

My “Private” Germany: Complex, Complicated, and Convoluted

Avi Colonomos

“When the wall came down, I cried,” said the waiter, with strong English, but a heavy German accent. “I was only fifteen years old, but I felt that moment in my core. I was no longer a subject of the German Democratic Republic, of Erich Honecker, and of the regime. I was free.”

German history is a maelstrom of big ideas, larger-than-life figures, and world altering events. Nationalism, fascism, and communism; Luther, Nietzsche, Bismarck, and Hitler; reformation, war, massacre, and national unification as well as reunification – these are the threads that weave the fabric of modern Germany. So poignant, so powerful are these figures and events that they continue to shape this society and its citizens. They raise confusion, conflict, and difficult questions. What takes precedence – regional identity, German identity, or pan-European identity? What should Germany’s role be in Europe? In the world? Can an immigrant be a German? What makes a “German,” anyway?

These questions make the issue of German identity vague and unclear. These questions raise debate across the country and beyond. They can be heard in the Reichstag building, in immigrant neighborhoods like Kreuzberg, and in Germany’s world-class universities. As one of over 400 million tourists to visit Germany each year, I was confronted by these tough questions. Looking at this pulsating and ever-changing society from the eyes of a Jewish American, a college student, and a young adult, I was provided the opportunity to feel Germany for myself. I felt the German waiter’s first taste of freedom, I felt the irony standing at the *Reichsparteitagsgelände* with an Israeli flag, I confronted questions of right-wing xenophobia in German society – much as I internalized the struggle to define modern Germany. These questions and irony-laden conflicts, which I came to ponder, make my own “private” Germany incredibly complex and tough to understand.

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“You’re going to Germany? I could never bring myself to go there,” a friend told me just days before my departure. “I could never bring myself face-to-face with the children and grandchildren of Nazis. It just creeps me out.” I pondered the concept for a minute. I shuddered at the fact that I would wander around a country and potentially rub shoulders with the children of those who had made my family suffer. “It’s a

new Germany,” I reluctantly responded, “and it’s important that we get to know it – at the very least, *try* to understand it.”

In order to tackle my “private” Germany, let us skip from this encounter (which occurred more than once) to the moments just before I left on my transatlantic flight to Berlin Tegel Airport – before I experienced the sights and sounds, the ideas and personalities that would puzzle me so much. What did my “private” Germany look like before I stepped foot in the country?

Like many Americans, my perception of Germany featured lederhosen-clad men and dirndl-wearing women. I imagined a country full of fast Audi, Mercedes-Benz, and BMW cars, as well as massive beer mugs and pretzels. I imagined a harsh and serious people, characterized by an irrational obsession with rules and no sense of humor. I imagined an ugly language, full of guttural and unpronounceable words, and an extremely efficient society (little had I heard about the condition of the Berlin-Brandenburg International Airport).

On a more sinister note, my perception of Germany was clouded by my grandfather’s tales of the Holocaust. The very word “Germany” raised images of racist propaganda, Adolf Hitler’s rants, and death camps. Like many American Jews, I ignored the fact that World War II had finished in 1945 and Germany had been rebuilt. Nazi Germany was very much alive in my mind. I couldn’t help but imagine a society of closeted ex-Nazis, hastily burying their past and evading justice. I pictured a society where the residue of World War II was still prevalent, and where, behind closed doors, antisemitism prevailed. My perception of Germany was not grounded in reality nor truth.

The France of my imagination is and always was quite clear. It is characterized by art museums and world-class food. The England of my thoughts is and always was equally clear. It is cosmopolitan and extremely familiar. I have visited sixteen countries in Europe, and never have I left a country understanding less about that country than I had when I arrived. However naïvely, I have always been able to say, “I understand ‘country X’.” My Germany, however, couldn’t be less clear. I was regularly blown away by the way that my well-defined stereotypes of Germany were simply shattered.

In fact, immediately upon arrival, I realized that my stereotypes were worthless. The Germany I encountered bore no similarities to my old perception of Germany. What I found was cosmopolitan,

European, and international – yet so unique and so distinctly itself. I was shocked. The constant and daily surprise that pervaded my experience in Germany is what welded my “private” Germany into something so vague, so complex.

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“According to the German understanding of the right of self-determination, it does generally not entitle separatist movements to secede from sovereign states,” a speaker who joined our group, confidently proclaimed. My mind raced, and I asked, “What about Kosovo? Germany was one of the first to openly support Kosovo’s separatist movement.” “You’re right, Germany did support Kosovo’s independence from Serbia. In exceptional circumstances such as after wide-spread crimes against humanity, a right to secede may be supported. This development of international law is a consequence of the horrendous crimes against humanity committed during World War II,” the speaker continued, “it’s complex.”

Germany is, case in point, complex – even for those who run the country itself. What does the complexity that shapes *my* Germany look like? How can I characterize the intricate nature of *my* Germany? How can I begin to describe something I don’t even understand myself?

Perhaps this complexity is best explained by the fact that I left Germany understanding less about the country than I understood when I arrived. It is nearly impossible to reveal what exactly shattered and simultaneously rebuilt my perceptions of Germany. Maybe it was the fact that at the Reichstag building, the European Union banner flies at the same level as Germany’s black, red, and gold banner. Maybe it had something to do with the fact that across German cities there are more signs advertising Döner than Wurst. Perhaps it was immigrant Kreuzberg, where Turkish seems more common than German, or hipster Mitte, where English prevails. Perhaps it was the way that these contrasts exist side-by-side, flourishing independently, but enduring under one flag.

Germany defies every rule. Berlin’s grandiose Prussian-era architecture sits confidently next to grey, communist-era apartment blocks that rub shoulders with lively clubs and bars. At the very heart of the capital city is the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe – a grey and expansive monument – that sits no more than a few blocks from the Reichstag building, which has emblazoned on it the eerily nationalistic phrase, “*Dem Deutschen Volke,*” or, “To the German People.” The Brandenburg Gate, once a symbol of

German militarism but today a symbol of European unity, sits between these two monuments. The *Stolpersteine* (or “stumbling stones”) that commemorate the victims of the Nazi terror, line blocks filled with cafés and bars. It is incredibly motley, and somehow, it is all indescribably beautiful.

The German attitude similarly shatters any preconceived stereotypes. Germans have wholly and fully rebuilt themselves in the most impressive way. They have simultaneously overcome their own great tragedy, while fully bearing responsibility for the tragedy of others. However, as a panel of German citizens explained, the German people are not “sorry,” but rather feel a unique sense of responsibility. It is a society where very few individuals feel personally guilty for the horrors of Germany’s past but overwhelmingly many feel collective responsibility to prevent such things from happening today – a sort of attitude that champions social justice and a concern for the wellbeing of mankind. Slogans covering the Berlin Wall call for peace, Russian Jews as well as Turkish immigrants speak of successful integration into German society, and Germany continues to take in thousands of refugees from Syria. The modern day German attitude that I so regularly encountered adds yet another layer of intricacy to Germany.

The nature of Germany itself as well as the German attitude that I found among politicians and waiters, Berliners and Münchenerers, and former East and West Germans alike touched me. It spoke to my “private” Germany, providing me with answers, but also many questions. Does Berlin’s modern cosmopolitanism and Germany’s pervasive commitment to social justice erase the tragedy of Germany’s history? How many generations must bear responsibility for the catastrophes of the past? Can Germans ethically and responsibly be proud of their heritage and nation, without allowing the past to repeat itself?

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Our world puts a heavy emphasis on clarity. We value clarity in speech, clarity in writing, and clarity in communication. No one would like to exit a classroom and be confused about what was taught in a lecture. Germany, however, taught me that, occasionally, a level of confusion and a lack of clarity is a good thing. Complexity allows us to wrestle with our surroundings, to strengthen old opinions, and to form our own new opinions. Germany’s complex nature allowed me to see neither what a postcard nor a Lonely Planet guidebook show, but gave the opportunity to evaluate this pulsating, ever-changing, and intricate society for myself.

I have come to the conclusion that, plainly and simply, there is no conclusion. My relationship with this nation's poignant, painful, and powerful history is hazy. I will never forget how much I loved the medieval city of Nuremberg, a city that was also the birthplace of the horrifying Nazi racial laws. I cried privately at the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe and rejoiced (after the fact) in Germany's World Cup victory. I felt disgust for the leaders of the former East Germany while standing at the Berlin Wall, yet my heart was oddly captured by the East German anthem, "*Auferstanden Aus Ruinen*," or "*Risen from the Ruins*." My personal Germany was never void of intricacy and irony.

My impression of Germany left me anxious to return – to see what kind of complex questions Hamburg, Frankfurt, and Cologne throw at me. I've seen the country through eyes that did not witness World War II or the Cold War (I was born almost five years after the Berlin Wall fell), yet I feel as though I've seen layer upon layer of undoubtedly the world's most complex society. The notion that layers of tragedy have built such an optimistically motivated nation continuously shocked me, and my "private" Germany continues to grow and develop in the United States. I am taking a class on the rise and fall of the Third Reich as well as a course on the Cold War era division of Germany – and I continue to be presented with challenges to my "private" Germany. Despite my constant search for answers, Germany has presented greater questions.

The threads – ideas, events, and people – that weave the fabric of modern Germany confronted me head on. They destroyed my clear perception of Germany and welded a new "private" Germany – one lacking clarity but welcoming question and debate. As I internalized the complexity of German society, my "private" Germany came to develop layer upon layer of complexity itself. In 1989, an obscure waiter at an obscure Berlin restaurant saw the birth of a new Germany and felt free. In 2014, I saw a cosmopolitan, cutting-edge, and pulsating society built upon the ruins of several great tragedies, and felt freedom myself. I found freedom from the stereotype that dominates our preconceived notions of Germany, freedom from spoon-fed clarity, and freedom to find beauty in complexity. The journey to develop a clear sense of my Germany will likely never end – and I will continue to embrace complexity, seek to understand difficulty, and learn to love intricacy.

**Passing On:
Remembrance in the Third Generation**

Will Trichon

As my grandfather lay dying, in the hospital bed that I had helped the hospice nurse assemble in his living room, we talked about many things. But over the course of days and nights of quiet conversation, the subject that Pop-pop found most confounding was my itinerary for an upcoming around-the-world trip: the ailing, 93-year-old Jewish patriarch could not understand why one of his five Jewish American grandsons was so excited by the prospect of a return to Germany. Three separate times during that last, difficult week, Pop-pop brought up the topic. “Why *Germany*, William?” he kept asking. “You’ve already been once, and there’s a whole big world to explore. Why go back *there*, of all places?”

And so, dutifully, I tried to answer.

Berlin is my favorite city in the world, Pop-pop, I explained. It’s a vibrant metropolis with a youthful population and more diversity than you find in most European capitals. I made friends there who I want to see, and I have other friends from all over Europe who like to fly into Berlin when I’m there. We rent an apartment together, and go out to the cafés, museums, and nightclubs together. Post-reunification, the city has *two* of every major cultural institution: two world-class zoos, and twice as many opera houses, ballet companies, and theatres as a typical city. It’s *fun*, Pop-pop!

“More diversity,” he echoed, his tone somehow managing to convey both skepticism and distaste, simultaneously.

I ignored the hint of dislike for cultural heterogeneity, and focused on his doubt. Okay, so the bar for diversity in European capitals isn’t particularly high, I admitted. But, Pop-pop, do you remember when I did the fellowship in Berlin and then traveled around the Continent by train afterwards? I visited nine cities in five different countries, and that whole month, I was acutely aware of how the various peoples of Europe acted towards foreigners, and how they talked about people they considered “different.” The Dutch, the French, the Austrians, the Italians – they all displayed disturbingly perfunctory, alarmingly widespread xenophobia. And there are certainly Germans who are right-wing and nationalistic, too, but with their history, such political sentiments are deeply taboo in Germany, and Germans seem to be willing

to call out racism and antisemitism when they see it. Equality and social justice are at least a *part* of the public discourse there, to a greater extent than in the other countries I visited.

Pop-pop didn't look convinced.

So I elaborated. Everywhere I went *outside* of Germany, I told him, the people seemed to lack a certain self-awareness about their own country's culpability and collaboration during the war years. All French people consider themselves the descendants of Resistance fighters, I said. All Italians swear that *their* family hated Mussolini. And in an Amsterdam bar, a Dutch guy said to me, with pride, "We were like the *good* Germans!" He actually said the words "We saved Anne Frank," Pop-pop! As if that were true! I had to explain to this man that, no, Anne Frank died in Auschwitz, after her neighbors turned her in.¹

Grandpa went stiff, at the mention of Auschwitz. "But William," he said, clutching my arm for emphasis, "her neighbors turned her in *to the Gestapo*. To the *Germans!*" He pulled at me with his dwindling strength, desperate to make me see The Enemy he saw. The enemy who – at twenty years old – he'd volunteered to fight. The enemy who – when he was twenty-four – was revealed to have built a place out of nightmare. A place named Auschwitz.

It is remarkable to me (if not surprising, exactly) how often the Holocaust comes up among Jews. And it's remarkable, too – and incredibly sad – to note how few Jews seem to realize how problematic it is, to remember the Holocaust as the story of evil German perpetrators murdering noble Jewish victims. That's just too simplistic a narrative.

¹ Author's note to the fastidious reader: Anne Frank did not, in fact, die in Auschwitz. That was a rhetorical flourish I used in an Amsterdam bar during a heated discussion that I then paraphrased for my grandfather's benefit. But details matter, especially when the subject is remembrance. What actually happened? Following their arrest, Anne and those she was hiding with were initially brought to Westerbork transit camp, from where they were transported to Auschwitz. But together with her sister, Anne was later moved to Bergen-Belsen, and it was at *that* horrific camp that she died. I'll take this opportunity to add that it's never been determined who it was, exactly, that tipped off the Germans that Anne and the others were hiding in the attic. You can read more here: "The Arrest: 1944." Anne Frank House, accessed April 20, 2016, <http://www.annefrank.org/en/Anne-Frank/Discovery-and-arrest/>. With all that said, the larger point remains: Anne Frank and the others were hiding not just from the Germans, but from their Dutch neighbors, too. Contemporary Europeans are mostly the descendants of perpetrators and of collaborators (and of "bystanders," a polite term for more passive collaborators), not of resistance fighters. That's something worth remembering, too.

So, while my dying grandfather wanted to make sure I would “Never Forget” the deaths of six million Jews at the hands of the Nazis, I was equally driven to show him that I had drawn my own (more nuanced) lessons from my study of the Shoah. I wanted him to see that, for me, the story of the Holocaust is a complicated tale about an ideology based on hatred of The Other, an ideology whose followers in many, many countries victimized and murdered many, many people, including (but not limited to) Jews.

I found myself using the same rhetorical flourish I had employed two years before, in a debate with Herr Volker Beck (MdB) during the Germany Close Up Fellowship. It’s more complicated than we want it to be, Pop-pop, I said. If I had been living in Germany in the ‘30s, say, and I’d been the age you were then, it’s probable I would have been killed without ever being classified as a *Jewish* victim of the Holocaust. Because long before I would have been gassed as a Jew, I would have been subject to lethal, non-consensual experimentation as a homosexual. Long before that, I would have been euthanized as a disabled person. And long before that, I would have been arrested and put into a concentration camp when they were first built, as a Communist and Enemy of the State. Victimhood in the Holocaust does not belong to Jews alone. Neither were the perpetrators exclusively German (a fact that guy in Amsterdam could stand to remember). And lastly, those who fought *against* the evils of the Third Reich include not just non-Germans, but many Germans, too. For “Never Again” to have any viability, as a precept, we must acknowledge the humanity and diversity of both the perpetrators and the victims. We must say “Never Again,” not just to the murder of Jews or to the rise of antisemitism and totalitarianism in Germany; we have to say “Never Again” to any permutation of the ideology that says “Fear The Other!” and preaches hatred of our fellow human beings, anywhere in the world. We are all capable of great evil, and of allowing great evil to be done in our name. The descendants of SS officers are as diverse in temperament and worldview as are the descendants of Holocaust survivors; I have friends from both groups, and I love them equally.

I don’t know that my grandfather and I ever came to any sort of resolution, on the subject. I’m fairly sure he died comfortable in his belief that German people were and are evil, and confident that at least one of his grandsons was and is foolishly idealistic. But for the next little while at least, when I think of Germany, I’ll probably think of it in terms of those last talks I had with Pop-pop. As part of our rambling, week-long conversation about life and my future (a future which would soon continue without him), I wanted my grandpa to understand why I continue to be so drawn to Germany, and why I think that attraction is worthy of celebration. And so, as I keep planning my upcoming around-the-world vacation – including a

stopover in Berlin to visit with friends – I'll continue to think critically about my fascination with that homeland of famous philosophers, composers, and artists, and of infamous mass-murderers. But I think my grandfather was mistaken about at least one thing: remembering the past does not preclude living in the present without prejudice. In fact, if we are to remember the past faithfully, and if we are to prevent the darkest parts of our history from repeating, then we must live our lives with as much compassion and empathy as we can muster.

L'dor Vador: From Generation to Generation

David Puterman

It was so cold. That's what I remember most. I was wearing multiple layers of clothing. The weather was unseasonably warm for December. But it still felt bitterly cold as our group entered the former Concentration Camp Sachsenhausen. I thought about how it must have felt over 70 years ago, arriving here as a prisoner. We walked through the gate, past that sign we'd seen all too often in photos: "Arbeit Macht Frei." A gust of wind swept across the camp. A chill swept through my body. Black and white photo images were changing into color. This was becoming my story.

It was the winter of 2011, and I was in Germany with the Germany Close Up Program.

I had mixed emotions about this trip; I was excited, but also nervous about what the week would hold. My Jewish education in Canada had portrayed the relationship between Jews and Germans, particularly during the last century, as one of devastating conflict. But for me it was more complicated; my family had a special connection with Germany. I sensed that connection the moment I arrived in Berlin.

So much about Germany felt familiar. The aromas, the faces, the voices. The Christmas market was full of reminders, especially about food. Glühwein tasted just like the mulled wine – my grandfather's recipe – that steamed on the stove at my parents' house in the winter. The Lebkuchen brought back memories of that red can of delicious cookies we received in the mail every year from my grandfather in the U.S. And the Stollen, the marzipan fruitcake sold mainly in the holiday season, was even better than what we bought in Vancouver.

I felt pulled in two different directions. On the one hand, Germany felt like home, the source of my family's history and traditions. On the other hand, this was the country responsible for killing six million Jews, including my great-grandparents. I began to realize that this was the dilemma facing German Jews in the difficult years leading up to World War II and the Holocaust: the realization that the country they loved had turned against them.

My German Roots

The camp had seemed like a fictional place until I walked through those gates. I'd seen black and white images of concentration camps, but I hadn't expected to see green trees in the distance, or blue sky peeking through the clouds. I had pictured buildings of grey brick and was surprised to see that they were dark red...

My maternal grandfather, Friedrich (Fritz) Katzenstein was born in Wiesbaden, Germany, in 1908. His parents – my great-grandparents – Dorothea (Dora) and Leopold (Leo), a physician, had a comfortable middle-class life in that historic spa city. My grandfather followed in his father's footsteps, studying to become a doctor.

When Fritz graduated from medical school, Nazi laws restricted the entry of Jews to many professions, including medicine. With encouragement from Leo and Dora, Fritz immigrated to the United States in 1936. While establishing a life in the U.S. as a doctor in a small Midwestern town, he also worked tirelessly to help his parents join him in America. But Leo and Dora could not escape the war. After several years of mounting hardship, they were sent to concentration camps. Leo was murdered in Sachsenhausen in 1942, Dora in Auschwitz in 1943.

My grandfather, despite what surely were painful memories of this loss, often spoke fondly of his native country. He was proud of his German ancestry and had traced his roots back to the 16th century. When I was younger, Grandpa Fritz, with his strong German accent, seemed stern, serious, and reserved. He died when I was only 11, and I was too young to wonder or ask about his childhood, the war, or his feelings about Germany.

I became interested in our family's German history through my mother, Dorothea (Dodie) Katzenstein, who was named in memory of the grandmother she never met. She has spent years researching our family roots. After my grandfather's death in 1993, she found a box of letters written by Leo and Dora to their son after his escape to the U.S., and to each other after Leo was arrested and sent to Sachsenhausen. My mother traveled to Berlin several times to meet a distant cousin who translated the letters and helped her investigate her grandparents' life and death. My mother describes this exploration as opening a door

to “a deeper understanding of the Holocaust, my family, and myself.” I know now that these are also my own roots and my own family story.

The Camp

Among the hundreds of barracks at Sachsenhausen, only two have been preserved. It was in one of these two that my great-grandfather was held prisoner for seven months. During our tour, I smelled the stale, musty air of the barracks. I shivered in the cold, open field at the front of the camp where prisoners were forced to stand for hours on end. I stood at the site of the pits next to the shooting range where my great-grandfather was likely shot.

I don't know how to describe the feeling I had walking into Sachsenhausen. Fear, anger, sadness, nausea... I had done my reading, I had watched movies and documentaries, I had heard my mother's account of her journey to Sachsenhausen. But it never felt real until I was actually there. No one just visits a concentration camp. You don't just see a concentration camp. You *feel* it. The sounds, the smells, the wind...

As I sat in the barracks with our group, I tried to imagine how Leo felt as he wrote those letters to my great-grandmother. I pictured him writing, on Sachsenhausen camp stationery bearing his prisoner identity number and a Hitler postage stamp. I remembered the words of what would be Leo's last letter to Dora, written the night before he was murdered, August 17, 1942:

“All good wishes known to a beloved heart flutter today for your birthday... I hope that the angels will always protect you. Please send me a few long stockings... I hope this heat is not too hard on you at your work. This is not easy at your age... As much as possible have happy hours. As always, your Leo.”

The Guide

An eerie quiet swept across the camp. Nobody said much as we walked the grounds; the sound of our footsteps on the gravel resonated between gusts of wind. We could hear a train in the distance, a chilling reminder that these same railroad tracks were once used to bring prisoners to the camp.

A young German guide led our group's visit to Sachsenhausen. A conversation I had with him remains the most enduring memory of my Germany Close Up trip. He was about my age, late 20s or early 30s, born in Berlin. He was very knowledgeable about the history of the camp, sharing interesting anecdotes and details throughout our tour.

He and I were walking slightly behind the rest of the group, through an open space where other prisoner barracks had once stood. After a few quiet moments, I broke our silence bluntly, asking "Why are you working here?" He began to tell me his story.

Our guide had graduated recently from university with a history degree. He told me that much of his study focused on the Second World War. "I needed a job," he said, "and the economy is tough right now." Then he added, almost as an afterthought, "... and... my grandfather was in the SS." I stopped walking.

The Hebrew expression, *l'dor vador* – from generation to generation – has a special meaning in Jewish life, stating the personal responsibility of Jews to pass their culture, customs, and traditions on to their children and grandchildren. It also serves as a reminder of the obligation of each Jew to remember the past and the struggles of our ancestors, especially the Holocaust. In this moment of conversation with our guide, I saw that the burden of that era is not just a Jewish story.

Our families were on opposite sides of the war, but now, over 70 years later, on this spot, I felt that our guide and I shared something important. The Holocaust had happened long before we were born. We bore no direct responsibility for that devastating tragedy. But, here we were, two young men in modern Germany, both of us trying to come to terms with our family histories.

I wonder what our grandfathers would say.

L'dor Vador

In front of the camp's memorial our group read the Mourners' Kaddish, the prayer recited in every Jewish religious service to remember those who have died. "Yitgadal

v'yitkadash sh'meih raba..." I had heard those words so many times before. But never had they been so meaningful.

The time is coming soon when the last survivors of the Holocaust will no longer be alive to share their experience in person. How will we remember this history when all of those who lived it are gone?

My family's story is just one of millions. For far too many families, no one survived to pass on their stories. And new stories continue to be written every day. Antisemitism is on the rise in Europe as far-right political parties gain support. Conflicts persist in the Middle East. And genocides still afflict many parts of the world.

But I am hopeful.

I'm hopeful that my generation can make a difference in the world. We can share and learn from our personal histories, working to prevent catastrophes like the Holocaust from ever happening again.

And, my Germany Close Up trip has given me hope that change is possible. While the weight of history still haunts many Germans, I saw that Germany continues working to heal the pain of the past. Our trip, connecting young adults from Germany and North America, focused not on conflict but on paths for understanding and common ground.

I had arrived in Germany thinking I would be angry. I thought that I would feel only the suffering that my great-grandparents and so many other Jews had experienced during the Holocaust. But instead, *my* story is now about respecting difference. It's about standing up for what's right. It's about caring. And it's about my generation's responsibility to work together to leave the world a better place than we found it.

A core teaching of Judaism is the concept of *tikkun olam*, "*repairing the world.*" During my grandfather's life, the world was broken in ways that I cannot even begin to comprehend. But he remained dedicated, in his family and community, to giving back, even though so much had been taken from him. He still was able to find love and hope, even though so much that he loved had been lost. And he still enjoyed Glühwein, Lebkuchen, and Stollen, though these tastes must have evoked painful memories of his previous life.

My grandfather's life gives me hope for the future. I will continue trying to contribute to positive change, looking forward while never forgetting the past. *L'dor vador*: from generation to generation. This is my story now.

My mood changed as our group walked back to the bus for our return to Berlin. The wind had stopped. I was no longer cold. And the sun began to come out from behind the clouds.

