



The little tramp still in motion *Der kleine Landstreicher noch immer in Bewegung*

by Willie Glaser



Willie Glaser (a.k.a. the little tramp) 2010 in Fürth
(photo: Susanne Rieger)

Previous visits to Fürth

I have returned many times to the place of my birth, the city of Fürth, since the end of war, first in 1945 when I came back as an allied soldier. Later my wife Jean accompanied me twice: In 1986 we participated in the unveiling of the memorial (*Mahnmal*) for destroyed synagogues in Geleitsgasse. In 1997 Jean and I were invited by a prominent group of Fürth citizens for a ten day visit which is now etched in my memory.

It was followed up by a few more. The main reason for the latter trips was an in-depth research into the deportation of my mother and my siblings to the transit camp (*Durchgangslager*) Izbica on March 22, 1942 and their death in the extermination camp (*Vernichtungslager*) Belzec in April or May 1942.



Unveiling of the *Mahnmal* in Geleitgasse
(photo: Willie Glaser)



Willie's wife Jean signing the Golden Book of the City of Fürth, lord mayor Wenning looking on
(photo: Willie Glaser)

In the year of 2010

Beginning 2010, I was informed that my great niece Tali in Israel will be married in June. I made my plans to attend the wedding and thought it would be a great idea to make a little side trip (*Abstecher*) to Fürth to do some more family research.

During the month of May my sister Lottie and her daughter Adele told me that they would like to join me going to Fürth. I was very surprised because when I asked my sister to accompany me to Germany, she always refused to return. This time her three daughters prevailed on her to make this "roots trip" to Fürth. I dropped all my well laid plans and changed my travel arrangements.

We left Israel during a heat wave, looking forward to some cooler weather in Germany. We were wrong because another heat wave awaited us in Fürth. After a pleasant train trip from Frankfurt, we arrived in Nuremberg where my very good friend Gisela Naomi Blume was waiting for us and brought us to Fürth.

I had made arrangements to book us into the "*Altstadthotel*" in Blumenstraße 41. This was an emotional experience as all five Glaser children were born in Blumenstraße 41. To be historically correct, actually we all were born in the *Nathanstift*, a birthing clinic.

My sister Lottie was overcome with emotion when we arrived in front of the house. The last time she had seen it was in 1938. We visited our old apartment on the first floor but I did not recognize because it was completely renovated with walls moved. It is now a brand new flat with elegant furniture, a modern kitchen and bathroom. The owners of the "*Altstadthotel*",

Herr and Frau Wiegel were most gracious hosts and made our stay in our old house a memorable event.



Grave of grandfather Lazarus Glaser
(photo: Willie Glaser)

With our guide, my very dear friend Gisela Naomi Blume, we visited the grave of our grandparents Lazarus (Leiser) and Esther Glaser and the graves of other family members in the new cemetery where I recited the Kaddish (prayer for the departed).

In the cemetery I was very impressed with the ongoing detailed restoration of the *Tahara* hall (*Leichenhalle*). Then the president of the Jewish community (*Vorstand der jüdischen Gemeinde*), Gisela Naomi Blume was faced with the fact that the structure of the *Leichenhalle* building was rapidly deteriorating to the point of being a danger to the public. She was able to raise an enormous amount of money to support its reconstruction. Even after she stepped down as president of the Jewish community, she was asked to continue to oversee the reconstruction work.



Restoration of the *Leichenhalle*
(photo: Willie Glaser)



Sister Lottie, niece Adele and Gisela Naomi Blume looking at restoration in progress
(photo: Willie Glaser)



Former Jewish junior high school (*Israelitische Realschule*)
(photo: Willie Glaser)

Except for this time, whenever I visited Fürth I attended Friday night and Saturday morning prayer services. The attendance was always pitiful small. At the most fifteen elderly men attended Saturday services. During my last stay in Fürth there was no *Minyan* (prayer quorum of ten men) for the Friday night prayer service.

I am told that the size of the so-called Jewish community is about 350 Russian Jews. Most of them have no interest in the community. Many call themselves Jewish for opportunistic reasons. As far as I am concerned, I recognize most of them as Jewish in ethnicity only. I have become sadly aware that many brought with them their life long communistic indoctrination in Soviet Russia. I have witnessed some questionable behavior of members of this community. This is not the “the Jewish Fürth” (*das jüdische Fürth*) of my childhood.

We spent several hours looking at the exhibits in the Jewish museum. The director of the museum, Daniela Eisenstein gave my family a personal tour. My sister and niece were fascinated with the exhibitions. I sat this out because I have seen the exhibits several times. Instead I browsed through the extensive library.



Daniela Eisenstein, Willie and Monika Berthold-Hilpert, 2009
(photo: Willie Glaser)

We toured the city park (*Stadtpark*) and the *Konrad-Adenauer-Anlage* or as it was called in our times *die Englische Anlage* (the English park). My sister remembered the fountain which was located in the center of the *Anlage*.

We walked in the streets of our childhood. My niece Adele loved the storks on the tall chimney. She was compelled to get closer and take pictures of the birds. We also took in the ambiance of *Gustavstraße*; the ladies just loved it there.



The unique ambiance of *Gustavstraße*: Gisela Naomi Blume and family
(photo: Willie Glaser)

We would have liked to have a look at our apartment in *Schwabacher Straße 22*. The family moved there from *Blumenstraße 41* which had become too small for the five Glaser children. I was able to visit this apartment in 2009. Then the main door was open. This time it was closed and I hesitated to ring any doorbell.



***Schwabacher Straße 22*: former Glaser apartment on the first floor, four windows to the right**
(photo: Willie Glaser)

What sets this apartment apart are the beautiful artistic paintings (*Kunstmalerien*) around the ceiling, framed by a decorative carved mahogany wood crown molding. I was told by the owner that the ceiling is under heritage protection (*Denkmalschutz*).



Ceiling paintings and molding in Schwabacher Straße 22
(photos: Willie Glaser)

The city's letter of honor

We had a lovely lunch in the house of Gisela Naomi Blume in Zirndorf which also was attended by two other good friends: Frau Barbara Ohm (whenever I visited Fürth I made sure I had a cup of coffee with her) and Susanne Rieger who represented Nuremberg.

At this lunch Gisela Naomi sort of let the cat out of the bag by telling me that lord mayor (*Oberbürgermeister*) Dr. Thomas Jung would like to say hello to me and my family. I had no clue what my friends including Gerhard Jochem from Nuremberg had arranged for me.



Researchers at work: Willie and Peter Frank selecting additional photos for the little tramp story
(photo: Alexander Mayer)



After more than 80 years a new Fürth trio: not Fritzl, Franzl and the little tramp, but Alexander, Willie and Peter roaming around in Nuremberg, July 2010
(photo: Willie Glaser)

At the city hall I was really surprised to find many of my good friends greeting me and my family. There were Frau Monika Berthold-Hilpert from the Jewish Museum, the city heritage protector (*Stadtheimatpfleger*) Dr. Alexander Mayer, Peter Frank, a Fürth historian, from Nuremberg my good friend Susanne Rieger, co-publisher with Gerhard Jochem of *Verlag testimon* and many others.



Willie during his acceptance speech in Fürth's city hall, June 30, 2010
(photo: Susanne Rieger)

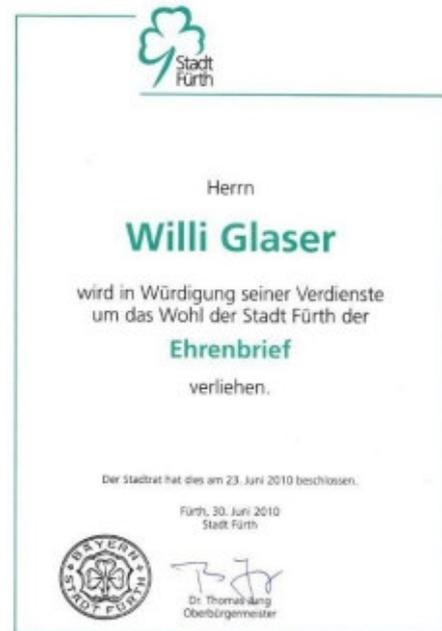


Some of the guests at the awarding ceremony (f.l.t.r.): Monika Berthold-Hilpert, Gisela Naomi Blume, Lottie Black, Peter Frank, Willie, Dr. Alexander Mayer, Adele Weil
(photo: Susanne Rieger)

We all chatted for a few minutes when *Oberbürgermeister* Dr. Jung arrived. I talked for a few minutes to him. Then he addressed me and the audience and said: "The Fürther Willie Glaser stands as an example for an event which took place at an unprecedented historical turning point in which he overcame the challenges and is helping us to overcome." He then handed me a folder with the city's letter of honor (*Ehrenbrief*) and a large picture book of Fürth (*Bilderbuch der Stadt Fürth*).



Lord mayor Dr. Jung presenting Willie the city's letter of honor (*Ehrenbrief*)
(photo: Susanne Rieger)



Because I was not told about the exact nature of the visit to the city hall (*Rathaus*) I did not prepare an acceptance speech. Though I think my short acceptance speech was to the point: I thanked lord mayor Dr. Jung for the honor he bestowed on me in the name of the municipality. I would not speak about the Holocaust. There is a time and place to speak about it. I spoke

about my wonderful childhood which nobody could take away from me. This makes me a proud Fürther (*stolzer Fürther*).



Willie in a relaxed discussion with lord mayor Dr. Jung after the ceremony
(photo: Susanne Rieger)

Der Heimatstadt die Treue gehalten
Fürther Ehrenbrief für einen ehrenhaften jüdischen Mitbürger setzt Zeichen



Überlebener Theresien Jung (in.) überreicht im Fürther Rathaus den Ehrenbrief an Willie (links). Der Würdigungskomitee hat die Laudatio mit einem Nachwort über den Holocaust in Auftrag gegeben.
Foto: Susanne Rieger

FÜRTH – Mit einem Ehrenbrief hat die Stadt einen ehrenhaften jüdischen Mitbürger ausgezeichnet. Willie Jung, der Fürth 1933 mit seiner Ehefrau Theresien nach Fürth gekommen war, wurde der Stadt für sein Engagement im jüdischen Leben und die Rettung von jüdischen Kindern, Frauen und Kindern während der Shoah geehrt. Willie Jung wurde am 1. März 1933 in Wien geboren. Er emigrierte nach Fürth im Jahr 1938. Willie Jung war ein aktives Mitglied der jüdischen Gemeinde in Fürth. Er war ein engagierter Mitarbeiter der jüdischen Gemeinde und hat sich für die Rettung von jüdischen Kindern, Frauen und Kindern während der Shoah eingesetzt. Willie Jung wurde am 1. März 2010 zum Ehrenbürger der Stadt Fürth ernannt. Er ist ein Beispiel für die Toleranz und den Mut, die in Fürth während der Shoah geübt wurden. Willie Jung ist ein Mann, der die Stadt Fürth mit seiner Arbeit und seinem Engagement bereichert hat. Er ist ein Mann, der die Stadt Fürth mit seiner Arbeit und seinem Engagement bereichert hat. Er ist ein Mann, der die Stadt Fürth mit seiner Arbeit und seinem Engagement bereichert hat.

Coverage of the event by the local newspaper "Fürther Nachrichten"



A proud Fürther
(photo: Susanne Rieger)

Afterwards I had a spirited discussion over wide ranging subjects with lord mayor Dr. Jung. I thought it would be special to tell him that I was born in *Nathanstift*, but he countered: "*Ich bin auch im Nathanstift geboren* (I was also born in *Nathanstift*)." Everybody had a good time at the reception.

In conclusion I can state that this was a memorable visit to Fürth. At first I was a little apprehensive how my family would react. I am happy to report my two ladies having been very comfortable. It is very possible that sometimes in the near future a German government action will require my presence in Bonn. Of course then I will make another *Abstecher* to Fürth.

edited by Gerhard Jochem

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