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'Seeing the Other Side – 60 years after Buchenwald'



Professor Stephan Seebass, Sister Renate Seebass, Mona Weissmark and her daughter, Brittany, pose amid the Chicago skyline during the Seebasses' first visit to Chicago in 2005.

By STEFANIE PERVOS
Staff Writer

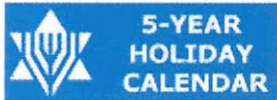
In the final weeks of the Holocaust, a young, defeated Adolph Weissmark fled the Langenstein-Zwieberge concentration camp—a Buchenwald sub-camp—and found himself at the doorstep of a German pastor and his family in a small village in north-central Germany. Ill with typhus and dysentery, covered in lice and starving, Weissmark and his friend, Rudolph Klepfisz, were welcomed into the home of the Seebass family, who, despite the risk to their own lives, cared for the two men as if they were one of their own.

Thanks to the charitable efforts of the Pastor Julius Seebass, his wife, Hertha, and their children, Weissmark survived the Holocaust, married another Holocaust survivor and immigrated to the U.S. to raise his family. His daughter Mona Sue Weissmark, an author and psychology professor at Northwestern University, is forever grateful to the Seebass family, and has worked for many years to ensure that the legacy of their generosity lives on.

Inspired by her parents' tales of survival, Weissmark began researching the relationship between the children of Nazis and the children of Holocaust survivors, facilitating the first meeting of its kind, bringing the two groups together, in the 1990s. The results of this social experiment were recorded in her book, "Justice Matters: Legacies of the Holocaust and World War II" (Oxford University Press, 2004).

A 15-minute documentary based on Weissmark's book titled, "Seeing the Other Side – 60 years after Buchenwald," aired nationwide on German WDR television last year. The film chronicles Weissmark's first meeting with the Seebass family during a visit to Chicago in 2005 when the family received the Yad

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Vashem "Righteous Among the Nations," a title bestowed upon non-Jews who risked their lives to rescue Jews during the Holocaust.

The producer, Johanna Holzhaeur, read my book and felt the message ought to be conveyed in a film so that it could reach the German nation and more especially the youth of Germany," Weissmark said.

The film, she said, teaches the German public about the Holocaust, including the concentration camp at Langenstein-Zwieberge, and also demonstrates that the Jewish community recognizes that not all Germans were guilty of unspeakable acts during World War II.

The film reminds ourselves that even in the darkest of times there were a few German families that knew what a human being had to do despite the times," said Professor Gottfried Seebass of Heidelberg University.

An English translation of the film recently became available for educational showings and to the general public. This month, Weissmark will discuss and show the film in Washington, D.C., and plans are under way for another showing in New York.

To view the documentary, visit <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-7650435739104968253> or www.weissmark.com.

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