, cousins, who also have had a significant role in my life since that 1998 Reunion.

The Museum has created these opportunities for us to meet and stay in touch. Who are we? The Museum's database shows over 3000 living descendants of the Jewish families of Hohenems. Obviously not all could make the visit here at this time. But that does not mean that we cannot try to stay in touch. The Museum, created through the vision of a number of local people, opened in 1991 and has given us this opportunity, even though very few of us remain nearby

in Austria and Switzerland. We live in every continent—excepting Antarctica—in Canada, Mexico, Guatemala, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, Great Britain, Ireland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, France, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Liechtenstein, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Sweden, Israel, Kenya, South Africa, Australia, and China.

At the behest of the Museum, and with the urging of Stefan Rollin, a Rosenthal descendant, Kurt Bollag, a Landauer descendant, and Felix Jaffe, a Brunner descendant, and also a Rosenthal, who had become involved with the Museum in its first days, a decision was made to hold a Reunion of Descendants in 1998.

After that first Reunion, Stefan thought that those living in the Americas should remain in contact, learn more about their connections to Hohenems and, of course, help the Museum. For that purpose, he worked with Uri Taenzer, a grandson of Rabbi Aaron Taenzer, to form the American Friends of the Jewish Museum Hohenems. To keep in touch, he suggested that we circulate a newsletter. I have edited it in most years since that time. I want to thank Nicole Angiel—a Brunner—who undertook the job for the time I did not.

It has been a fascinating experience, reviewing the reports from the Museum and learning the stories of so many descendants. If I would remind you of all of these stories, we would be here until tomorrow. Let me only touch on three. (1) The section of the doctoral dissertation of Dr. Eva Grabherr, our first Museum Director, that we published that tells the story of differences between life in Hohenems and Augsburg towards the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, all based on letters hidden in the walls of the Löwenberg house here in Hohenems. (2) Clint Brown's story of his grandfather, Wilhelm Mendelsohn, who left Hohenems to avoid the Austrian draft and then volunteered in the American Civil War. Incidentally, we learned from another article that Leopold Burgauer also served in that Civil War and now at the Reunion I learned that a Bernheimer served on the other side. (3) The story by Brunner descendant, Sister Hedwig, about her life from the time she was a Kinder transport child until she became a nun, and the life of her parents in Vienna during the Nazi years. In her later years, Sister Hedwig worked tirelessly for better Jewish-Christian relationships, as we reported in her obituary.

Unfortunately, we don't live forever— so we have published other obituaries of descendants. And we have also published other family stories: stories about other Brunners, and Rabbi Taenzer, stories about the Rosenthals and stories about the Uffenheimers, Bretttauers, Burgauers and Hirshfelds. Since there are over 3000 of us, I know there are more stories. We should share these and I believe the newsletter of the American Friends is a great avenue, whether you live in the United States or elsewhere. Think about your family story, write to our new editor, and let us all learn from it.



# Excerpts of Remarks

DELIVERED BY CHRISTOPHER BRAUCHLI -REICHENBACH AT GALA DINNER



Christopher Brauchli ©Markus Feurstein

This is a wonderful gathering of a multitude of descendants from different families but having a common ancestry and we all owe a debt of gratitude to Hanno Loewy and the entire museum staff and volunteers for their monumental efforts in organizing this gathering.

Museum and other visits are reminders of the horrors of the past century that affected ancestors of those gathered here today. And those horrors must never be forgotten. .

But as we reflect on events of the past, it is impossible not to consider events of the present and the depressing human conditions and attitudes that exist today. When we were in

Prague last week we visited the National Museum and there we visited the exhibition of Ai Weiwei entitled: "The Law of the Journey." In his written introduction to the exhibit he opens with these words: "There's no refugee crisis but only human crisis. In dealing with refugees we've lost our very basic values." As we sit here in Hohenems, the United Nations Refugee Agency reports that 28,300 people a day or 20 people a minute are forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution. In total 65.6 million people around the world have been forced from their homes. Twenty-two million five hundred thousand of them are refugees and more than 11 million are children under age 18. In Syria alone, the United Nations reports there are more than 6 million Syrians displaced within Syria and 4.8 million who are refugees outside of Syria. Almost 500,000 Syrians have been killed in the conflict in that country. If those numbers are not sufficiently depressing and you want to focus on just one other geographical location, you can go to South Sudan where millions are facing famine and thousands have been killed in the ongoing civil war. In his 1988 letter to Olga, Vaclav Havel writes: "The tragedy of modern man is not that he knows less and less about the meaning of his own life but that it bothers him less and less." [And with the present United States leadership] there is no hope that for the foreseeable future that the United States will play a significant role in bringing peace and stability to a world that is sorely in need of them, and of courageous and insightful leadership from the United States.



In front of the Museum ©CR Walser



Salomon Sulzer Platz ©CR Walser



# Remarks

BY VAHIDE AYDIN, MEMBER OF THE REGIONAL PARLIAMENT



Gala Dinner- Vahide Aydin ©CR Walser

I welcome you to "Reunion 2017" in Hohenems. I feel honoured to be able to speak to you today. Before I start I would appreciate, if you could excuse me for my English.

Searching for our roots and coming back to where we are from. Finding or already knowing the reasons, why our family, our ancestors left. Many different feelings come

up. Nostalgia with a drop of sadness, about what our ancestors created and what we left behind.

There are many reasons why people leave their homes behind. There are the ones who need to flee because of war. Then there are the ones who go with the hope of a better life. And then there are the children who didn't even have a say. I was one of those kids. One of those who did not get to decide. I had to go where my family went. Leaving my home behind, but luckily making another here in Austria. As hard it was to leave my roots behind, as hard it was to make this new, foreign country my new home. But with the help of the people who lived here, I felt accepted and it was easier to mentally arrive in this new country. Most of all, my primary school teacher, my friends and my neighbours had a big part in it.

In my opinion, it needs tolerance, acceptance and moral courage for a good arrival and life in a new country. How we

react to the problems of others, of the society and the problems in politics, is of course influencing our future. That is why it is important HOW we solve these problems: do we put the things in front, that divide us or do we try to see, what unites us. With dividing the people, we will create more problems, than rather solving them. With uniting them, I think we have a bigger shot at solving the Problems of our time.

But the most important thing is, how much do we invest in our educational system. I see it as an investment in our future. These kids will grow up to be, the workers, the teachers, the politicians, the leaders, the scientist, so the future of their country. No matter where they were born, or where their parents or grandparents were born. And also, besides of course knowing and speaking the language of the country, education is another key point of integration. The treasures of a nation are not only fossil fuels and resources, which one-day are going to be exhausted, but more than that, people with education. People who can think for themselves. People who are independent. People who know that there are problems more complicated to solve, than some others think. People who are able to question systems and humans, if they see something going south.

Empathy, tolerance, moral courage, these words each of us should never forget and furthermore live by them. As long as we respect each other in this way, the future of the next generation is going to be peaceful and worth living. If we all take these words for granted and live by them, then there is nothing standing in front of all the futures to come.

Freedom is like water and air. Everybody needs it. And everybody should have it.

And with that in mind, I wish you a great event and a pleasant stay in Hohenems.



The Guides in Front of the Museum ©CR Walser





The Brunners ©CR Walser



The Dannhausers ©Helmut Schlatter



The Hirschfelds ©CR Walser



The Reichenbachs ©Helmut Schlatter



The Landauers ©Helmut Schlatter



The Rosenthals ©CR Walser



The Sulzers ©CR Walser



The Taenzers ©CR Walser





## New Editor

I want to thank everyone who has helped me in the preparation of this Newsletter through the years, particularly **Nicole Angiel**.

As I have previously stated, it is time for someone else to take over. Our next editor will be **Jennifer Shimer Piper-Rosenthal**. Jennifer has volunteered to serve as editor of In Touch commencing with the first issue of 2018. She is a descendant of Philipp Rosenthal and Regina (nee Bernheimer) Rosenthal, and also a descendant of Joseph Rosenthal and Clara (nee Löwenberg) Rosenthal. A graduate of Grinnell College, she holds a Masters degree from the University of Maryland. Jennifer lives in Louisville, Colorado and is an administrator in the Boulder Valley School District. Together with her husband, she has attended two Reunions in Hohenems, with her three children, one of whom, Jessica Piper, was the intern at the Museum, supported by the American Friends in 2016.

She welcomes your input and your articles. Please contact Jennifer at [jennsp500@gmail.com](mailto:jennsp500@gmail.com)

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Your past donations have been used to support the Museum's Home, its Library, its Archives, its Website, the Genealogy Database, its Jubilee Brochure, Exhibitions, such as Jerusalem and the First Europeans, an American Friends Intern to work at the museum, and the reunions, as well, of course, this Newsletter, which is available at the Museum .