

# Verein Bürger fürs BADEHAUS Waldram-Föhrenwald e.V.

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## Testimonial on our visit to Foehrenwald/Waldram – June 7, 2016 by Shoshana Bellen (née Blanka Hellman) from Nordiyah, Israel

For many years I have been thinking about taking a trip to Poland to visit my family's roots. Every time I planned such a visit to Zaleszczyki and Tulste (they are both towns in the Ukraine today) something happened and I was not able to complete my plans. As my 70th birthday approached, I realized that maybe what I needed to do was visit MY roots, not my parents' roots. I started searching the internet for information about Foehrenwald.

I contacted ITS and they actually suggested I contact the Historical Society Waldram and that of course led me to the Badehaus Foehrenwald/Waldram Project. I felt I was destined to visit the camp where I was born. I corresponded with Stephanie Coenen who was so kind and helpful. She arranged a visit for my husband and I just a few days before my 70th birthday. Stephanie met us at the train station and we were most fortunate to also meet with Maria Mannes and Sybille Krafft. What dedicated volunteers and activists.

Our visit to Foehrenwald/Waldram was an amazing birthday gift. I could barely listen to what was being said as we walked through the streets of what once was my first home. To see the streets and hear the description of where the communal buildings of Foehrenwald once were, was very emotional. But the real cherry on top of the „birthday cake“ was a visit to 2 Floridastrasse to see the building where we actually lived. The residents living there now were most gracious and invited us into the apartment. I cannot describe how my heart was pounding.

The narrative of the Holocaust has been two-fold: „Never Forget“ or „Never Again“. The atrocities of the Holocaust were horrific and must be told and retold; and of course the lesson must be to never again allow such an evil, insane thing to happen. But there is also another story that needs to be told. That is the story of my parents, the survivors, who after going through such a negative, dehumanizing experience, nevertheless chose life. Foehrenwald and the other DP camps gave them the opportunity to rebuild, to be reborn, to have children and declare that they would bring forth the next generation. The Badehaus Project symbolizes their strength and their courage. The Society of the Badehaus Foehrenwald/Waldram is very important. Through archives and exhibitions the Badehaus will tell the story of rebirth and positive reactions to horrible events. By converting the Badehaus into a center for learning and for dialogue this aspect of the human spirit will be told to the new generations. I stand by you in support of the project.