

The Stolpersteine

“A person is only forgotten when his or her name is forgotten.”

Gunter Demnig, the artist of the Stolpersteine, cites this quote on the project's [homepage](#). In 1996 he began a symbolic art project laying “commemorative brass plaques” to honor and remember victims of National Socialism. He places these “stumbling stones” in front of the victim’s last known location or an address of choice.



Yesterday, I finally got to see the stones honoring my great grandparents, Paul and Käthe, and my great uncle, Erwin. Their home and life was destroyed during the Second World War, but thanks to the Stolpersteine, a piece of them will always have a home in Hamburg.

For a long time I've imagined standing in front of my great grandparent's Hamburg home. I pictured myself walking down the streets of their neighborhood, on the same

route my great grandfather Paul walked to his hospital. I would enter the old historic hospital and take a stroll down its long somber halls, wave hello to the nurses and tell them my story.



Yesterday, Elizabeth, her mother and daughter, the Stolpersteine community and the people of Hamburg welcomed us Bonheims “home” with open arms. Television reporters, newspaper photographers, biographers and community members greeted us with delight and enthusiasm in the place where my family once lived. We were treated like celebrities, taping interviews, answering questions and receiving any information that was available to share. Even local people from neighboring houses came out to share their respect and admiration for the three Stolpersteine stones that now held a place in front of their homes.





After the Stolpersteine ceremony, Elizabeth and her mother accompanied us to what was once the “Freemason Hospital of Hamburg.” Dr. Hans-Jürgen Wilhelm invited us in to what has now become a newly renovated assisted living, senior citizen home. We were given a VIP tour of this facility, which is where my grandfather worked alongside his father prior to the war. We were presented with a mouthwatering

spread of hors d'oeuvres, coffee and refreshments for us to enjoy while discussing the history and success of the facility. This home for the elderly was exceptionally upbeat, bright and cheery. The halls were decorated with humorous photos of the residents making funny faces, drinking wine and playing pool with friends. It was obvious to me, that the staff made every effort to provide a caring and inviting atmosphere. I know that my grandfather and great grandfather would have been pleased that this building was being used to do good things for the people of Hamburg.





I was not sure how this experience would affect me. Would I be overwhelmed with emotions? Would I break down in front of the cameras? My reaction took me by surprise. I couldn't hide the grin on my face. After over 70 years, my three family members still had an incredible influence on their beloved city. Their memory was enough to bring all of these people together in one place for such a beautiful day of remembrance.



I have learned more about my family in the past 2 days than I have been able to gather in my 22 years on this earth. I feel like now I have a true sense of these relatives, who they were, where they came from and what they've left behind.



My great grandparent's home was destroyed during the war and a large modern brick apartment building now stands in its place. Their neighborhood is no longer a Jewish quarter of the city and my great grandfather's hospital has been converted into assisted living for the elderly. The glamorous images that I imagined and guarded so carefully in my mind no longer exist, but the memories that have taken their place are infinitely more meaningful