Ronia Beecher, geb. Reutlinger

Nichte der Geschwister Beck)

(Ansprache Stolpersteine für Familie Beck)

24. September 2020

Lörrach, Teichstraße 9

We are honored to have been invited to participate in your Stolperstein memorial ceremony today. My daughters, Judi Andrea and my husband Vic would have loved to have been here, but this worldwide pandemic made it impossible.

My name is Ronia Reutlinger Beecher and I was born in Loerrach in 1936. My parents met here in Loerrach. The first two years of my life were spent here with my parents and my great aunts and uncles.

I'm the daughter of Adolph Paul Reutlinger, the last cantor of the Loerrach Synagogue, and Alice Geismar Reutlinger, who worked as a dressmaker in Basel. My mother, Alice, was the daughter of Judith Beck Geismar, also born in Loerrach who was one of the nine Beck siblings, four of whom we're honoring today.

After Kristalnacht and the destruction of the Loerrach Synagogue, my father was released from the Dachau concentration camp, along with my great uncles and my grandfather. Upon his return to Loerrach, all the Jewish children of the Baden area had been removed from the German Public Schools and were now forced to go to a mandatory Jewish School, behind the Lessing Real Schule in Freiburg. My father was transferred there and became of the last teachers of all of the Jewish children before the deportation

On October 22, 1940, when I was almost 4 years old, there was a knock on our door, and we were given one hour notice to leave our home. We were allowed one suitcase each and 100 Reichmark. We, as well as Adele, Bernhardt, Samuel and Isaak, and all of the Jews of Baden, were deported to camp Gurs.

Many of my great aunts and uncles, as well as my grandfather, died in Gurs or were later murdered in Auschwitz and Majdanek. After 5 months in Gurs, my parents and I were transferred to camp Rivesaltes, we sadly had to leave my grandparents and all of my great aunts and uncles behind, most of whom we never saw again.

We were interned in camp Rivesaltes also in southern France, for one year, then at the age of five, I was smuggled out by the OSE and put into hiding by the Swiss Red Cross in a chateau in

France, where I remained for a year. Several weeks before Rivesaltes was to be emptied, my parents planned their escape. They hid in the eaves of one of the barracks for ten nights.

After many perilous events, my parents and I made our escapes… separately. We were fortunate to be reunited again in Switzerland. My two brothers were born in the refugee camps in Switzerland. We finally succeeded in obtaining our visas and arrived in New York on May of 1946. I was 9 ½ years old.

My parents never again spoke to me about our past, they put their energy into building a new future for their 3 children. Life was really hard, but we moved ahead and left our past behind.. I knew very little about my parents and my ancestor's lives in Germany.

We came back to Germany in 2017 and again in 2018, on a hunt to fill in the missing pieces of the lives of our ancestors as well as my own and my parent's lives.

Here in Loerrach, we were graciously welcomed by Mayor Joerg Lutz and Lars Frick, who helped organize our visit. Ulrich Tromm helped us with a great deal of advance research and spent the day with us when we arrived, showing us where my parents and great aunts and uncles had lived, many on Teichstraße. He brought us to the memorial plaque on Teichstraße, and we found documents which brought our family history alive. We were amazed wih our many discoveries.

It made us extremely sad to hear what I and my family member had to experience, but we were also heartened by the dedicated and wonderful people in Loerrach, Freiburg, Offenburg and Breisach who created these remembrances to keep alive the names and memories of the people who were so suddenly deported, many of whom either lost their lives because of terrible living conditions or killed in the death camps. They had been so much a part of this community going back several generations.

The Stolpersteins being installed today help acknowledge to future generation that although they were only a tiny percentage of the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust, they were part of the fabric of this community here in Loerrach.

Yes, they were Jewish, but they were also German, and they had loved their country.

If these remembrances were not here, it would be as if a whole generation of Jews, as well as all the other people who were persecuted and were killed during the Nazi times had never existed.

Although Isaak, Adele, Samuel and Bernhard had no children, there are more than 80 descendants of the surviving four Beck Siblings, scattered across the United States, Europe and Israel. Many of us in the US have remained close, by coming together on holidays, a tradition started by our parents.

More than 80 years have now passed and there are many people who want to forget, but it is important to remember these terrible events, so that history will, hopefully, never be repeated.

We'd like to especially thank all of the people who worked so hard and persevered to make this day possible: Rabbi Moshe Flomenmann, and many of the elders of the Jewish community, Mayor Joerg Lutz, Lars Frick, Andreas Lauble, Ulrich Tromm, Markus Moehring, Dr. Markus Hoffman and Gunter Demnig.