

## Nemanns' Stolpersteine- Words on Site 14.9.22

**Intro:** 50 seconds piano piece [Menuet in D minor, from Notenbüchlein für Anna Magdalena Bach BWV Anhang 132](#)

My name is ilan Nemann. I am the grandchild of Willy & Hanna Nemann, and the nephew of Jochen Nemann.

The Nemanns' house was a piano house. We just heard a piano piece from the notebook for Anna Magdalena Bach, so familiar to any girl or boy practicing their 1<sup>st</sup> year piano lessons. Imagine this house. Full of life. Ordinary life. Imagine yourself passing here, on this pavement, hearing these very same notes played on the family's piano by Mirjam Nemann, or Jochen Nemann. A piano piece written in 1725, by probably the most legendary Leipziger of all times, Johann Sebastian Bach. What a contrast between what was created here in Leipzig in 1725, a cultural masterpiece, to what happened in this very same place 2 centuries later: The worst barbarities of all times.

An ordinary family of three, trying to live an ordinary life, of law practice, community activities of sports & charity, and ordinary school studies. But in Germany then, living an ordinary life, was asking for too much - if you were a Jew. During those tough years, our grandfather was deeply involved in trying to help Leipzig Jews escape the country. Luckily, Willy & Hanna Nemann succeeded to send my 15-year-old father Gideon, and his 18-year-old sister Mirjam (Roni's mother) to Israel. Tragically, Willy failed in saving his wife, his youngest child, and himself. In his last heartbreaking postcard to my father, he wrote: "I put the community above all and neglected our own emigration".

On May 10<sup>th</sup> 1942, Willy, Hanna, & Jochen Nemann, my grandfather, my grandmother, and their 14-year-old son, were forced onto the "**Da 27**" transport train, from their hometown Leipzig, 2,000 km eastward to Poland, to a small town named **Belzyce**. Their boarding the train is the last trace we have of them. They were then murdered in the Sobibor extermination camp, or earlier in Belzyce.

Nobody returned to Leipzig from the "Da 27" transport.

So after intolerable years of intimidation & terrorization, imprisonment and brutality, the Nemanns were transported and murdered on the sole mission of making Leipzig Judenfrei (*Yudenfray*). A mission which, to our horror, was executed with remarkable efficiency & success. From 13,000 Leipzig Jews before the war, the number of Jews in Leipzig by the end of the war stood at 24.

In Israel, Mirjam & Gideon both built their new families, and ... founded a new state - the state of Israel. 9 years after their escape from Germany to Israel, Israel became an independent state. And this was achieved by people like Gideon & Mirjam Nemann, fighting against all odds, to do the unprecedented. To build a state for a nation that lost its independence 2,000 years ago, its people scattered over the entire world.

This is a point well worth noting. The attitude of our parents, the holocaust escapers, was that their mission is to leave behind the atrocities they experienced, and build a new and normal life for their children. Compared to other nations & people who are devoting their lifetime and their children's lifetime to try to reverse the irreversible essence of history, I find this attitude of our parents **inspiring**. Don't look back at your original homeland that betrayed you and murdered your Dad, your Mom, and your brother. Look forward. You are a Jew, and your new homeland is your old homeland. Israel. Build it, and be sure you build it well. Be sure you build it strong. And build it proudly.

The presence of the Nemanns here today, the grandchildren of Willy & Hanna Nemann, together with our children, Willy & Hanna's great-grandchildren, is of course a moment of great emotion for us. A moment that **emotionally** would not have been possible from our side, if not for the outstanding Stolpersteine initiative. Allow me to concisely elaborate on the emotional barrier I am crossing today.

I was born 13 years after my Leipzig grandparents were murdered. Of course, I have never met my grandparents, and surprisingly, I was never indoctrinated against Germans by either my Leipziger father, or his Leipziger sister. Still, I never chose to visit Germany. This was never an option. There was this huge emotional barrier, this 10-ton burden of history on my shoulders, which meant for me one thing. For you visiting Germany is not an option. For you, it is something that simply is not done.

Today, I am breaking this paradigm. I want to deeply thank **the Stolpersteine people & organization** for enabling this. I want to thank **the school students** that took the Nemann family project and learned about our family. And I want to thank **Dr. Jutta Faehndrich & Dr. Yuval Rubovitch**, for their unique help & research.

I have my deepest appreciation for the young German generation learning the Holocaust. I find that **the interest itself is encouraging**. This mind switch, that the Holocaust is German history not less than it is Jewish history, is strengthening my belief in a better future. It reenforces my faith in **education**. Education is the one & only vaccine against antisemitism & racism. And as history has proven, this vaccination is not for life. The education vaccine against antisemitism needs to be renewed regularly. This is our only known method to prevent the most horrible crimes, performed right here, from reoccurring.

Thank you all very much for this very touching moment.