

Full Circle

a German American Jewish family in Berlin

Building Bridges through the Obermayer Awards

Posted on [January 29, 2015](#)

The quest to learn your family history in the aftermath of a genocidal era such as the Holocaust requires help from others. Survivors and their descendants seek answers from many sources, ranging from government officials to village historians. My own family research brought me into contact with many dedicated people in Hesse to whom I will always be grateful. Before moving to Germany, I was not aware that there is a formal way to honor “Germans who have made outstanding voluntary contributions to preserving the memory of their local Jewish communities.” It’s been done almost every year since 2000 through the [Obermayer German Jewish History Awards](#).

Long-term correspondence with one of my blog readers brought about the opportunity to attend the 2015 Obermayer Awards. He had written to me on numerous occasions about Jörg Kap’s dedicated efforts to commemorate the Jewish community that once lived in Arnstadt, Thuringia. He first nominated Jörg for the Obermayer Award in 2007, but it wasn’t until he was joined by fifteen other nominators from around the world this year, that the jury selected Jörg for this distinguished honor. As Jörg Kaps presented his extensive efforts to preserve the memory of Arnstadt’s Jewish families, I had a sense of what his volunteer work meant to the descendant of one such family.



Jörg Kaps and this year’s four other Obermayer Award winners are just some of the non-Jewish Germans who have helped to reclaim and rebuild a part of Germany’s history and culture that was all but obliterated. Their publications, restorations, art works, exhibits, tours, lectures, and more are a significant part of Germany’s ongoing reconciliation efforts.

Lately, we hear a lot more from the media about threats to the future of Jewish life in Germany and the rest of Europe than we do about positive signs for the future. I’ve offered my own perspective on trends affecting Jewish life in Europe in a new article for Tikkun Daily: [Jewish in Europe: Another Perspective](#).

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