

Buying a house with history - A Stralsund woman reunites the Jewish Blach family

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SUMMARY

Buying a house with history A Stralsund woman reunites the Jewish Blach family When Friederike Fechner and her husband buy the former house of the Jewish merchant family Blach in Stralsund, their descendants are scattered all over the world and have no idea about each other. The musician brings them into contact for the first time. Cellist Friederike Fechner and her husband don't know what to expect when they buy the dilapidated house in the centre of Stralsund. It is not only the lengthy reconstruction of a Hanseatic town house. They also rediscover its history: the history of the Jewish merchant family Blach, who lived in the house until 1938. During her research, Friederike Fechner finds descendants who have lost track of each other. In Amsterdam she meets Gaby Glassman: her mother and stepfather had fled there from Stralsund and survived the war in hiding, her grandparents were deported from Amsterdam and murdered in the concentration camp. Her brother, then eight years old, was betrayed and survived the concentration camp. Inspired by her encounters, Friederike Fechner founded the "Initiative for the Remembrance of Jewish Life in Stralsund". Volunteers are working on a digital memorial book. The aim is to list all the Jewish citizens of the Hanseatic city and their fate.

Speaker



Radio Play Feature Radio Art

The feature

Buying a house with history

A Stralsund woman reunites the Jewish Blach family

Atmo Skype signal, telephone conversation Friederike Fechner, Gaby Glassman.
Signal - Hello! Hello Gabi? I don't see you yet. - Oh. - Can you see me? - I called your house, didn't I? - I called your house, didn't I?

On it Speaker

The study of a musician. A cello by the window, music stands, shelves full of books, the desk packed, just enough space for the laptop. Friederike Fechner tries to get in touch with Gaby Glassman, Stralsund - London.

Atmo Skype signal, telephone conversation Friederike Fechner, Gaby Glassman.
How do we do it then? - Should we zoom in? - Yes!

O-Ton

Gaby Glassman

When she got in touch, I was so excited! And I knew where it came from, I knew it was my mother's feelings that would have been so excited. It was 14 years after her death - my mother never went back to Stralsund. She simply couldn't psychologically, because she suffered too much from anti-Semitism.

Atmo

Telephone conversation Friederike Fechner, Gaby Glassman Q: Did you read the email I sent Tom? Tom Blach? - Yes, yes, and his reply. - That he is ready to talk in London! I was pleased that he replied. -

O-Ton

Gaby Glassman

The whole thing is still like a dream again. You always hear it - or sometimes - that a dream like this happens to everyone else. But now it happened to me!

on it citator

Buying a house with history -

A Stralsund woman reunites the Jewish Blach family.

A feature by Alexa Hennings

Atmo

Cello, Friederike Fechner plays Bach Cello Suite on it

What connects these two women in particular has a long history.

Friederike Fechner, a cellist from Hamburg, has lived with her family in the pre-Pomeranian Hanseatic city on the Baltic Sea since the 1990s. Her way to the music school takes her through

Heilgeiststraße almost every day. Her husband, the ophthalmologist Martin Fechner, also always has to go this way when he goes to his clinic. House No. 89 is one of the last unrenovated houses. In 2012,

Speaker

the Fechners bought the more than 300-year-old Hanseatic town house. In 2014, they were awarded the city's Building Owner's Prize for their particularly successful renovation.

O-Ton

Friederike Fechner

However, this award came with the condition that I research the history of this house. So I went to the city archives and found out that the house was owned by Jews from 1883 to 1934. But the shop, the Jewish leather goods shop, was "allowed" to continue to exist until 1938.

Speaker

Friederike Fechner can identify Friedrich Blach as the last Jewish owner of the house in the files of the Stralsund city archives. He was the son of Julius Blach, who settled in Stralsund as a leather goods dealer in 1883 together with his brother Felix and bought the house at Heilgeiststraße 89. Julius bequeathed it to his son.

O-Ton

Friederike Fechner

But Friedrich Blach moved to Berlin in 1919 and became director of the Charlottenburg Waterworks, losing his position in 1933. I had learned that Friedrich Blach left Germany on the St. Louis in 1937 and fled to New York. So I knew that he had survived. Yes, and then I also learned that this leather goods dealer Julius Blach had six children, four of whose daughters were killed in the Holocaust. And the moment I told this at the award ceremony, I was so moved myself that I decided to find the descendants.

Atmo

Cello

Speaker

Where to start? Birth and marriage and death registers, databases on deportations, on Holocaust victims, on Jewish families in Western Pomerania - all this was new territory for the musician.

O-Ton

Friederike Fechner

Then nothing came for quite a while. Because I didn't know where exactly to start and I also didn't know that they had already changed their name from Blach to Blake. And then one day I had a visit from a friend who is an heiress investigator and works a lot with databases. Just for fun, I asked her: "Can you please enter the name Friedrich Blach? And then the next day I had the e-mail address of Friedrich Blach's grandson - Casey Blake, who is a professor at Columbia University in New York.

Music

Citator

Dear Friederike Fechner, thank you very much for your letter. What a wonderful surprise. Yes, I am the grandson of Friedrich and greatgrandson of Julius Blach. My father Peter Blach (who changed his name to Peter Blake and had a great career as an architect and architecture critic) and his sister Madi Blach, who was a painter and sculptor, have both passed away. My grandfather Friedrich was the youngest of six children. Only he survived the Holocaust. My father never spoke about the tragedy that wiped out so many family members. That chapter was closed for him.

O-Ton

Friederike Fechner

In 2016, my husband and I booked a flight in October and flew over to New York to visit Casey.

Speaker

In the meantime, Friederike Fechner had not only searched for the living descendants of the Blachs. Traces of this Jewish family history were found in the Jewish cemetery in Stralsund, but also in Hesse.

O-Ton

Friederike Fechner

His great-great-great-grandfather Samuel Blach - the family originally came from Reichensachsen in Hesse - he was a teacher at an Israelite school there and wrote children's books. I brought him these and read them to him. Of course he knew nothing about it. His father told him practically nothing about the family.

Casey Blake and his sister Christina in New York lived in the belief that their grandfather Friedrich Blach was the only survivor of the family. They knew that Friedrich's four sisters had been murdered in concentration camps. And they were sure that the descendants of Felix Blach - the other progenitor of the Stralsund leather merchant family besides Julius Blach - were also no longer alive. In fact, however, there are still descendants of both branches of the family. Friederike Fechner found out.

Speaker

O-Ton

Friederike Fechner

We were in New York and had met Casey, and on the flight back, I had packed the book, I read in the book "Flight or Death" by Wolfgang Wilhelmus. It's a collection of letters from Jews who used to come from Pomerania. And in it I found a letter from Rosemarie Simons-Joseph from Stralsund - and of course it flashed in me, because the name Joseph sounded familiar. Gertrud Blach had married a Max Joseph and it was clear from the letter that there was a family connection. And at the end of this letter, Rosemarie Simons-Joseph wrote in 1984 that her son Peter had survived and was now, at the age of 51, the head of a large chemical company in Amsterdam and had five children. I immediately thought: I must find this contact, then Casey and Christina might still have relatives!

Speaker

But there was no trace of a Rosemarie Simons-Joseph anywhere. And nothing led to a chemist named Peter in Amsterdam, of whom Friederike Fechner did not even know the surname. Once again, the heirs' investigator friend had the saving idea.

O-Ton

Friederike Fechner

Rosemarie writes that the wedding took place in 1932 with her first husband! Then you have to go to the city archives and look for the marriage certificate! And that's where I found the surname: Weishut. Rosemarie's first marriage was to Günter Weishut, and I googled Weishut and ended up with Daniel Weishut in Jerusalem.

Music

Citator

Dear Friederike Fechner, yes, Rosemarie Joseph is indeed my grandmother. I will forward this message to my aunt Gaby Glassman from London, who manages the family archives. Yours sincerely,
Daniel Weishut.

O-Ton

Friederike Fechner

I wrote to Gaby, she wrote back immediately: Date 2.12. 2016. Dear Friedrike, I'll translate this - thank you very much for contacting us and thank you very much for all the work you have done for our family - with three exclamation marks! I am really very exited about it. And I thought that calling you would be the nicest way to answer.

O-Ton

Gaby Glassman

The first three nights I couldn't sleep. On the fourth day we had a Skype conversation and then we became friends. We both had interests and personalities that suited each other.

Speaker

Gaby Glassman is a psychotherapist, she has lived in London for almost 50 years, is married to an Englishman.

O-Ton

Friederike Fechner

We then arranged a telephone appointment with Christina as a Skype conference - because that was when Christina met her cousin Gaby for the first time, whom she knew nothing about beforehand. It was a three-hour conversation, unbelievable. The enthusiasm and the need to tell stories was considerable. And that's how I came to meet Gaby Glassman.

Atmo

at the monument, street

Speaker

May 2022, Amsterdam. Friederike Fechner has come from Stralsund, Gaby Glassman from London. She was born here 72 years ago. She grew up here with the feeling of losing her family.

The two women walk along brown brick walls. It is the new Holocaust Memorial by Daniel Libeskind. 102 000 bricks. With 102,000 names on them. Piled up into walls, just high enough to read the names on top. Gaby Glassman looks for the name stones of her grandparents.

Atmo

at the Holocaust Memorial, Friederike Fechner, Gaby Glassman. Q: And how do you find them now? - It's alphabetical. - Max Joseph? - Yes. - That's your grandfather! - On his mother's side. He ran the business in Stralsund. - Married to Gertrud Blach... Atmo continues, street noise...

They are Gaby Glassman's maternal grandparents. Max Joseph and Gertrud Joseph, a née Blach, had fled from Stralsund to Holland in 1938. Just like Gaby Glassman's paternal grandparents, they were called Simons.

Atmo

at the Holocaust memorial, Gaby Glassman, Friederike Fechner. So many family names remind me of family names of descendants I knew when I grew up here. Where you think, these are family members. So now "S". - Who are you looking for now? - My other grandparents. - The Simons. - Simons? Here's "P." - But I still have to find my grandmother.

Atmo

at the monument

Speaker

Speaker

The architect Daniel Libeskind has placed the walls in such a way that, when viewed from above, it reads in Hebrew script: "In memory of you".

Atmo

at the Holocaust Memorial

G: In the concentration camps you only had one number, you were reduced to a number. So my four grandparents were taken to Westerbork. They lived there for almost a year, then they were deported on the same day to Sobibor and then on the same day again, after three days, they were gassed. - Q: 130,000 were there?

- There were 140,000 Jews in Holland. 30,000 German Jews and 110,000 Dutch Jews. Of the Dutch Jews, only 5,000 returned. They were deported the most. Because they thought their nonJewish fellow citizens would help them. The resistance started too late in Holland. It's very bad how the Jewish community was simply destroyed. After the war, when I was growing up, they said there were 20,000 Jews left in Holland. Now there are more. But many emigrated immediately after the war to Palestine, then Israel - and to America. Because the memories here were too bad.

Atmo

at the monument

Speaker

Gaby Glassman is here for the first time. The memorial was opened in 2021, so she didn't want to travel because of the pandemic. But she really wanted to show her friend from Stralsund the place that remembers her grandparents. They have no grave. The two women sit down, directly opposite the letter J. J for Joseph.

Atmo

at the Holocaust Memorial, Gaby Glassman

My grandparents both grew up in Stralsund. I have a picture with them. - F.: Gaby definitely didn't have a photo. It was a picture of the house from 1910. With Julius Blach and Selma Blach in the window and also the four daughters, Paula, Grete, Else and -- Margarete? - Gertrud. - Gertrud, excuse me. This is a very special photo and I think Gaby was also very, very happy that this photo appeared: What a beautiful house it was back then. - G: Yes. When I was in Stralsund for the first time, I saw the house. And it looked so terrible that I just looked away!

Music

Speaker

Gaby Glassman first saw the Blach family home on a visit to Stralsund in the early 1990s, before Friederike and Martin Fechner renovated it. Today, the historic façade is painted a warm orange-red. There are six modern rental flats here, and a wine and tea shop on the ground floor. Above it is a lettering that had been erased there since the expulsion of the Jewish residents in 1938: Gebrüder Blach Lederwaren.

Atmo

Stralsund, street, front door

Speaker

In the hallway, Friederike Fechner had boards about the history of the building and the Blach family put up. On them are photos of the residents, documents and views of the house from earlier years.

Atmo

Friederike Fechner

Here is the house as it looked when we bought it. Hello Mrs Meier! - Oh, good day! - Shall I help you?...

Speaker

You can also read an excerpt from the business chronicle in the hallway: the last entry before the forced closure. These lines were written by Carl Phillip Blach. He was the cousin of the last owner, Friedrich Blach. Because he worked as a lawyer in Berlin, Carl Phillip ran the business and lived in the house with his family until 1938. Friederike Fechner was also able to trace descendants of this branch of the family.

O-Ton

Friederike Fechner, author

Three or four years ago, I was able to contact - via WhatsApp, funnily enough - the daughter-in-law of the last operator of the shop, the

leather shop Carl Philipp Blach. She visited me in Stralsund and gave me a present - which I will of course pass on to the city archives later: The business chronicle from 1876-1938. The handwritten business chronicle. It contained all the testimonials, photos, lots of information material and advertising for the company. And at the end there's just one - I can read it out to you if you like? - Yes. Did you transcribe all that? - Yes, it's all digitised and we want to make a book out of it. I'm reading it out right now.

Speaker

It is the entry Carl Philipp Blach made on his last day of work.

O-Ton

Friederike Fechner *My wish that the shop would remain for one of my sons did not come true. Today, on 21 June 1938, in the 73rd year of its existence, it has to close its doors forever. Three years since I...*

Music on

Citator

takes over, continues reading letter

Three years have passed since I wrote this book, during which time I have made an honest effort to maintain my father's business. I have not succeeded. I therefore endeavoured to sell or lease my company, but this too was not approved. So I decide to dissolve completely and go to Berlin with my family to prepare myself for a new craft profession and then go abroad. As I write this, the cellar and the shop are already empty and I sit in my half-cleared-out parlour. And wistfully I remember the times when I sat on my father's lap in the same room as a child and was taken into the company by him a quarter of a century ago. To you dead, who devoted all your strength to the business, I cry out that I am blameless for the decline of your life's work. That I have always endeavoured to preserve it in your sense, but that I had to give way to an act of God. So I close this book with the vow that however and wherever I build a new life for myself, it will always be based on the principles of a decent and honourable merchant....

O-Ton

Friederike Fechner takes over, continues reading

... as I learned it from you, dear deceased. Stralsund, 21 June 1938, Carl Blach, former owner of the company Gebrüder Blach. He survived, but died in 1946 of complete emaciation, severe anaemia

and a broken heart. His brother and his two sons were deported to Auschwitz and killed in Auschwitz.

Speaker

Carl Phillip Blach owes the fact that he survived to his second wife. He married her in 1935 after the death of his first wife. She was not Jewish, the so-called "mixed marriage" protected him from the extermination camp.

O-Ton

Friederike Fechner

He tried very hard to get abroad. I have the O-tonfolder here with all the correspondence he sent all over the world. He also wrote to leather goods dealers he didn't even know, he wrote to Blach names that weren't related to him at all. And it was all to no avail.

Music

on it

Citator

reads petition

Dear Sir, you will kindly excuse that I write to you but before some days I found your name in the telephone-book of Chicago and as you are my namesake - a namesake of a rare name - and as we are in a great distress I hope that I may be allowed of addressing to you to help me if possible. We have to emigrate within a short time and nothing we would like more as to immigrate to the U.S.A. (...) We all are healthy and we are sure of being able to earn the money for livelihood, so that your aid only would be a formality.

Citator

Translation

Dear Sir, Please be so kind as to excuse me for writing to you. But a few days ago I found your name in the Chicago phone book. And because you are my namesake, the namesake of a rare name, and because we are in great need, I hope to turn to you for help. We have to emigrate within a very short time and there is nothing we would like more than to immigrate to the USA.... We are all healthy and quite sure that we can make a living, so your help would only be a formality.

O-Ton

Friederike Fechner

Of course they didn't let him out, so his children had to die and many of his relatives. They went to Australia, Ecuador, the USA, I don't know, everywhere.

Atmo

Street Stralsund

Speaker Anyone passing the house at Heilgeiststraße 89 in Stralsund has to pass the Stolpersteine (stumbling stones) for the murdered family members. Friederike Fechner founded the "Initiative for the Remembrance of Jewish Life in Stralsund" and suggested laying Stolpersteine in the city. New ones are added every year, most recently those for 13-year-old Eva Dorn and her parents. They were deported to Auschwitz in 1943. The Stolpersteine in Stralsund are polished, including the one in Heilgeiststraße.

O-Ton ***Friederike Fechner, author on the street***
We have an 80-year-old Mr. Kunde living here in Stralsund. Mr Kunde's mother was killed in the Ravensbrück concentration camp when he was two years old. And Mr Kunde has taken it upon himself to clean all 55 Stolpersteine in Stralsund every four weeks. We feel that this is indispensable because unclean Stolpersteine are a slap in the face for the victims who are to be commemorated. If you lay stumbling blocks, you have to take care of them. - But if there is no such person, or if this person no longer exists, would the homeowners have to do it? Is such a thing regulated? - That is not regulated. But we are in contact with the schools so that this work can be continued through school projects and sponsorships, hopefully beyond Mr. Kunde. I will try to get Mr Kunde to personally guide the pupils. This is another project of our initiative, he is also a member of our initiative.

Atmo **street Stralsund, then fade with atmo at the monument
Amsterdam see above.**

Speaker A few hundred metres further on, near Stralsund's market square, Ossenreyer Straße 53, lie the Stolpersteine for Gaby Glassman's grandparents Max Joseph and Gertrud Joseph, née Blach. The house no longer exists. It was destroyed in a bombing raid - by then the Jewish residents - including Gertrud's sisters - had already been deported or expelled. Gertrud Blach had married into the Joseph cleaning and fashion shop and ran it with her husband Max Joseph. Rosemarie, their daughter, grew up there: Gaby Glassman's mother. Rosemarie often told her daughter about her youth in Stralsund: Anti-Semitism was felt there long before the Nazi era.

O-Ton ***Gaby Glassman, author at the memorial***
My mother wanted to become a member of the tennis club when she was ten years old. She couldn't, she wasn't accepted. - What year was that? - 1920. And my uncle, who was seven years older than my

mother, suffered terribly from anti-Semitism. He left school at 16 and went to Berlin to study. My mother left home in 1929 because she started studying medicine. But she still got married in Stralsund, it was one of the last Jewish weddings in Stralsund.

Speaker

Rosemarie Joseph married Günther Weishut. Friederike Fechner came across this entry during her search for descendants.

O-Ton

more

That was in mid-December 32, in January 33 Hitler came to power and then everything changed.

Speaker

Gaby Glassman brought an old cassette to the meeting with Friederike Fechner in Amsterdam. It is a recording from 1988, when she was visiting a German school class with her mother: Rosemarie Joseph-Simons tells the pupils about turning points in her life.

Atmo

Click Cassette Machine

O-Ton

Rosemarie Simons-Joseph from cassette

And then, of course, Hitler came to power in '33 and we noticed at the university when there were petitions, for example, when you had to sign that a professor who was pro-Jewish should not be dismissed, Jews were not allowed to sign. I was not allowed to be with Christian students. Eventually I stopped studying after all. And in 1935 my son was born and we finally thought we had to emigrate. And where to? We got a recommendation for Rotterdam, where my husband could work in a counting house. That's what I did. We emigrated to Holland in '37. We lived in The Hague and my husband worked in Rotterdam. That went on until 39 the war broke out and 40 the planes came. After the occupation, of course, we had to take the names Israel and Sarah. And all the laws that applied against Jews in Germany also applied in Holland.

O-Ton

Gaby Glassman at the memorial

They lived in Haag and then in 1938, before the November pogrom took place, my grandparents managed to move to Holland. My grandfather was already ill, he had suffered from Parkinson's disease. That was not easy. And unfortunately they couldn't save my grandmother's siblings who lived in the same house. The farewell must have been horrible, because even then you didn't know if you would see each other again. The correspondence continued until Piaski, even after the deportation, because the first deportations from Germany began in Stralsund, as early as February 1940. I didn't know that it was so early.

Atmo

in front of monument, see above.

Speaker Margarete, Paula and Else Blach, the sisters of Gaby's grandmother from Stralsund, were killed in Piaski and Lodz respectively, Paula Blach's daughter in Lublin. Their names are nowhere engraved in stone. The Holocaust memorial in Amsterdam only lists the names of those who were deported from Holland. Only for a short time could the escaped Jews feel safe in Holland: In May 1940, the German occupiers marched in.

O-ton ***Gaby Glassman at the memorial***
The threat came closer and closer and was of course very frightening. At the end of 41, beginning of 42 there was another new decree and then everyone had to move to Amsterdam. The Germans were very efficient. They wanted to centralise the Jews. They were told where they should live because of the raids, and then they could simply pick up the Jews from the houses, and that was often at night.

Atmo **click cassette player s.o.**

O-ton ***Rosemarie Simons-Joseph from cassette***
Anyway, we had to leave the coast and then we went into hiding, but without our son. A child in a room - we didn't know how long that would last. And we gave him to very nice Dutch people who had lost a son. They took him in under a false name and he went to school with a Bible.

O-ton ***Gaby Glassman Simons-Joseph at the memorial***
They were very simple people, they were called Kossen. Mrs Kossen came from Friesland in the north, and then it was said that Peter was a nephew from Friesland. And his name was changed to Piet Wijsmar, a Frisian name.

O-Ton ***Rosemarie Simons-Joseph from cassette***
And they were betrayed, and when my son came out of school, he ran into the arms of the Gestapo and was taken away and deported to Bergen-Belsen. That is the worst thing I experienced. But he came back happy.

O-ton***Gaby Glassman Simons-Joseph at the memorial.***
Mrs Kossen and he were arrested and towed away. She went to Ravensbrück. She was killed there. Her husband survived the war and he always came to us when Peter was with us. I don't remember him ever saying that his wife had given her life because of it. He was simply all alone after the war.

Music **from the tape: singing of Dutch women Ravensbrück**

then

Speaker

Gaby Glassman brought another cassette with her to Amsterdam. It contains songs that Dutch women sang as prisoners in Ravensbrück. Whenever she hears the music, Mrs Kossen comes to her mind, the woman who lost her life in the German concentration camp because she had saved a Jewish child.

Fade music with

Atmo

Street Amsterdam, Friederike, Gaby

...Q: We walk past the synagogue, across the canal and through Wertheim Park.

Speaker

In search of the Resistance Museum through the once Jewish Amsterdam. Past the monument commemorating the general strike against the German occupation of 1941: the only great and courageous uprising of the Dutch population was bloodily put down. Past the Schouwburg, the Jewish theatre where all the Jews were crammed and rounded up immediately before their deportation, including Gaby Glassman's grandparents. Today it is a memorial. It seems the city is full of such places of remembrance.

Atmo

Street Amsterdam, Gaby Glassman

G: No. 61 is Resistance Museum, wait a minute

Friederike...street...traffic light...

Atmo

**Museum
on it**

Speaker

The Dutch Resistance Museum is also such a place of remembrance. Here the atmosphere of the war years is reconstructed: The German occupiers, the Dutch Nazi party NSB, the many hangers-on, the few who actively but effectively resisted, built up their network to help the persecuted. Persecuted people like Rosemarie, Günther and Peter Weishut, Gaby Glassman's family.

O-ton

Gaby Glassman in the museum

There were more people in the NSB than the Dutch who helped Jews here to go into hiding. So most of them just didn't do anything. And now I know that if you are just a spectator, that you are also guilty.

Because you then allow it to take place, that the bad deeds, the murders can take place. That can only take place if the local population allows it. One has learned from this that one has to intervene immediately. One should not trust and wait: it won't be so bad. We have the examples of history.

Atmo

room on top

Speaker

Many so-called little people like the Kossens were involved in the resistance system in Holland: Workers, farmers, clerks, craftsmen who, because of their rather inconspicuous lives, were not so under observation and took people in. Others, often students, doctors and pastors, used their contacts to get new hiding addresses, false identity cards, ration cards or worked as couriers.

O-ton**Gaby Glassman, Friederike Fechner, author at the museum.**

G: You had to be able to trust them, of course. - Q: How brave the people were who helped and hid people, I find that so brave. - G: And when you think about it, it was also particularly brave because you never knew whether neighbours would betray the Jews next door. They got seven guilders fifty for every Jew they turned in. A: Seven guilders fifty?! - G: Yes. I don't know how much money that was back then, but it was an amount. But it doesn't matter how much money it was, it's all about whether it's morally okay or not. And the fear - you really never knew. Because there were so many who went along with the Germans.

Speaker

There were hiding places where Gaby Glassman's mother and her husband could only stay for a few days because then danger threatened again. In others, one could live more openly with a false identity, for example as a maid of all trades in a boarding house. Then again, there were tiny dungeons under floorboards - such a hiding place has also been reconstructed in the Resistance Museum. Gaby Glassman remembers: "She has seen something like this before in the original: At the home of a hand weaver who had kept Rosemarie and Günther Weishut in hiding.

O-ton

Gaby Glassman, author at the museum

My mother once took my children and me to visit this woman who was already very ill with multiple sclerosis and could hardly walk. But she had weaving equipment, looms. And there were the hiding places, you had to lift a board like that out of the floor. We could

imagine what that was like, it was half a metre deep, very, very narrow there. Yes, then there was danger and she had to hide there in her room immediately. My mother told me that when Holland was liberated, she cried because she didn't know who had survived. And when she thought of Peter during the war, she stirred the soup and her tears got into the soup. Because she worked in a boarding house, that was in hiding, and she was an under-talented German girl who helped out there. You couldn't feel that she was all sad. - Nor that she was clever. - No, certainly not.

Speaker

At that time, Rosemarie Weishut, née Joseph, from Stralsund had become Carla Johanna de Lange, born in Krefeld. Gaby Glassmann brought one of her mother's false identity cards with her. Similar documents can be found in the Amsterdam Resistance Museum, as well as forged ration cards and: Tulip bulbs.

O-ton

Gaby Glassman in the museum

She weighed 42 kilos, was really malnourished and in the famine winter of 44 to 45 she lived on sugar beet and tulip bulbs. When you are so needy, you take everything you can get.

Speaker

At the age of eight, Peter Weishut was deported alone to the Westerbork concentration camp, one of the two so-called transit camps in the Netherlands. From there, most of the Jews were sent to the death camps. Peter Weishut's great luck was that he met his teacher from the Jewish school there again. She took care of him, also later in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, where he had to suffer for another year. From there, at the end of the war, a train full of prisoners was sent east. In it Peter, alone again. The train was then liberated by the Red Army in Tröglitz, a town in what is now Saxony-Anhalt.

Atmo

Click Cassette Machine

O-Ton

Rosemarie Simons-Joseph from cassette

What a terrible thing it was when the war was over, there were barrel organs in the streets in Holland, everyone was happy, but I had tears running down my face. Because we still had no news whether our Soff was still alive.

O-ton

Gaby Glassman, Friederike Fechner in the museum

And then my mother heard on 13 July, that was 13 July 45, that he was still alive, still alive. Q: I have the document here in my mobile phone, the telegram! Can you read it? - G: Pietje gezond arrived in Losdrecht, Watermann.

Speaker

Friederike Fechner also has her mother's reply telegram ready. She received a copy of it from Peter Weishut when she was able to interview him in 2018 for her research on the Blach family history. Today, the 87-year-old, who lives in Amsterdam, no longer feels able to give an interview for health reasons.

O-ton

Gaby Glassman, Friederike Fechner in the museum

F: It says: Overgelukkig...G: reads in Dutch, then German: Overjoyed to have you back in Holland, arriving Sunday evening 18.16 Hilversum by train from Amsterdam.

Music

Singing Dutch Women Ravensbrück

Speaker

Many people contributed to the rescue of her brother, one woman gave her life for it. Gaby Glassman tells of the guilt her mother felt throughout her life.

O-ton

Gaby Glassman

My mother is less to blame because she was able to get her parents out. But she has a lot of guilt because she couldn't save her son and that he had to go to Bergen-Besen alone. I don't know of any child who was deported alone. Some children lost their parents there, of course. What should she have done? Otto Frank, for example, is often accused of being so stupid as to let his family go into hiding together, as they say, and that it was far too risky. So most of them went into hiding separately. The hope was that my brother Peter would have a relatively normal life because, although it was bad without parents, he was with a family. Hopefully there would be no danger. The poor boy, what could he do? He was no danger to anyone. After he moved in with the Kossens, he was still able to see his parents from time to time. But then he always had to call them aunt and uncle, because otherwise it was considered too dangerous. And in Bergen-Belsen he was also so sensible, that's what I was told. He got parcels with sugar cubes a few times, as a help to stay alive. And he was so sensible that he didn't eat them all straight away. And he always thought: I should keep this until I'm really hungry. And of course, for a child who gets so little to eat, that's just the kind of selfcontrol he showed.

Atmo

**welcome, Pauline and Kees Pilaar
...Dutch...
on it**

Speaker A suburb of Amsterdam. Gaby Glassman and Friederike Fechner visit Pauline Pilaar, her son Kees has also come. The almost 90-year-old is a long-time friend of Gaby Glassman. Their family history connects them: Pauline Pilaar's father, Paul Wouter, was the family doctor in The Hague. It was he who provided the Jewish couple who had fled Germany with a total of five hiding addresses.

O-Ton ***Pauline Pilaar Mother, Son***
Keek, in de Oorlog - in the war, people get scared. Then they often ask the doctors: can you do something for our children? For us? - Son: The doctors and the pastors helped each other to give the addresses of farmers and ordinary people in their area who they knew were vulnerable to robbery. So that was the kind of organisation. And the helpers were also students, young students without families. They could take bigger risks. And that's why my grandmother said: Grandfather was no hero, he was always afraid.

Speaker Gaby Glassman brought a letter that the doctor had written after the end of the war. Rosemarie and Günther Weishut now had to prove to the Dutch authorities that as Germans they had not collaborated with the German occupiers, but that they were persecuted by the regime. After the war, their marriage had been divorced; Rosemarie's second husband René Simons was also a Jew who had fled Germany.

O-ton ***Gaby Glassman, reading***
Here your father has written: I, Dr. P.A.V., doctor in The Hague, declare the following on oath. I have known Mrs. R. Simons, née Joseph - that is, my mother was already remarried then - since 1937. When then...

Citator takes over When, in the second half of 1942, conditions for Jews living in Holland became very critical as a result of the German persecution measures, Mrs Simons decided to go into hiding with her then husband, Dr Günther Weishut. It is known to me that Mrs. S. lived illegally without interruption from 8.8.42 until the end of the war on 4.5.45.
Mrs. Simons and her husband were forced to spend long periods in hiding in an underground dungeon without light or heating, where one could not stand and could only sit if necessary. Here, too, they...

Again, they did not come up for air in the nine months they were with the van Ij family. Mrs van Ij's son and daughter were arrested one after the other for illegal activity. Mr van Ij junior was sentenced to death. I myself was also arrested.

Speaker

The doctor Paul Vouter and his wife Margarete not only took care of hiding addresses for the refugees from Germany. They also rescued many Jewish children who had been brought to safety by members of the resistance in Amsterdam. Couriers, including Margarete Vouter's sister, then accompanied the children to the doctor's family home in The Hague. There they stayed for a few days until Dr Vouter found a family in the country. People who had the courage to take in a Jewish child under a false name. Even in their own family this had to remain a secret. Daughter Pauline, then twelve years old, was not allowed to know anything.

O-Ton

Pauline Pilaar, mother, son

I said: Why are the children here? My mother said: They are sick children, they need the doctor. That was the only thing she said. Son: They had courage, they had to do that. I often asked my grandmother the same thing, she had a family of three children: Didn't you know what could happen then if they were arrested and discovered? And she said in English - she is Canadian: Ignorance is a bliss when it is folly to be wise - they both laugh - Ignorance is a bliss, so: not realising what could happen. When you think about it, you're not supposed to do that. But we didn't realise that, that gave us the courage and the conviction: We should do it!

Atmo

on

Speaker

Room, Gaby Glassman, Pauline Pilaar

Pauline Pilaar has placed a framed certificate on the table and a small box, inside a medal: the "Righteous Among the Nations" award. Her parents received it posthumously. An honour from the State of Israel for non-Jewish individuals who used their lives to save Jews from being murdered during the Nazi era. Gaby Glassman was also present at the presentation ceremony; she and other descendants of rescued families filled a small hall: people who would never have been born without the courage of Margarete and Paul Vouter. Pauline Pilaar carefully takes the medal out of the box.

O-Ton **Pauline Pilaar Mother, Gaby Glassman**
*Here you have the names of Paul-Antoine, my father, and Margaret Quien Vouter. And here is the Hebrew. And this says: Le peuple juif reconnaissant. It means: The Jewish people in thankfulness.
Thankfulness, is that English? - G: Gratitude...*

Speaker And the saying on the certificate:

O-Ton **high**
He who saves a life...Who saves a life, saves the whole of the universe.- G. Who saves a life, saves the life of the whole world.

Music **Cello Friederike Fechner Bach**

Speaker

During the visit to Amsterdam, many pieces of the mosaic came together for Friederike Fechner. The picture of the Blach family expelled from Stralsund is becoming more and more complete, filled with people, stories, impressions, pictures. In the meantime, Fechner found descendants in four countries, visited many of them, was visited, organised meetings in London and Stralsund. And she witnessed many virtual meetings of the family members.

Atmo **Skype signal s. front**

O-Ton **Friederike Fechner**
I found it particularly nice that they always copied me and let me participate, so to speak. There were often simple e-mails, but there were also Skype conferences that didn't want to end and lasted an incredibly long time. It was really important to me that I was allowed to experience that, those were unbelievable family stories that were thrown back and forth for hours. I didn't say anything about it, I was just a spectator. I found it very touching and great.

Speaker In the meantime, the cellist has been honoured for her commitment with the Federal Cross of Merit and with the Obermayer Award - an award given by a foundation in the USA to people who dedicate themselves to researching Jewish history.

O-Ton

Friederike Fechner

We have identified all the Blachs, so to speak. We are still working on a family in South America that has not yet really gained confidence. Then I said: This has triggered such a wave, it can't just stop now! We actually want to try this for all families, to contact descendants and invite them to Stralsund and offer them their family roots, if they haven't already looked for them themselves. And one of our members had the idea to create a digital memorial book for all Stralsund Jews. All Stralsund Jews who lived in Stralsund from 1856 onwards, were born there or moved there and were deported from there. We have researched all of them, there are over 200, more than in the city archives. We have also included mixed marriages, which suffered just as much. I think this is a great project that schools can access for their lessons, but also descendants can research their family roots. I think it's a very meaningful project.

Speaker

The digital memorial book of the city of Stralsund has been online since November 2021. Friedchen Blach and Carl-Philipp, Gertrud, Margarete, Paula, Ernst, Friedrich, Gerd, Paul-Samuel, Hans, Rosemarie. So many faces from the Blach family look out at the viewer from the memorial book. Photos of citizens of a German town.

O-ton

Gaby Glassman

They have become people again. They live again. They are part of the population in Stralsund again. You can see that: If you separate certain groups from the community, then they no longer exist. And then others think: They don't belong to us. But the fact was that they had lived there for many years and had good contacts. Such a digital monument on the web is something incredible, all the stories can be read there. And so the Blach family can live on. It's a huge amount of work to research all that. Friederike now knows almost my family better than I do myself - and I was always considered the one who knew the most!

Atmo

Cello Friederike Fechner, Bach

O-Ton

Friederike Fechner

It is really very moving how positively this work is perceived by the descendants. And I think that also contributes a lot to the healing of this work. Because the wounds are by no means healed.

O-ton

Gaby Glassman

For me now, what it means: it has helped me enormously with my identity. I now see my Jewishness as a line that goes back to 1730, where the oldest document came to light. Now there is no break between the present and the past. Before, I could only go back to the Holocaust and then there was a gap. And now it's easy: it flows and I feel like I have a big family.

Atmo

Cello high

on

Citator

House buy with history -

A Stralsund woman reunites the Jewish Blach family.

A feature by Alexa Hennings

Speakers: Nicola Gründel and Daniel Berger

On the cello: Friederike Fechner

Sound: Oliver Dannert

Director: Anna Panknin

Editing: Wolfgang Schiller

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END