

Feb. 1, 2019

Dear Prof. Kessler,

I am writing to you to express my condolences in relation to the passing of the former director of the Ethnic Heritage and Jewish Studies program, Mr. Herbert Hochhauser.

I've known Mr. Hochhauser only briefly - from one interaction in 1984 in East Germany. I was one of the kids interviewed by Robert Clary for his movie "Robert Clary A5714 : A Memoir of Liberation". Besides Mr. Clary, the person I do best remember is Mr. Hochhauser's son - a boy of similar age as mine - who was in charge of setting up the camera system. I do recall this was a little challenging to him

which captured my attention and almost drew me into the situation. I was wondering why the Americans would leave him alone with the camera.

The interview with Robert Clary left a lasting impression of deep significance with me - at that point in time and also repeatedly thereafter, even up to this present day.

Unfortunately, the way how our school handled the meeting, in particular, what followed afterwards left much to be desired. There was no follow-up with our children's group at all and we never watched the movie. The event was largely kept secret. I doubt beyond our small group anybody even knew of the visit.

In 2014, I became interested to find out whether the movie was ever finalized. At that time I did not recall any names of the people I had met in 1984. My memory was largely emotional, not very factual. Still, I found the movie and a few old newspaper articles. Upon locating the documents, I knew immediately and without any doubt that this was what I was looking for. I also realized while talking to a few people from an NGO called Förderverein Buchenwald that the movie is completely unknown in Weimar, at my former school, and even at the Buchenwald Memorial itself. In January 2019 I undertook a second attempt at bringing some light into this story. I contacted Mr. Brad Margolis (the film director) in London and we had a good conversation.

by phone. I also contacted the deputy director of the Buchenwald Memorial. I can tell you that something good will come out of this. The story is still unfolding.

I would like to thank you for your attention. My point simply was to communicate that Mr. Hochhauser left a lasting impression here in Weimar, a place not far from his birth place Berlin. I only had a short interaction with Mr. Hochhauser, but something of his soul is still here today and I am grateful to have known him and that Mr. Friedman had this idea to come to our school.

I will make sure to finally watch the movie. It took 35 years to reach that point. Some things, just take a little longer. ☺

Warm regards from Germany  
Sileylle Petrak